
LAME COWS

No antibiotics without diagnosis

Lameness caused by hoof and leg ailments in dairy cows may impose a significant cost upon the dairy farmer if not followed up and addressed correctly. Lameness causes cows to produce less milk, take longer to conceive and are more likely to be culled. Lameness also causes cows to eat less often resulting in a lower body condition. So, an **early detection** of lame cows, a **prompt action** and a **correct treatment** (that is without injection of antibiotics except for interdigital phlegmon) are essential to resolve the situation.

Step 1: Identify lame cows

Even a slight lameness may hide a serious lesion such as a sole ulcer. So, it's necessary to regularly observe your cows for lameness to spot the cows that have just gone lame.

To identify as soon as a cow goes lame, you should:

- While the cow is walking: look for an arch in the centre of her back or uneven weight bearing
- For a cow standing at a headlock: look if she rests her foot. Is her stance good or does she rotate her hooves? Is her back curved?



Curved back



Good stance



Rotated hooves



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Step 2: Raise the cow's foot

You need to lift the cow's foot to establish the cause of her lameness. This should be easy, safe and not unpleasant for you or the cow, and take a minimum of time (10 min max). It should be possible for one person

to get the cow in the handling facility in one minute. With or without handling facilities, the system must be adapted and integrated in the installations.



With a handling facility



Without a handling facility

Step 3: Recognize

By different lesions, some infectious (such as heel erosion, digital dermatitis...) and some not infectious (such as white line disease, hemorrhage, ulcer) for which the use of antibiotic is not necessary. The majority of these lesions are recognizable after a

functional trim. To correctly diagnose the lesion, you should be adequately trained. If you don't have these skills, contact a professional (trimmer or veterinarian).



Heel erosion



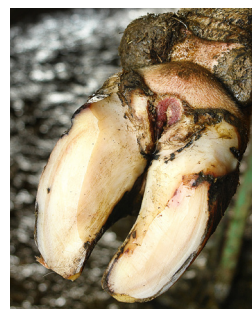
White line disease



Some hemorrhage



Sole ulcer



Digital dermatitis

Please note that none of these lesions require an **injection** of antibiotics!



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Step 4: Treat

Don't delay, treat today! Recent research has shown that any delay in the time to treat lesions, regardless of the treatment administered, is likely to reduce the rate of recovery.

Following a functional trim, a treatment trim, with or without block, is in the majority of cases the most effective. Good quality trimming is a difficult skill to master and a poor quality job can actually make cows lame. A practical training course is strongly recommended and regular refresher courses help to keep up-to-date and to improve technique. So, trimming must only be done by a trained person or a professional.

With digital dermatitis, as a first line treatment the use of systemic antibiotic is not necessary : after for this lesion, overall, regular foot bathing, hygiene and disinfection at foot trimming and steps to improve yard or pen hygiene are key to prevention.



One exception: interdigital phlegmon* requires systemic antibiotic treatment

Interdigital phlegmon is characterized by the sudden appearance of a strong lameness with a symmetric swelling. In this case, it is essential to contact your veterinary and/or follow the health protocol established on your farm.

*1 to 2% of lame cows



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TESTIMONY

Vincent Daboudet, Managing lameness in our farm

I have got a handling facility and tools so, if a cow limps, my first response is to contain her safely, lift her foot, do a functional trim and observe for possible lesions. I don't do anything until I have observed the animal.

In order to minimize lameness levels, our trimmer comes 4 times a year to trim cows close to drying off as well as those who seem to need it. I have never injected my lame cows with antibiotics because I have never seen any interdigital phlegmon!

In order to recognize lesions and to better understand lameness risk factors, I was trained during a technical day with a group of farmers. To manage digital dermatitis, I am rigorous on the scraping of the exercise area and I routinely use foot baths.



Leaflet inspired by a French leaflet created by CFPPA, CNIEL, FCEL, FNPL, GDS France, INRA, Institut de l'Élevage, ONIRIS, SNGTV, with the collaboration of AHDB.

"Photos have been provided by Marc Delacroix; François Gervais; Gérard Bosquet; Ludivine Perrachon."

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Animal Care

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