

Reducing antibiotic use in lameness cases using the Healthy Feet Programme



Figure 1. Sole ulcer (left) and white line disease (right)

Rather than using antibiotics, it is better to treat forms of lameness such as sole ulcers and white line disease (see Figure 1) with a foot trim, block and a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug.

For claw horn lesions (non-infectious), there is no evidence that antibiotics improve the cure rates of sole ulcers.

For infectious lesions, such as digital dermatitis, antibiotics may be entirely appropriate. Ensure all medicines used are **licensed products**. Antibiotics for footbaths are **not** licensed and are inappropriate.


For claw horn lesions, the appropriate treatment is a therapeutic trim plus a block on the opposite claw to relieve weight-bearing on the affected claw, plus a course of NSAID.

NSAID is short for non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug. They have pain killing and anti-inflammatory properties.

Cows recover better when treated with NSAIDs possibly because they feel less pain - but this is not thought to be the main reason. The inflammation associated with claw horn lesions (sole bruising, sole ulcers and white line

disease) can cause long-standing damage inside the hoof, such as the growth of spurs of bone. These can delay healing and also make the cow prone to new bouts of lameness in the future.

Therefore, the best time to use NSAIDs is **early** on when the lameness is less severe, but before irreversible changes have occurred due to inflammation.



Better to treat cows with a foot trim, block and a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug.

“ The aim of the Healthy Feet Programme (HFP) is to help you make the necessary changes to reduce lameness and improve your business performance. ”

What would less lameness mean for you and your herd?

Here is what some farmers said about the HFP after one year:

- “We’ve gone from treatment to prevention. Basically, we now use our time far better”
- “The best thing about the Healthy Feet Programme is I now feel more in control of lameness than I ever thought possible”
- “Simple: improved welfare. If my cows are happy, I’m happy!”
- “The financial benefits have been huge. Reducing lameness has brought me an extra 1.8 ppl margin, easily”

Here’s how to achieve success for yourselves:

1. Walking the walk – work out what’s going on

- Enrol on the HFP
- Work with a mobility mentor
- Diagnose the lameness problems
- Assess what contributes to lame cows on your farm
- Develop your skills

2. Decision time – farm staff develop a plan

- Agree on actions that can be done on your farm
- Decide the first steps
- Do it!

3. Check your progress – keep and look at records

- Mobility score cows regularly
- Review and update actions

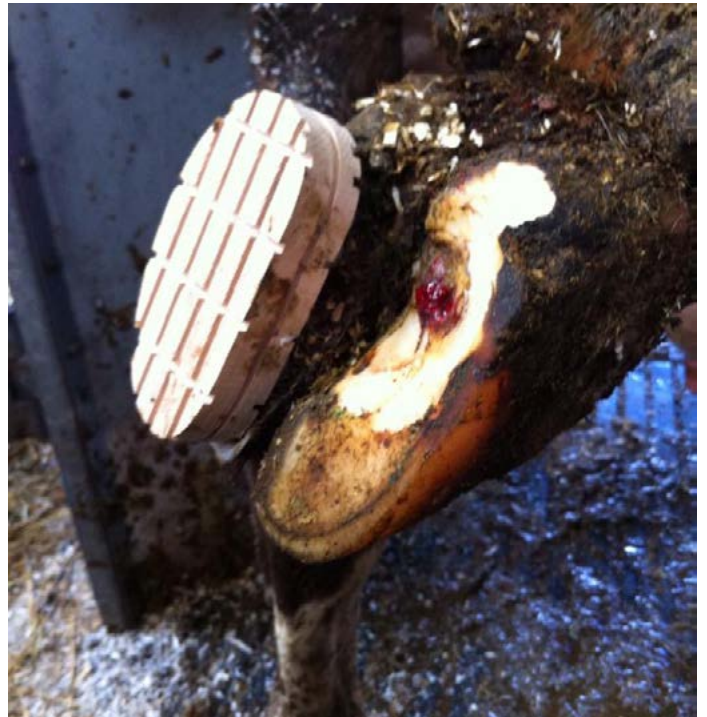


Figure 2. Foot trim and block applied as treatment for sole ulcer

Acknowledgment

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Further information

For more information on the Healthy Feet Programme please visit dairy.ahdb.org.uk/technical-services/healthy-feet-programme or email, healthyfeet@ahdb.org.uk

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