



Prime Health Vets

www.primehealthvets.com

Newsletter



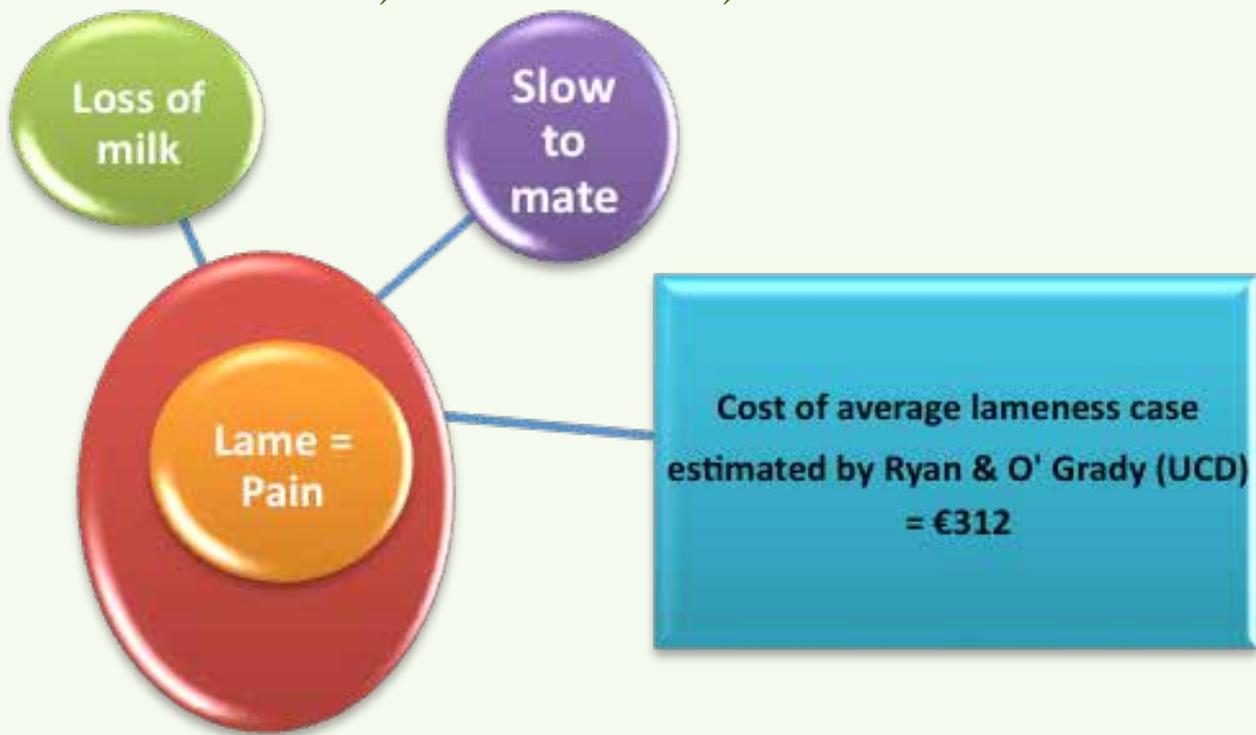
THE ROADWAY TO SUCCESS WITH LAMENESS



Lameness

- **Herd Health issue:** Herd Health is anything to do with the health of your herd. Lameness is an issue on all farms - on many farms it is a severe problem. This is a herd health issue that should be dealt with in the same manner as any other herd health issue.
- **Production issue:** A lame cow will lose her rank in the herd and will not eat the same as she previously used to. This means that she will not produce as much milk as a normal cow and the condition will fall off her. Therefore lameness is a production issue.
- **Fertility issue:** The amount of days 'open' more than average is costing you money. A lame cow will not cycle and thus she is costing you- she may even end up being culled because of it.
- **Welfare issue:** Welfare is a major issue among consumers and this is reflected by the code of practice adopted by the big supermarket chains. They want to be seen to buy products that have come from 'happy and healthy' animals. This does not only mean that you treat all lame cows immediately. It also means that you prevent your cow from getting lame in the first place. To do this means having top class housing, feeding protocols, management, genetic selection and farm roadways. These are laid down in guidelines by EFSA (European Food Safety Authority).

What is the cost to you of lameness in your herd?



Types of lameness

Laminitic

Infectious

Upper Limb

Laminitic problems: include conditions such as sole ulcers, White line disease, under-run soles, cracked walls and sole hemorrhages. Most of these are as a result of damage to the part of the claw that makes the horn of the hoof. This can be caused by a number of things such as mineral deficiencies, hormonal imbalance, underfoot conditions, loss of body condition and nutritional imbalance.

Around calving cow's soles are thinner due to reduced horn growth because of hormones associated with the growth of the calf and production of milk. Changes in the diet from dry cow to milking cow (transition period) can also cause ruminal acidosis. This leads to inflammation within the hoof (laminitis) and further reduced production of horn.

Infectious conditions: are caused by bacteria that are commonly in the soil and others that we have introduced with imported stock over the last 30 years. The ones commonly found in our soil need a break in the skin in order to cause a problem. Uneven ground and rough passages can cause injury to the skin between the claws or even the sole itself leading to bacterial invasion and subsequently to Foot rot and Super foul. These conditions need to be treated quickly in order to reduce the overall cost of the case. There are antibiotics and pain killers available that have zero milk withdrawal.

The condition called Digital Dermatitis (Mortallero) is rife on some farms where the cows are walking through wet muddy conditions. It is a contagious condition that is almost impossible to eradicate being controlled by continuous foot bathing and trying to improve underfoot conditions.

Upper limb conditions: include the ugly condition of infectious tarsitis (swollen hock). This has arisen because of genetic selection. We are breeding cows either bigger or smaller than those we had when we built our cubicle house so cows are now not lying correctly and are getting abrasions to the outside of the hock. This break in the skin allows infectious agents to enter and cause a very painful condition that is difficult to cure.

Factors affecting Lameness

Genetics: The trend with EBI has been to select for traits like milk solids and fertility to the detriment of hoof condition and conformation. Because it has such an importance in milk production maybe we should pay more attention to breeding for soundness. Nutrition or management cannot compensate for poor genetic selection.

Housing: It is said by experts that a cow should be lying for 14 hours a day. If there is not at least one cubicle per cow then they cannot all lie down for their allotted time. If the cubicles are not comfortable and dry then cows will not lie down for long enough. If there is not enough space at the feed barrier or water trough then too much time is spent standing around on hard concrete floors waiting to get at the feed or water. If the cubicles are not the correct size for your cows then they can end up with lesions like swollen hock (tarsitis). Cubicle mats are a must for cow comfort. Do your cows take all day lying down or getting up? Do they lie straight or are the beds very dirty? How many cubicles are never occupied and why is this so? Ask your veterinary surgeon to carry out an audit of your facilities. We are the experts in animal health and all the factors that affect it.

Constantly carry out maintenance checks on the state of your cubicles, floors, feed barriers and water troughs. Are your floors slippery? How many cows did the splits in the last 12 months? All of these factors have severe implications for your cow.

Roadways: Constantly check the state of your farm roadways, looking out for potholes, ruts, stones on the surface or very dirty sections. These are symptoms of surfaces that have poor drainage. They are, perhaps, too level or with raised sides or maybe because the roadway is lower than the surrounding land. Roadways need constant maintenance. Don't let them deteriorate.

You should avoid having excessive walking distances. Remember that a cow has to walk this distance four times a day. This can be intolerable for a lame cow. If your cows seem to take all day to walk in and out maybe it is a sign that your roadways are inadequate and that you need to do something about it now and not just try to hurry them along with a quad or a dog.

Avoid bottlenecks by widening the passageway at corners and junctions. Don't hold animals on roadways for too long. Avoid prolonged standing on wet/ slurry-covered concrete yards. Avoid prolonged waiting milking times.

Expansion: All the talk now is of expansion of herds. This may carry a major risk to cows if finances don't allow provision of extra cubicle space. If extra grazing land is rented will the roadways that are added be suitable or will the distances travelled be excessive. More cows being milked in the same parlour means more standing time in the collecting yard and thus more lameness.

Regime

- Weekly footbaths
- Locomotion scoring every 3-6 months
- Trimming every 6 months – avoid over trimming (can leave sole too thin to withstand insults).
- Lameness prevention programme

Locomotion scoring: Locomotion scoring is a system of grading animals between 1 and 5 on the severity of their lameness. It is a good exercise to learn and can be carried out at critical times of the year. Studies have shown that farmers do not appreciate the losses accumulated due to lameness on their farm. Your vet can carry out a locomotion scoring for your herd and at the same time teach you to do future scorings. In consultation with you your vet can monitor any ongoing lameness problem and help to swing the balance back in your favour.

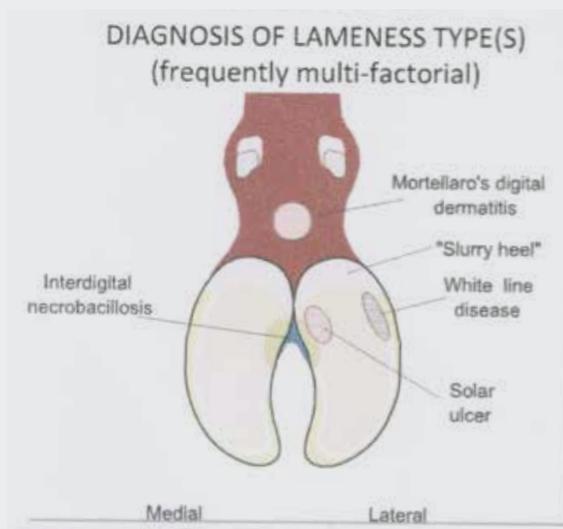
Bi-annual hoof trimming: When your cow comes in for the winter and is facing a few months standing on concrete she needs to have a good hoof to stand on and likewise at turn out when she is facing miles and miles of walking on roadways before she reaches the comfort of the grassy field. These are two prime times for carrying out a hoof trim. This can be done on a whole herd basis or (in conjunction with locomotion scoring) can be carried out on the more needy cows. You really need to consult with your vet on which ones are 'needy'.

Keep records: It is an essential part of modern farming that you keep records. If you keep records such as locomotion scoring (carried out every 3-6 months) and lesion scores (carried out for every lame animal) then it can help your vet follow trends among different animal lactation groups, different times of the year etc. and help find the underlying cause. Maybe these records in conjunction with your milk recording records could lead to a diagnosis of SARA as the underlying cause. Records are essential. Accurate record keeping is vital to the success of any investigation.

Clinical case data needs

- Cow ID
- Claw affected
- Lesion identified
- Treatment adopted
- Result

Lameness can be prevented and successfully treated. We are the people with the knowledge and the experience to help you. Why not ask us?



Courtesy of UCD

Paul Redmond MVB MRCVS CertPDHH