

Why worry about lameness?



Lameness is an economical loss in prosperous times, but it's even more serious when times are tough: it shows no mercy. The complexity of the issues that cause lameness will not allow me to explain everything in one article – perhaps some other time I can go into more detail in a special series. Right now, though, I will give you a short overview on a good approach for curing and preventing lameness caused by warts (Digital Dermatitis).

1. **Proper diagnosis.** It is of great importance that we *know* what is causing our case of lameness. To do this properly, you should lift the foot and check for sore areas in the sole or skin. Find a way to do this procedure safely and easily by using a chute: make it fun. Gather some basic understanding about the various hoof problems and recognize them. The purpose of a proper diagnosis is to let you apply proper treatment and prevention protocols.

I would like to make this clearer by giving you an example:

If a cow is down in milk and your employee calls you about it, would you immediately call the veterinarian to perform a DA surgery? Of course not – I'm sure you would first ask some specific questions to allow you to come to some sort of conclusion (e.g., does she have a high temperature? when did it start? is she still eating? how is the manure? etc.).

Lameness detection is no different.

2. **Individual cow care.** Now let's say we have figured out the cause of lameness and the animal is in our chute. The purpose of this approach is to emphasize that you cannot depend only on a footbath to cure a lame cow. It is too risky to depend on a footbath when you haven't been monitoring the foot all along. What if the problem is not cured after 3 weeks of bathing? Then you are still at square one; you've lost a lot of time and money; and you still have to lift the foot.

Proper trimming is a must to deal with all hoof defects, including hairy heel warts. The hairy heel wart problem is dealt with as follows:

Trim the foot and remove all loose horn and heel erosion. Use a hand towel to clean and dry the area between the claws and the wart itself. Then use Hoof Sol Gel and brush it onto the front, in between, and on the rear of the claws. Apply a cotton pad with some Hoof Sol Gel and use a wrap for increased contact time. After 3-4 days, the wrap will need to be removed. Severe cases might need an additional application with the Hoof Sol Gel, but now do it without the wrap. The key is to keep on it and monitor the

healing process: it's exactly like mastitis – treat it as soon as you notice it and keep on checking.

- 3. Preventive measures.** Referring back to a common question about the use of foot bathing, I would like note the following:
- a. Do not skip the previous two steps. They are part of the prevention as well: a hairy heel wart will continue to spread in your herd, so why wait a day longer?
 - b. Some herds will do great with just whole herd spraying with Hoof Sol Liquid, where even the last cow through the parlor or in the stanchion barn receives a clean and 100% solution. This should be done weekly and it's a great way to monitor the hooves of the whole herd.
 - c. The use of the footbath is also a great preventative way to control lameness. There are many baths and various bath products on the market and these should always be used according to the manufacturers' recommendations. Some need a daily approach, others are twice weekly; some are corrosive, while others cause irritation and are very harsh for your own health. You also need to note the danger of environmental contamination caused by dumping the contents of the baths onto fields. Antibiotic resistance in animals and humans is also a concern. Do some shopping and ask your hoof trimmer or veterinarian for advice. The Hoof Sol Bath and the Intra Bath are the complete answer; they are part of the Hoof Sol program. Ask Jason or Albert for more detailed information.

I hope that this gives you a little overview. Let me know if this plan works for you and your herd.

Please feel free to forward any further questions to questions@allabouthooves.com