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FOOT DISEASE TREATMENT PROTOCOLS

In the past, veterinarians did most of the diagnosing and treating of sore-footed cows. Now, with increasing herd sizes, the availability of professional hoof trimmers, better knowledge of prevention, and fewer barns with beams to throw a rope over, veterinarians are taking more of an advisory role in lameness management. Also, the entire industry has recognized the effects lameness has on milk production, reproduction, and animal well-being. Promoting and documenting animal well-being may be the biggest challenge that animal agriculture faces in the coming years.

Laminitis is the primary non-infectious cause of lameness. It is associated with changes in the blood flow within the claw that occur because of rumen acidosis. Rumen acidosis is most often due to feeding high concentrate, inadequate amounts of or too-finely chopped forage, and inadequate use of buffers. On dairies without TMRs, slug feeding of concentrates may play a role. Other factors are too much time spent standing, especially on concrete, not enough comfortable resting areas, not enough bunk space, and any stressful conditions. Laminitis often results in toe and sole ulcers and abscesses, white line disease, and, sometimes, in septic arthritis, if an abscess penetrates into the coffin joint. Treatment involves corrective trimming, draining abscesses, and applying blocks to the sound claws. Antibiotic therapy is usually of limited value in these cases except when there is infection in the joint or the swelling appears to be spreading up the leg. When that occurs, commonly used antibiotics are Naxcel, Excenel, or Certiflex because of no milk withholding. Polyflex (**WITHHOLDING**) also works well. All dosages should be based on body weight; treatment should be continued for 3 to 4 days. Because cows with infected joints often do not respond well, the above antibiotics are recommended because they have short slaughter withholding times.

Foot rot is an infectious disease that is characterized by a suddenly swollen and lame foot often with a smelly, draining tract between the claws. Foot rot responds well to Naxcel, Excenel, Certiflex, and Polyflex. Excede and LA200 work well, also, and provide longer-term therapy for animals that may be hard to catch on a daily basis. Copper sulfate foot baths are effective against foot rot. Please note that Kopertox, which was used for years to treat foot rot, is not allowed anymore and should not be in the dairy barn at all.

Hairy heel warts have become the primary infectious disease causing lameness in dairy cattle in the last 20 years. Herd-oriented control is based on using foot baths containing tetracycline, LS 50, copper sulfate, zinc sulfate, formaldehyde, or many commercial products. Formaldehyde (embalming fluid) is very dangerous and is a carcinogen and must be used with great caution. Bandaging or spraying the warts with tetracycline has met with success; more information can be provided if desired. Injectable antibiotics are typically of limited value in treating hairy heel warts.

For all of the above and for injuries, too, the use of anti-inflammatory drugs like aspirin and Banamine (Flunixin) (**WITHHOLDING**) at dosages based on body weight should always be considered. Please note that phenylbutazone is absolutely not allowed in dairy cows.