FriarsMoor
Livestock Health

Newsletter
September 2024

Digital Dermatitis and 'Non-healing claw horn lesions'

By
Paul Doran MRCVS, CHCSB member
and AHDB Mobility Mentor.

AHDB HEALTHY FEET PROGRAMME

Many dairy farms struggle at one time or another to control digital dermatitis (DD). Cost estimates of DD are generally much lower per case compared to other forms of lameness. For example, Willshire & Bell (2009) estimated the cost of an individual case of DD to be around £75 and that of a sole ulcer to be in the region of £520.The same review estimated that in the average case of lameness, 82% of the costs were due to reduced fertility and yield with vet costs only contributing 1%.

However, in the case of DD, such conservative cost estimates do not account for a potentially more significant herd level impact because of the association between DD and so-called non-healing claw horn lesions. The most widely recognised of these lesions is toe necrosis but other 'non-healing' claw horn lesions such as necrotic axial fissures or non-healing white line lesions (aka 'wall ulcers') are also associated with Digital Dermatitis.

What is less often appreciated is that curative surgical treatment of these lesions is possible by a vet under local anaesthetic. In most cases, if the farm is prepared to provide some aftercare (repeated antibiotic spray) and the lesion is relatively recent, the cow is likely to have a good prognosis. If appropriately and promptly treated, there is a much greater chance of permanently curing a case of toe necrosis than a sole ulcer.

There are several advantages to treating these lesions:
a) Improved mobility in affected cows tends to result in improved milk yield and fertility and significantly reduce the risk of early culling.
b) Necrotic claw horn lesions are a reservoir of digital dermatitis so the presence of cows with these lesions in the herd increases the infection pressure and is therefore a barrier to good DD control.
c) Treatment has a significant welfare benefit to the cow and therefore is the ethical thing to do.

On a farm with good foot trimming facilities, it is possible for a vet to treat these lesions on their own, however in many situations, it is often easiest for a vet and foot trimmer to work together to treat these cows.

Treatment requires surgical removal of all necrotic tissue and any under run horn under local anaesthetic. Pain relief is given and the treated hoof is bandaged for 12-24 hours to prevent bleeding. With good aftercare and a little follow up, the success rate can be excellent.

Of course the long term goal should always be to improve Digital Dermatitis control so that fewer of these lesions are seen in the future but treating these animals can also play a part in achieving that.

Toe necrosis lesion following surgical debridement, prior to bandaging

Necrotic white line lesion (wall ulcer) following surgical debridement

G & S SHOW

What an amazing attendance we had at the show this year!! Every year we thoroughly look forward to engaging with our clients and the farming industry. Thank you to everyone that helped to make it happen. Here's to next years!

Introductory offer for Autumn calvers new to knockdown disbuds

Autumn calvers – reduce disbudding stress by using our knockdown service this year!

Over the next month our vets and techs will be busy disbudding. Each year we do an increased number of 'knock down' disbuds. The process of disbudding can be stressful for the calf and time consuming for the farmer. Giving a sedative to the calves prior to disbudding helps to reduce the stress for the calf and speeds up the process. Calves are quicker to drink after being disbudded compared to the conventional method, and there is thought to be less of a dip in growth rates. The sedative will 'knock the calf out', and they will also be given their usual local anaesthetic and pain relief (Metacam). Calves typically take 60 minutes to wake up and be on their feet again.

The age of disbudding is important. Very young calves may not have palpable horn buds, and they can have a body temperature drop from the sedation. Disbudding is best done at 3-5 weeks old as the buds are still small, making the process quicker, and are smaller so require less drugs making it more cost effective. It is important that calves with signs of pneumonia or scour are not disbudded that day, as any concurrent disease increases the risk with sedation.

The cost of knock-down disbudding will vary depending on the size of the calves and the time it takes. It works out most cost effective when there is sufficient labour to disbud several calves at once. After the initial set up of the equipment we can easily disbud 40+ calves per hour. Drug price per calf will vary from £2.85 for a 40kg calf to £5.34 for an 80kg calf.

It is becoming increasingly popular with the spring and autumn block herds with large groups of calves to do at one time.

If you would like to try knock down disbudding for your calves this autumn, take advantage of our introductory offer of a free vet tech to speed up the process. A vet visit will be required for the sedation purpose. It will still be important to provide as much trained farm help as you are able to.

BRANCH NEWS

Our Shaftesbury Branch will no longer be opening on Saturdays. Please bear this in mind when placing drug orders for collection from this branch.

BATH & WEST
THE DAIRY SHOW

Wednesday 2nd October
Find us in the Showering Pavillion

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

11-13 SEPT

LANTRA FOOT TRIMMING COURSE

The course covers in depth anatomy of the foot and how this relates to the development of lameness. Both preventative and therapeutic hoof trimming via the modified Dutch 5 step method are covered. The safe use of angle grinders will also be introduced throughout the course.

16-18 SEPT

AI COURSE

This is a three-day training course, which consists of one day of theory and PM specimens, followed by two practical training days.

Day 1 Theory at Friars Moor Sturminster Newton DT10 1BH 10am to 2.30pm
Day 3 Practical at Longmoor Farm SP8 5QW 10.45 am start.
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17 SEPT

SHEEP AND CATTLE WEC COURSE

11.00-2pm at the Sturminster Branch.
Animal Health and Welfare Pathway funding can be used to cover the cost of the course, please speak to Lucy or Becca for further details.

24 SEPT

REGENERATIVE DISCUSSION GROUP - IN CONJUNCTION WITH LEIGH CLIMATE GROUP

Join us for the film showing of Six Inches of Soil, a story of courage, vision and hope. The film, tells the story of remarkable farmers, communities, small businesses, chefs and entrepreneurs who are leading the way to transform how our food is produced and consumed.

Presented by Leigh Climate Group at Leigh Village Hall
7.15pm for 7.45pm showing.
Tickets £5. Admission by ticket only

26 SEPT

MILKSURE

11am at the Sturminster Branch.
MilkSure training improves the professionalism around medicine use on dairy farms and drives higher standards. This is to avoid medicine residues and reduce antibiotic resistance..

To register your interest, or for any further information about our meetings, please contact the farm office on 01258 472314

STAFF NEWS:

We welcome a new Vet Tech - Patrick Snelle who will be training to be an ATT in addition to doing vet tech work, foot trimming and freeze branding.

Sadly, this month we say goodbye to Fiona who is leaving to be able to concentrate on her own farm.
We wish her well for the future.