

Dairy Pipeline

By
Glenn A. Shirk
Extension
Dairy
Agent

On Sound Footing

Good feet and legs are the foundation of the cows that make up your dairy herd — your dairy business. If their feet and legs are weak, or throbbing with pain, they won't eat well; production and conception will drop, and it may become necessary to cull these cows from the herd prematurely. That's costly!

Foot problems can arise from: poor genetics, improper feeding, or from infections and injuries that result from an undesirable environment, or from inadequate management. Some leg problems develop because of foot problems, which force cows to shift their weight and walk improperly. Some of these problems, if left unattended, can affect the cow's joints, or her entire body.

There are several things you can do to prevent or correct these problems, or to give cows some relief from them. Hoof trimming is one.

Hoof Trimming Meeting
Periodic trimming — perhaps

twice a year — should be a regular practice on most dairy farms. It helps dairymen spot problems early so they can perform necessary action before problems become too severe; it can add years to cow's life. In addition to these routine trimmings, additional trimming may be necessary for some problem cows.

Two barn meetings have been scheduled for Thursday, June 20 to demonstrate and discuss hoof trimming. There will be a slight charge, and reservations will be accepted on a first-come basis (call 717-394-6851).

Times and places are: 1:00 p.m. at Ken and Jere Skiles', Narvon; 7:30 p.m. at Dale Herr's Kirkwood.

James Shaw, Oley, will demonstrate "Preventive and Corrective Trimming." "An Explanation of Foot Problems" will be presented by Dr. Richard Bartholomew, New Bolton Center, Kennett Square.

Foot Baths
The use of foot baths can accomplish several things. It can

help prevent and control the spread of foot infections. Depending on the materials used, it can either help to harden or soften cows' hoofs.

Organisms causing hoof infections generally thrive in warm, moist, filthy conditions. Thus, it is advantageous to fill in mud holes, fence off wet areas, and to keep pens and alleys as clean and dry as possible. This will also help to reduce coliform mastitis.

In addition to harboring infectious organisms, these wet conditions can also lead to soft feet. It is also believed (I'm not sure it's been proven, though) that continual exposure of hoofs to urine and manure may help deteriorate hoof tissue. Feed exposed to such conditions are more prone to injury, thus opening up the way to infections.

To help harden cows' hoofs and to help fight infections, walk cows through a foot bath twice daily. Use a 2.5% copper sulfate solution. To achieve this, mix about 1 lb. of copper sulfate in 4 gallons of water. A 6% formalin solution (8 ounces per gallon of water) can also be used.

If you use the bath only once or twice a week, the solution strength can be increased about two fold. However, if the solution is too strong and you use the stronger concentration too frequently, the hairs at the hoof line may tend to stand on end, and cows may start to limp.

If you prefer a dry preparation, mix 1 part of copper sulfate to 9 parts of hydrated lime. To prevent the mix from becoming "muddy" and sticky, cows' hoofs should be dry before walking through the mix.

Foot baths should be placed in return alleys or at exits from the barn. Actual design will be dictated by existing facilities. It should be long enough and wide

enough to prevent cows from leaping over it or walking around it. The solution should be 4-6 inches deep. Therefore, the "box" needs to be 8-10 inches deep.

Also consider how you are going to change the mix or clean out the box. You might consider such things as portable baths (some portable fiberglass baths are now available on the market), removable boards that slip in and out of grooves, or sloped ends which permit dirt to be squirted out with water under pressure. Also remember that you do not want the bath to become a dirt-collecting hole when it is not in use.

To remain effective, the bath solution must be kept clean and it must not become diluted; protect it from precipitation and form other sources of water.

If there is a problem of cows dragging in dirt from a muddy lot, consider the following alternatives: 1) Have cows enter through one door and exit through another, where the bath is located; 2) Use a portable bath. Pull it aside as cows enter, and put it back in place before they exit; 3) Create a water bath for washing cows' feet prior to entering the foot bath.

Dry and Hard Feet

Don't expect foot baths to accomplish everything. In addition to using a footbath, trim cows' feet and treat foot problems as necessary, pick up debris around cow lots, cover up or remove sharp stones, and create a healthy environment for cows' hoofs. In other words, provide cows an opportunity to get away from wet areas for 10-14 hours per day so their feet can dry out occasionally.

This can be accomplished in several ways: 1) Give cows access to clean, dry pastures; 2) Create a wide, elevated pad for cows to stand on as they feed at the bunk —

similar to the Virginia barn concept; 3) Provide cows with clean, dry, comfortable stalls. Good ventilation and the use of fans can help entice cows into the stalls. This will also give cows some reprieve from the stress of being on concrete.

So farm, we've been concentrating on soft feet. What about hard, cracked feet? This can occur when cows are confined to clean dry stalls.

Turn these cows out onto dew-laden pastures. However, be careful with dew-laden legumes as they can cause cows to bloat. Let cows walk through moist clay, perhaps in a foot bath. To prevent slippage on the clay, place small slats in the bottom of the foot bath. Walking cows through clean water may also help, but be sure to keep the water clean.

In certain cases, you may want to apply a hoof ointment to the coronary band at the top of the hoof.

Feeding and Management

Many foot problems are directly related to feeding and management practices.

Foremost among these would be the problem of laminitis or founder. It's a problem that affected cows will have for life. It can be caused by: inadequate fiber, too much grain, too much protein — especially on a high grain ration, sudden changes in the ration — especially to rations with high amounts of easily fermentable carbohydrates such as corn, fevers, and infections such as mastitis. So, proper feeding technique and balanced rations are essential.

There are many kinds of foot problems — too many to discuss here. Be sure to discuss your herd's foot problems with your veterinarian.

FRANK A. FILLIPPO, INC.

— WANTED —

DISABLED & CRIPPLED COWS, BULLS & STEERS

Competitive Prices Paid

Slaughtered under government inspection

Call:
Frank Fillippo -
Residence - 215-666-0725
Elam Ginder - 717-367-3824
C.L. King - 717-786-7229

FARM BUILDINGS NEED PAINTED?

Let Seal Crete BRIGHTEN Up Your Life

"The Farm Painting Specialist" Since 1961



We Are The Fussy One's

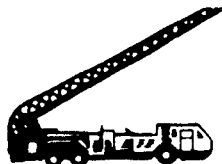
OUR SPECIALITIES ARE:
AGRICULTURE - COMMERCIAL - INDUSTRIAL - CHURCHES

- Barn Painting
- Milk House
- Roof Coating
- Water Proofing Silos
- Stucco Farmhouses

Paint It Now, Before The Snow Flies!

The Job Must Be Done To Your — Satisfaction —

For FREE Estimate CALL



Seal Crete Inc.

PAINTING & WATERPROOFING
RD 2, Box 417, Ephrata, PA 17522 • 717-859-1127