

Summer's legacy – key points for tackling lameness

Vet **Richard Knight** says that the fine summer seems to have made everyone feel a lot better, but has left a legacy of increased lameness in sheep. An informed diagnosis is important in order to be able to treat this effectively



Richard Knight

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At last! We've had a great summer for sheep! Shepherds, the sheep and everyone who makes a living from the industry are breathing a great sigh of relief as there has been a chance for a recovery of morale and condition from the last two summers.

One effect of the dry,

warm weather generally has been that lameness appears to be more prevalent. As with all ailments, it is best to come to an informed conclusion as to the diagnosis, before treatment and control can be considered.

Many times the farmer will come to this conclusion himself, but it does no harm to ask questions before dispensing medicines or treatments such as foot bathing solutions. The first question



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should be: "What did you find when you looked at the feet?" Further questioning can be about the interdigital skin, coronary band lesions, white line disease, or traumatic injury. This includes injury from previous, overzealous, trimming which will lead to a granuloma, or 'cherry', protruding from the damaged area.

Don't be afraid to encourage them to consult their vet to come to a definitive diagnosis and for treatment. Removing things like granulomas requires appropriate local anaesthesia to be done properly, with sometimes even the affected digit requiring removal.

To be able to differentiate contagious ovine digital dermatitis (CODD) from scald, and even scald from foot rot, is vitally important, especially when things like foot rot vaccine are being used. We've

all had cases where vaccination has been dismissed as ineffective, but no diagnosis had ever been reached. You then go on to find that CODD is the underlying cause, so vaccination would never be expected to work alone!

"It is best to come to an informed conclusion"

WATCH THE VIDEO

If you have 10 minutes free during a tea-break, I would advise everyone, farmers most importantly, to watch a YouTube video by Professor Laura Green. If you search under 'sheep lameness', it will come up first on the list. Economics of treatment, along

with diagnosis and approaches to treatment are expertly and succinctly covered. Intervention levels are covered well, illustrating how important it is to treat cases as they arise. Viewers are encouraged to understand just how easily we can damage the ovine foot with shears and hoof knives (which are the last things that should be reached for).

The picture where Laura shows light shining through the sole of a boiled-out hoof specimen really demonstrates their fragility. Get the kettle on now!

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