

## **Animal WOFs Newsletter – Jan/Feb 2012 –**



Welcome to another *Animal WOFs for Lifestyle Blocks* newsletter.

Each issue we are covering important animal health issues relevant for that time of year. Please feel free to give us feedback or ideas for the next issue, with any topics you would like to see covered.

### **In this issue:**

**Animal Health Diary – things to watch out for at this time of year**

**Footrot – an update on causes, treatment and prevention**

**“Weed of the month”... an introduction to poisonous plants**

**Visit the Vets at the AP&I show in the Animal nursery**



## Animal Health Diary Jan/Feb

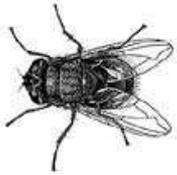


### Important aspects of summer animal husbandry:

**Facial Eczema** – a reminder to keep an eye on sporecounts and start treatment with zinc boluses, zinc in the trough or fungicide treatments on pasture when sporecounts are rising.

We are happy to come out and bolus sheep and cattle for you and are offering “bolus runs” for our WOFers in the same area that we can visit on the same day to reduce mileage costs to you. At the same time we can vaccinate and drench your livestock for you, so animals will only need to be yarded once.

Please email Stef on [animalwof@lhvc.co.nz](mailto:animalwof@lhvc.co.nz) or call 06 368 2891 to sign up for our “zinc bolus runs”.



**Flystrike** – check your barnyard pets for flystrike regularly and consider dagging and shearing sheep with long wool. See the article in last months newsletter for more information.

**Reproduction** – remove bulls now from spring mating herds so cows won't calve too late next year. Consider pregnancy testing cows to see if they are in calf or not – we can scan cows from 35 days of pregnancy onwards.

Wean lambs and late born calves now but keep rams away from ewes to avoid lambs being born in winter (sheep are pregnant for 5 months only).

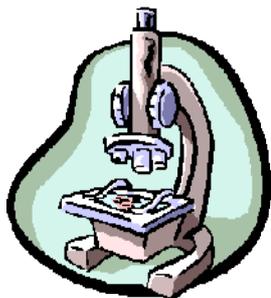
**Feed** – have hay and other supplements available in case of a drought.

Don't feed any garden waste or clippings as some garden plants like rhododendron, oleander and lillies are toxic to animals. See our new article “weed of the month”, introducing different poisonous plants in each newsletter or call us for more information.

Preferentially feed young stock on good quality pasture as they need more nutrients and energy for growth compared to adult animals.

**Heat** – with the hot summer weather coming up, remember to provide shade for your animals as well as plenty of fresh water.

Pigs need a wallow or bath to keep them cool in summer as they can't sweat like humans do. They need to cool their bodies with water or mud to avoid overheating and the mud baths also help prevent skin problems.



**Faecal egg counts** – this is the time of year for young stock to pick up worms from pasture, so monitor for weight loss, diarrhoea/scouring and check faecal egg counts for worm burden. A new product called Ipulse for cattle involves a once off bolus (capsule) placed in the rumen that will prevent worm infestation for 110 to 160 days in calves.

Keep in mind that most drenches have withholding times for meat and milk, so avoid use in milking animals or animals due for slaughter.

For questions, queries or concerns on the above mentioned summer husbandry facts, please call us at the clinic on 368 2891 or contact [animalwof@lhvc.co.nz](mailto:animalwof@lhvc.co.nz) for non urgent enquiries.

# Footrot...

## – an update on causes, treatment and prevention –

Footrot is an important and common cause of lameness in sheep, goats and cattle. It can affect several animals in a flock and whole herd preventative measures may need to be taken.

Footrot, or in its milder version called interdigital dermatitis, is caused by continuous wetting of the interdigital area, the soft part between the claws of the hoof, and following invasion of the bacteria *Fusobacterium necrophorum* and *Dichelobacter nodosus*. These bacteria are widespread in the environment but cannot penetrate healthy intact skin.



The following factors predispose to bacterial invasion of the foot:

- prolonged grazing of wet, muddy pastures or staying in wet dirty yards
- overcrowding
- introduction of new stock with carrier animals (carrier animals may not show clinical signs of footrot and can spread footrot for 2-3 years)
- poor foot care, e.g. irregular foot trimming
- poor foot confirmation, e.g. long toes, uneven weightbearing, overgrown heels

*Vet trimming a goat's overgrown foot.*

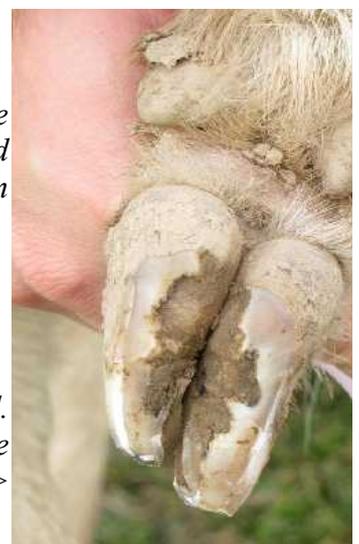
### Clinical signs:

Depending on the type of bacterium, some animals show mild lameness with inflammation and swelling between the claws, other animals can develop severe disease with a characteristic foul smelling, raw and ulcerated lesions between the claws as well as separation of the hoof wall and sole with pus built up underneath.

Goats and sheep grazing down on their front knees is a sign of lameness and may be due to footrot.



*← An overgrown goat's hoof. Note the overgrown edges and heel with mud impacted under the wall and inbetween the claws.*



*Same foot after it has been trimmed. Note the even length of hoof wall all the way around. =>*



In cattle we often notice swelling just above the hoof and lameness in one or more feet as a first sign of footrot. The swelling is often in the middle of the foot at the front and back and the interdigital area can appear quite red or raw.



*<= Severe raw and ulcerated footrot lesion in a cattlebeast.*

Secondary complications like fly strike in the affected area or tetanus in unvaccinated animals may arise.

### **Diagnosis:**

Usually made on the basis of clinical signs, herd history and the response to treatment as laboratory tests like cultures are expensive and take several weeks to identify the bacteria.

### **Treatment:**

At the beginning of every footrot outbreak every foot of every goat or sheep should be examined and treated as needed. This is a bit more difficult in cattle but lame animals and animals with swollen feet should be examined by a vet to diagnose footrot as underrun soles, abscesses in the foot and other injuries can cause lameness also.

*A bull's foot is lifted up to be examined. =>*



Mild cases can be treated with regular footbathing (see Prevention for more information) or application of antibacterial sprays like Aerotet Forte ("Purple Spray"), Koppertox or similar sprays. More severe cases require trimming back of the hoof and injectable antibiotics.

Remove affected animals from wet paddocks so the feet can dry out and continue checking feet regularly.

It is important to disinfect the foot shears after trimming infected feet as infection can otherwise spread to the next healthy foot you trim.

## Prevention:

The following preventative measures should be taken:

- Regularly examine sheep and goats feet and trim hooves as needed to prevent overgrowing of horn. A vet can show you how to do this for the first time as over-zealous trimming can predispose to footrot. Foot shears can be purchased from the clinic.
- Where a herd problem with footrot exists, animals can be run through a footbath on a weekly basis to reduce occurrence of footrot. Footbaths should be at least 4cm deep and animals should stand in it for at least 2 minutes, longer if footrot is present.

=> Commonly used solutions include Copper sulphate (10% solution = 1kg copper sulphate in 10L water) and Zinc sulphate (10% solution = 1kg zinc sulphate in 10L water). Zinc sulphate is the preferred solution but don't allow animals to drink out of the footbath and ensure all feet are placed in the tub for at least 2 minutes.

- Provide access to dry areas like concrete yards, large slabs of concrete in the paddock or stone mounds so animals (goats in particular) can get out of the wet. This will allow feet to dry out.
- Lime muddy gate ways and areas around troughs regularly to lower pH and reduce the ability of bacteria to survive here.
- A footrot vaccine is available for sheep, however as the causative bacteria occur in several different types, vaccination may not protect against all of them. This particular vaccine can also cause severe local reactions in the skin. Pregnant animals should not be vaccinated within four weeks prior to birthing. The vaccine requires a booster 4-8 weeks later, then revaccination every 4-6 months.
- As there are family and breed differences in the incidence of footrot, breeding animals with good foot conformation and low occurrence of footrot should be chosen preferentially to increase resistance for footrot in the flock.



## “Weed of the month”...

### This month featuring: - **Macrocarpa** -

#### **Description:**

Macrocarpa, or *Cupressus macrocarpa* in its scientific name, is an evergreen tree growing up to 25m tall with reddish dark brown bark. The leaves are scale-like and don't protrude far from the branches. The characteristic looking cones are attached to the branches.

#### **Distribution:**

The plant is common and widespread in New Zealand and is often grown as a hedge and timber tree.

#### **Species affected:**

Cattle intoxications are mainly reported but other livestock like sheep and goats may be affected also.



#### **Clinical signs:**

Abortions in the last trimester of pregnancy are the most common problems seen with macrocarpa intoxication. In nearly all cases the abortion is followed by retained foetal membranes. With ingestion of large amounts livestock can display lethargy and severe depression, sunken eyes from dehydration and weight loss and in some cases death.

#### **Diagnosis:**

This is based on a history of access or evidence of grazing on macrocarpa trees, often macrocarpa abortions can occur after storms have blown branches off trees into paddocks. In an abortion investigation the exclusion of any other causes like bacteria and viruses with a possible exposure to macrocarpa is diagnostic.

#### **Treatment:**

This is mainly symptomatic like providing fluid therapy to dehydrated animals, treating retained foetal membranes in aborted cattle and generally good nursing care.

## AP&I show in Levin 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> January at the Levin Showgrounds

Every year the staff at the Levin and Horowhenua Vet Centre help set up and run the Animal Nursery at the Horowhenua AP&I Show in conjunction with the local Young Farmers Club.

This year, just like last year, our theme is “Country Bumpkins” and our staff have fabulous costumes with our stand set up in a very neat “little country cottage” look.

This picture was taken at last years show. =>

We have a collection of small and not so small animals for everyone to enjoy. There are kittens and puppies to cuddle, static displays, chooks, sheep, a miniature horse and even eels that occasionally escape from their pool to the squeals of watching children.

Come in and have a look at the Animal Nursery, we're beside the grandstand under the trees. Meet some of our staff and say hello. There's a quiz for the children and useful information and sale items for adults.



There will also be showing of livestock, equestrian competitions, home industries, wood-chopping and shearing together with craft stalls, trade exhibits, sideshows and fantastic affordable family entertainment.

Looking forward to see you at the AP&I show, the clinic or at your place,

Step of the team  
@ LHVC.

Levin & Horowhenua Vets  
518 Queen Street, Levin  
Ph: 06 368 2891  
Fax: 06 368 4003  
Email: [animalwof@lhvc.co.nz](mailto:animalwof@lhvc.co.nz)