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VETERINARY SERVICE

Dairy Lameness | Identifying Claw Lesions

Lameness in dairy cattle can be a very expensive problem. In general, lame cows milk less, breed back poorly and are at a higher risk of being culled than their non-lame counterparts. Unfortunately, the root of lameness doesn't lie in one single cause. Understanding the underlying cause of lameness can drastically alter the way that it is treated and managed.

In general lameness can be broken down into two primary categories: non-infectious and infectious. Examples of non-infectious lameness include broken bones, dislocated joints, white line disease, toe/sole ulcers, corkscrew toes, etc. Obviously, some of these causes are more treatable than others. When treatable, non-infectious lameness can generally be addressed by corrective trimming. If you utilize a routinely scheduled hoof trimmer, they are already doing this. As is true for most things, prevention will go much further than treatment. To prevent non-infectious causes of lameness it is important to maintain an open environment with sound flooring. An open environment implies that cows are not overcrowded or forced to maneuver through tight spaces forcing un-natural weight distribution. Grooved flooring has aided the dairy industry tremendously in preventing slips and falls, however when this flooring begins to chip away or loose rocks become commonplace, it results in damage to the hoof wall and underlying structures, which is not only painful, but causes a significant amount of damage to the sole of the hoof.

Infectious causes of lameness include digital dermatitis, foot rot, heel erosion, and interdigital dermatitis. While corrective trimming may be part of the treatment of infectious lameness, additional therapy will usually be required. Digital dermatitis AKA hairy heel warts, as discussed in our last newsletter, is an example of infectious lameness that is best managed with a footbath as opposed to corrective trimming.

For more information on different types of hoof lesions check out the link below.

https://www.zinpro.com/lameness/dairy/lesion-identification