

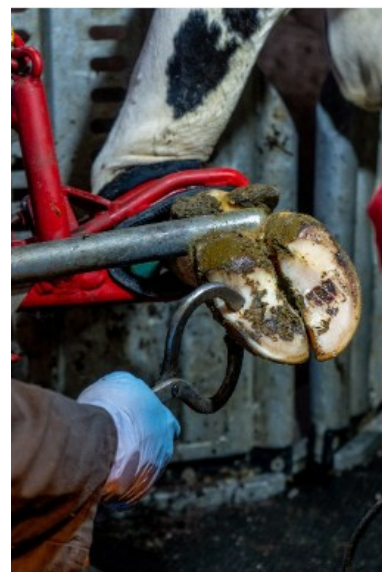
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Health and Productivity Gains from Early Pain Management

Lameness affects around a third of the national dairy herd, causing considerable economic losses through its impact on fertility and milk yield, as well as early culling and treatment costs. Yet, despite its impact, little overall progress has been made in reducing its prevalence over the past 20 years! Although non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are being used more widely in lameness treatment, they are still underused for this painful condition.

As such, VetPartners funded Project FEET to investigate the perception of pain and use of NSAIDs for conditions caused or associated with lameness in dairy cows, by different members of a farm's mobility team. From past research and clinical experience, we already know there is an increase in successful lameness recovery when mild cases of lameness are detected early and treated straight away with NSAIDs. Even more effective is when the NSAID is given in combination with a foot block and corrective trimming, which more than halves the number of cows that fail to recover. However, this only works in mild or early cases, so early detection and treatment is key. Led by VetPartners vets, the Project FEET study researched the whole farm mobility team: farmers, farm vets, vet techs (VT) and foot trimmers (FT). A total of 210 participants were surveyed, including 80 farmers, 80 vets, 34 FTs and 15 VTs. The findings showed that members of the mobility team had different perceptions around pain and lameness and that increasing collaboration and harnessing skills and knowledge within the team could improve early detection and treatment of lameness, with consequent benefits to cow welfare and production. Farmer perception of lameness was also clearly different to other stakeholders in the mobility team. Farmers consistently scored pain lower than vets and foot trimmers and reported under 10% of their herd were lame at the time of the survey, compared to the national average of 30%. The survey showed that farmer opinion of using NSAIDs was positive overall and that a key reason for using them was that the chance of recovery was increased. Focussing efforts on early treatment gives you better value for the cost of the NSAID by reducing the likelihood of a case of lameness becoming chronic. The chronic cases still benefit from NSAIDs as pain relief, but surgical treatment or culling are often necessary. There is also evidence that by giving NSAIDs to cows at calving, you can reduce lameness in the subsequent lactation, improving welfare and cutting the cost of treatment. A lot of lameness is caused by damage that occurs around calving. Using NSAIDs will reduce inflammation that occurs in the foot following hormonal changes and increased standing times around calving. This can prevent lameness due to lesions such as sole bruising and ulcers from occurring later in lactation.

Training is also a contributing factor. Lameness outcomes can be significantly improved by training all members of your team in mobility scoring so that they are able to identify lame cows effectively. This can lead to more consistent and effective lameness management strategies; if you see your herd every day, you can become habituated to the overall level of lameness present. Quick identification and preventative care will make a big difference to overall productivity and welfare.



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New Research Targets Genetic Resistance to Maedi Visna (MV)

You may already be aware but last year a groundbreaking £1.1 million research initiative last announced to combat Maedi Visna (MV), a chronic viral disease affecting sheep. This project, a collaboration between the University of Nottingham and the Moredun Research Institute, aims to develop genetic resistance to MV, potentially transforming sheep farming and enhancing animal welfare worldwide.

MV is a significant concern for sheep farmers, as it is difficult to detect and control due to a long latent period between infection and testing positive. In the UK, the number of affected flocks has increased sharply in the last 30 years, from 1.4% in 1995 to 9.4% in 2019. At least 1.6 million animals out of the UK's 32 million strong sheep flock are affected.

Time to get technical!

Central to this research is the TMEM154 gene, which encodes a protein associated with genetic resistance to MV. Sheep with two copies of the resistant allele (K/K genotype) show lower viral loads and reduced disease transmission. Primary data indicates varying frequencies of this resistant allele among UK breeds, with Dorset Horns at 90%, Scottish Blackface at 64%, and Texels at 15%.



The project includes genotyping tests to identify the presence of the resistant allele in different breeds. This testing is cost-effective, at less than £30 per animal, and is being offered free for certain breeds lacking existing data. Breed societies and farmers are encouraged to participate as the findings will inform breeding strategies aimed at increasing MV resistance across the national flock.

By incorporating genetic resistance into breeding programs, this research seeks to provide a sustainable solution to MV, improving flock health and productivity. If you're interested in participating or learning more about the project, you can contact the University of Nottingham or the Moredun Research Institute for further information.

Summer Mastitis

The main ways to **prevent** Summer Mastitis are:

1. Fly repellents like pour-on and spot-on (**not** pour on wormers as these do not repel flies) and fly tags for the ears. Other products like Stockholm Tar on the udder twice weekly work well at the peak fly time when the flies are "savage".
2. We need to ensure they have adequate dry cow therapy in the form of antibiotic Dry cow tubes and teat sealants, which will last all summer and not run out half way through. Please ask in Parklands for their combination deal on sealer and antibiotic dry cow tubes!
3. After last year Parklands have sourced a **barrier teat dip** which forms a layer outside the teat to seal it off from flies.
4. Management practices like keeping the cows on high, exposed "airy" fields can have a huge effect on reducing fly numbers.
5. Moving the cows every 2 to 3 weeks to clean pasture has been shown to reduce mastitis after calving!

Speak to a Parklands vet for more info.