

Prime Cuts: Feedlot Foot Problems

Famo Flier

Spring 2017

Hoof problems can occur at any time of year in the feedlot, though we typically associate them with the warm, muddy conditions of spring and early summer. There are various conditions that cause hoof problems and lameness in feedlot cattle, not all of which are responsive to antibiotic treatment.

Causes of Lameness:

Foot Rot

- Caused by *Fusobacterium necrophorum*, which is common in mud and manure.
- Foot rot can occur year-round. Bacteria rely on skin breakdown to penetrate the foot to attack deeper tissues. In the winter, cuts and abrasions that occur from frozen manure allow bacteria access to sensitive tissues, in spring and summer, wet and muddy conditions lead to the breakdown of the outer layer of skin.
- Swelling will be uniform around the hoof, with significant lameness, and a strong-smelling wound between toes.
- Prevent hoof rot by scraping pens often and well to keep hooves dry and prevent frozen manure from building up in winter. Vaccinating for *F. necrophorum* may decrease the incidence and severity of foot rot as well.
- Treatable with antibiotics.

Toe Abscesses

- Caused by physical damage to hoof tip.
- Lameness presents about a week after cattle are moved to feedlot. Typically seen in flighty groups of calves running on concrete causing abrasions to the hoof.
- Prevent by keeping calves calm when moving them to new pens to prevent hoof damage.
- Toe abscesses do not respond well to antibiotic treatment; however, draining the abscesses by puncturing them with a clean hoof knife often helps to release the pressure and resolve the problem.

Laminitis (Founder)

- Typically associated with high starch diets or sudden changes to the feeding program.
- Laminitis is a condition where the tissues of the hoof wall and underlying bone separate. Cattle suffering from chronic laminitis may have hooves that become overgrown further inhibiting proper locomotion.
- Prevent by feeding a diet with sufficient forage to maintain rumen health and prevent acidosis. Avoid abrupt changes in dry matter intake and energy levels. Do not let cattle get hungry.
- Not treatable with antibiotics. Move lame animals to an area with softer bedding to manage the pain and reassess the diet and feeding strategy.

Digital Dermatitis (Hairy Heel Warts)

- Caused by *Treponema spp.*
- Typically associated with dairy herds but also seen in feedlots. Infection forms raw, circular lesions found between the toes and on the heel. Sores are very painful, debilitating, and highly transmittable.
- Use biosecurity strategies to prevent new cases from entering facility. Heel warts are hard to eradicate once the problem is established.
- Use foot baths to control breakouts. No injectable antibiotics have been found effective. Topical treatments are effective.

Joint Infections

- Caused by *Mycoplasma bovis*.
- Usually occurs several weeks after a respiratory disease outbreak and is easily transmitted from calf to calf. Joint swelling comes from inflammation of the joint capsule and tissues surrounding the joint. The cartilage-covered bone surfaces, which heal poorly, are minimally affected. This is key as even calves with severely swollen joints can often recover.
- Because calves often have *M. bovis* in their upper respiratory tract, the best method of prevention is to reduce stressors to keep calves healthy. A good vaccination and nutrition program will also help to support the immune system to avoid outbreaks.
- Unresponsive to most antibiotic treatment.

Prevention is critical with hoof health issues. Keeping the environment clean and cattle healthy will help to reduce these issues. If hoof problems are a concern at your facility ask your Famo Feeds representative about our Hoof Health blend which contains a specific mix of organic minerals to enhance hoof and skin integrity. This blend can be incorporated into your feedlot ration to support immune function and hoof health. As always, if your cattle are experiencing a severe outbreak of lameness issues call your veterinarian for assistance to determine the type of hoof disease that is occurring. Consult your nutritionist and veterinarian to determine the best course of action.