

Healthy feet = happy animals (and happy owners, too!)

Hoof care and health

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Hoof health

Hoof care is an important aspect of small ruminant management.

Hoof health can affect an animal's performance, disease resistance, and welfare.

Hooves should be checked regularly for disease and excess or abnormal growth.

Animals with diseased hooves or excessive or abnormal hoof growth should be culled.



Hoof trimming

The frequency (and/or need) for hoof trimming varies and is affected by many different animal and environmental factors.

Overzealous hoof trimming is discouraged.

Best time to trim hooves is when they are soft.

Do not trim feet during late gestation.

Do not trim hooves too close to show or exhibition.



Equipment for hoof trimming

1. Hoof shears (trimmers)
2. Hoof knife
3. Brush
4. Tight fitting gloves



Restraint for hoof trimming

Small ruminants need to be properly restrained for hoof trimming.

For small numbers of sheep, it is customary to tip them on their rump (in shearing position).

You can also use a “deck chair” to restrain sheep for hoof trimming.

For small numbers of goats, it customary to lift their feet or trim their feet while they are tied to a gate or standing on a milking or fitting stand.

For larger numbers of animals a tilt table or squeeze shoot is highly recommended.



Trimming hooves properly

Clean and inspect hoof.

Remove debris.

Trim toe (tip) and outside hoof.

Inside wall of hoof and sole and heel regions may also be trimmed.

Use hoof knife to remove crevices and pockets

Try not to draw blood

After trimming, the bottom of the hoof and coronary band should be parallel.

Spray hoof with zinc sulfate solution or Kopertox®

Disinfect hoof trimmers before trimming hooves of next animal.



Diseases Affecting the Hooves

COMMON (BACTERIAL)

Foot rot

Foot scald

Hoof abscesses

LESS COMMON (MOSTLY VIRAL)

Laminitis (founder)

Blue tongue

Sore mouth

Hoof and mouth disease



Diseases affecting the hooves

Foot scald

Usually more serious in goats than sheep.

Caused by a bacteria that is present wherever sheep, goats, and cattle are: *Fusobacterium necrophorum*.

Causes a redness or inflammation between toes (claws). Usually no involvement of hoof.

Precursor to foot rot and hoof abscesses.

Outbreaks occur during periods of wet weather.

Not considered contagious.

Foot rot

Usually more serious in sheep than goats.

Cause by interaction of two anaerobic bacteria: *F. necrophorum* and *Dichelobacter nodosus*.

Involves separation of horny portions of hoof.

Usually affects both claws and more than one hoof.

Characteristic foul odor

Highly contagious - difficult to eradicate!

Foot abscess

Occurs when *Actinomyces* spp. bacteria invade tissue already weakened by interdigital infection

Using only affects one hoof or digit.

Affects mostly mature or heavy animals.

Not contagious.

Foot scald



Foot rot



Foot abscess



Dealing with foot rot and foot scald

ERADICATE (OR CONTROL)

Hoof scoring and trimming

Topical treatments, e.g. Koppertox, zinc sulfate

Repeated (e.g. weekly) foot bathing (w/zinc sulfate)

Separate infected animals from clean animals and put in clean area after treatment.

Soak pads

Dry chemicals

Antibiotic sprays

Antibiotic injections (LA-200[®], Draxxin[®])

Cull animals that do not respond to treatment or those who have re-occurring infections.

PREVENTION



Practice good biosecurity

- Don't buy it: closed flock/herd, quarantine
- Preventative foot soaking
- Disinfect shared equipment before use



Thank you for your attention. Questions? Comments?