



STEP-BY-STEP

A Farmer's Guide to Tackling Mobility Issues in their Herd



1 in 3 cows in the U.K. may have an issue with mobility at any one time¹

Changes in mobility can be tricky to spot, especially in the early stages of any condition. Sometimes we can find ourselves 'firefighting' and treating more severe cases, without getting to the 'nub' of the problem within the herd. Improving mobility in a herd can lead to enhanced welfare and economic benefits.

Production benefits resulting from improved herd mobility include:

- increased milk production²
- enhanced fertility²
- reduced cull rates²



A key challenge faced by farmers wanting to tackle mobility issues at a herd level is where to start!

This step-by-step guide has been written alongside a range of cattle foot health experts to support farmers as they develop a plan to improve mobility in their herd. Managing herd mobility is a team effort and there are a range of specialist organisations that can help you out at every step.

LINKS TO INFORMATION

Click on the name of the association to go through to their website

- Your **veterinary surgeon**: always a first point of contact for information
- The **Register of Mobility Scorers (RoMS)**: to source independent scorers or to train members of the team
- The **Cattle Hoof Care Standards Board (CHCSB)** or **The National Association of Cattle Foot Trimmers (NACFT)**: to find a qualified trimmer with whom you and your vet can work closely as a team and **Lantra** to train members of the team in appropriate foot trimming techniques
- The **AHDB Healthy Feet Programme**: supporting farmers as they work with their vet to develop structured foot health plans and management protocols
- A local **mobility mentor**: to support you and your team through the process. Note: this may also be your vet, foot trimmer or mobility scorer

More information on conditions of the bovine foot can be found at:
www.wavegoodbyetopain.co.uk and **www.nadis.org.uk**

YOUR **STEP-BY-STEP** GUIDE SUMMARY

Developing a mobility improvement management plan can be a little confusing. This guide has been designed to help you, alongside a vet and foot trimmer, to plan and implement an effective mobility improvement programme across your whole herd.

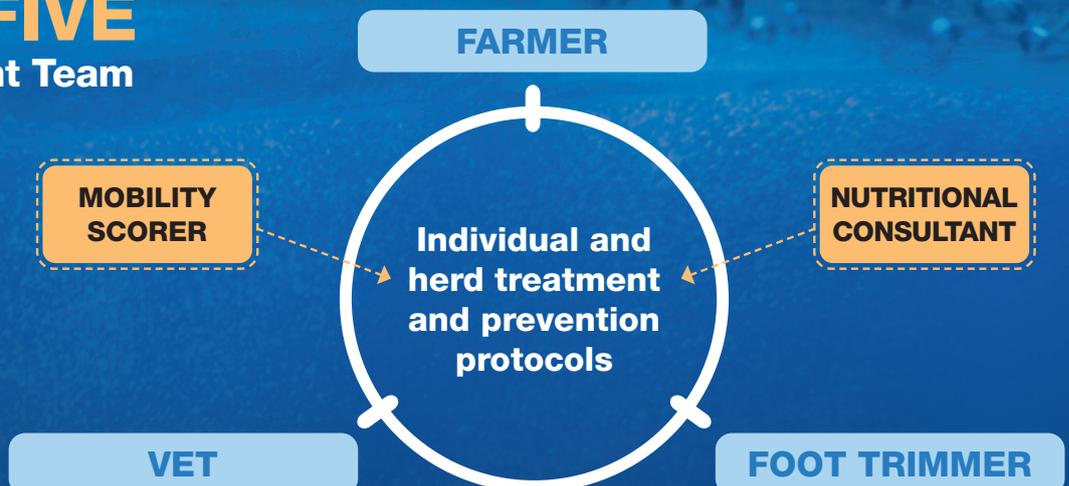
Step 1: Review Whole Herd Mobility Status

- Use an **independent, RoMS accredited** mobility scorer
- **Reduces bias** from the farm team who see cattle every day
- Picks up **early lameness cases**, where treatment at this time leads to better outcomes
- Enables the development of **accurate and detailed records**, which can be monitored and updated over time and used to create a management action list of new, chronic and maintenance cases

Step 2: Seek Specialist Advice

- Immediate **veterinary attention** is required for **all severe or painful lesions** and to develop a treatment plan
- Contact a **mobility mentor** (if this is not the attending vet) i.e. someone who has been trained to deliver the AHDB Healthy Feet Programme
- Bring together the **'FAB FIVE' foot treatment team**
 - It may be difficult to get all 5 members of the team together at once, although virtual meetings are useful
 - Arrange a discussion with your farm team, the vet and the foot trimmer and feed in information from the mobility scorer and nutritional consultant for good decision making

The **FAB FIVE** Foot Treatment Team



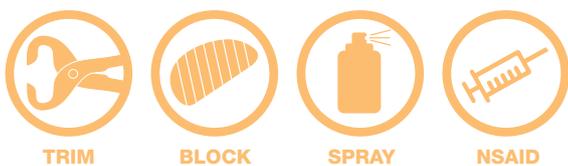
TREATING & PREVENTING

Implementing a robust and ongoing treatment plan will yield results in the short-term (e.g. improved cow comfort and reduced lameness) and in the longer-term (e.g. increased production and herd welfare).



Step 3: Initial Treatment Protocols

- Treatment of lame cows should take place **within 48 hours of identification** by the mobility scorer (or sooner, especially for animals with severely impaired mobility) and then at least fortnightly until healed



Treatment should include some or all of the following: **TRIM, BLOCK, NON-STEROIDAL ANTI-INFLAMMATORY (NSAID) PAIN RELIEF** and **TOPICAL ANTIMICROBIAL SPRAY** (as advised by your vet)

- All hoof trimming should be completed by a **trained and qualified trimmer** (either contracted or in-house)
- All lame cows should then be **rechecked after 3-5 weeks** (this may need to be sooner for severe lesions) to monitor healing – especially those that receive a block, and those with digital dermatitis (DD)
- If DD lesions are present, cows should be **re-checked daily** to monitor healing (this can be done in the parlour)

TIPS FOR THE SUCCESSFUL USE OF NSAIDs

- Seek veterinary advice before using NSAIDs to ensure the right product and administration route is selected
- The trimmer should record all cows with lesions to develop a list of those cows requiring pain relief
- If approved by a vet, the first dose of NSAID can be administered in the crush, at the time of trimming, to reduce further stress on the cow and for labour efficiency
- Ensure cows requiring further doses are clearly identified and recorded – leg bands or stock marker can be used to highlight animals requiring NSAID administration over the following days
- One member of the team should be responsible for ongoing NSAID administration
- NSAIDs containing the active ingredient ketoprofen, have a zero milk withhold and are licensed to treat lameness, making them suitable for use in dairy cattle



Step 4: Ongoing Treatment, Prevention and Monitoring

- Continue to use an **independent mobility scorer at least every 2 weeks** in the first instance and / or train a member of the farm team to use the ADHB scoring system
- Ongoing treatment should occur daily, with all new score 2 cows seen within 48 hours after mobility scoring
- Plan for regular visits from a trained and qualified foot trimmer who is regularly assessed as competent – ensure they have enough notice for the visit if specific days are needed
- Develop **daily foot bathing protocols** for milking cows (as approved by a vet)
- Set up **training plans with farm staff** to ensure they are able to conduct accurate and timely foot checks



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STEP-BY-STEP in more detail

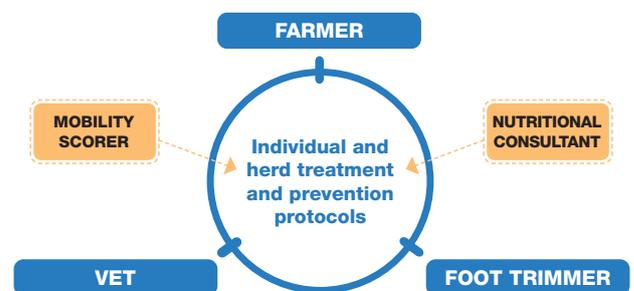
Step 1: Mobility Assessment

- An independent RoMS accredited mobility scorer should be employed, in the first instance, to accurately assess the current state of herd mobility, with no bias. In the longer-term, a member of the farm team can be trained to use the AHDB scoring system to frequently assess mobility
- It should be communicated to the scorer that they will be conducting a high sensitivity mobility score to identify all of the animals on the farm that would benefit from treatment
- The mobility scorer should leave you a complete list of lame cows (mobility score 2 and 3) before the end of their visit and deliver a complete mobility score within 48-hours of their visit
- This score can be used to identify where the lame cows are located on the farm i.e. “high risk groups”. This is particularly useful if the herd is split into several groups, or across different locations
- The data can be used to assess the prevalence of lameness across a farm
 - How many cows are lame at one time?
 - Is it more or less than expected?
 - How can this be used to set treatment targets and outcomes?



Step 2: Engage Vet and Mobility Mentor

- After the mobility score report is received, the local vet should be contacted (and mobility mentor if different) and a date set to develop a treatment plan:
 - All action taken to tackle lameness should be guided by the veterinarian attending the farm
 - Team meetings between the ‘Fab Five’ foot treatment team are vital to ensure plans are followed through proactively and collaboratively
 - Your vet (and mobility mentor) will develop an initial risk assessment around the farm and then an action plan as part of the **AHDB's Healthy Feet Programme**
 - Treatment protocols need to be clearly stated in the herd health plan to ensure consistency of approach and to make sure any externally contracted staff are protected legally



The **FAB FIVE**
Foot Treatment Team

STEP-BY-STEP in more detail

Step 3: Deliver Treatment

- A treatment protocol should be developed with a specialist vet, alongside the foot trimmer and mobility scorer:
 - o Severe lesions are likely to require immediate attention from the attending vet.
 - ▶ Note: collaboration between the vet and trimmer when treating these lesions can improve cure rates and optimise cow welfare (e.g. through the vet treating more complicated lesions when the trimmer is on farm)
 - o Tailored treatment for the rest of the herd should take place within 48 hours of identification
 - o Hoof testers are a vital piece of equipment for detecting lameness causing lesions when treating according to a sensitive mobility score
 - o Where appropriate, lame cows should receive a therapeutic trim, an orthopaedic block, topical antimicrobial spray to all DD lesions, and a one-to-three-day course of the NSAID, ketoprofen (as advised by a vet – see step 3 summary for more details)
 - o Re-checks are vital, especially if cows have had blocks applied:
 - ▶ Severe lesions (e.g. toe necrosis, wall ulcers) require a re-check 1 week, 3 weeks, and 5 weeks post-treatment
 - ▶ Mild to moderate lesions should receive a recheck 3-5 weeks post treatment, depending on the severity
 - ▶ During the re-check, expect some blocks to be removed, some re-applied and others modified if the lesion hasn't fully healed.
 - ▶ Some cows may be required to go onto a straw yard or a paddock close to the milking parlour



Accurately record all treatments given and ensure farm teams have access to protocols



STEP-BY-STEP in more detail

Step 4: Long-term Treatment and Monitoring

- o Mobility scoring should be conducted fortnightly by a RoMS trained mobility scorer
 - ▶ Will pick up early cases
 - ▶ Monitors progress of more chronic cases
 - ▶ Enables accurate recording and comparisons
- o Treatment of new, recurring and chronically lame cows should take place **fortnightly** following the attendance of the mobility scorer
- o Lame cows should take priority, unless they were treated at the last foot trimming visit and are not due a foot check
- o Faster cure rates are possible if farm staff are trained and competent in conducting foot checks – so assessment can be carried out weekly, rather than fortnightly

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL ROUTINE FOOT CHECKS

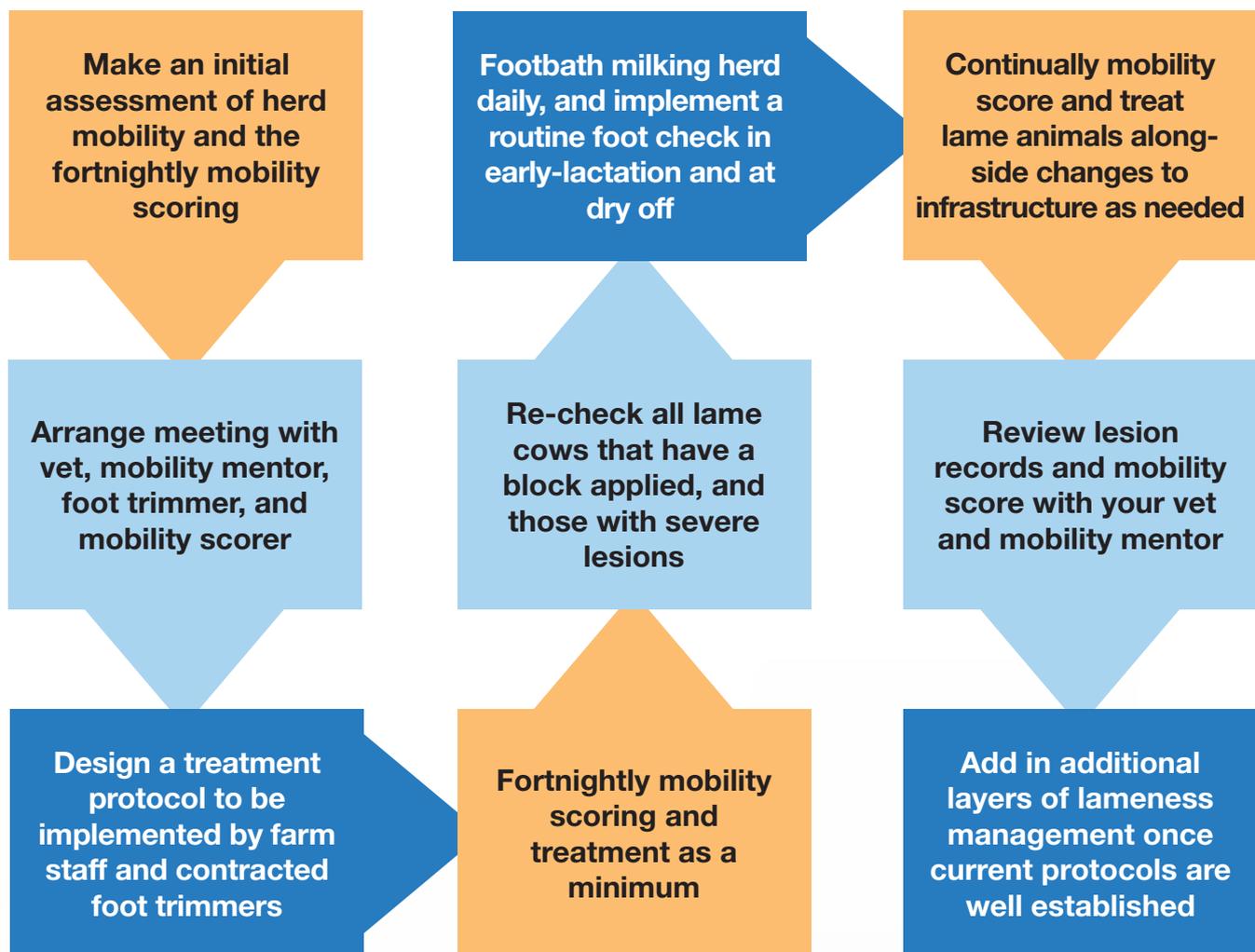
- o Avoid the use of “search cuts” and opt to use hoof testers instead – it is important to investigate the foot before trimming rather than trimming the foot to investigate (i.e. remove as little horn as possible to search for lameness causing lesions)
- o A whiteboard or “WhatsApp” group can be installed to communicate the identification of lame cows requiring treatment to everyone on farm who may be responsible for their management
- o Ensure that farm infrastructure is laid out to enable quick and easy restraint by one person for successful daily treatment
- o It is important that foot trimming equipment is kept on or around the foot trimming crush, with good quality, sharp knives always being available. Remember to disinfect hands and any part of the trimming kit that has come into contact with lesions in between treated animals to reduce the spread of digital dermatitis
- o Carry / store a good stock of different blocks, including: wedge blocks, standard blocks, soft blocks and extra large blocks as each can be deployed in different circumstances to optimise height difference and claw stability
- o Ensure that blocks and glue are kept warm during the winter months to improve adhesion and retention rates
- o Invest in a robust record keeping system so cows can be identified easily for monitoring or a re-check; electronic systems are available to link into dairy management software

- o Foot bathing should be carried out daily on all milking cows, with dry cows and infected heifer groups being foot bathed at least 3 days in a 7-day period
 - ▶ Consult veterinary advice as to the most suitable foot bath protocols
- o Routine foot checks should be carried out at early-lactation and dry off as a minimum
- o Conduct 6 and 12-month data reviews, if a positive change in mobility status is not occurring, consult your vet and mobility mentor to discuss possible ‘bottle necks’ and where protocols may not be working



Image supplied by Hoof Count

SUMMARY



References:

1. Randall, L.V., H.J. Thomas, J.G. Remnant, N.J. Bollard, and J.N. Huxley. 2019a. Lameness prevalence in a random sample of UK dairy herds. *Vet. Rec.* 184:350. doi:10.1136/vr.105047.
2. Huxley, J.N. 2013. Impact of lameness and claw lesions in cows on health and production. *Livest. Sci.* doi:10.1016/j.livsci.2013.06.012.
3. Leach, K.A., H.R. Whay, C.M. Maggs, Z.E. Barker, E.S. Paul, A.K. Bell, and D.C.J. Main. 2010. Working towards a reduction in cattle lameness: 1. Understanding barriers to lameness control on dairy farms. *Res. Vet. Sci.* doi:10.1016/j.rvsc.2010.02.014.

Ketofen® 10% solution for injection for horses, cattle and pigs contains 100 mg ketoprofen per ml. **Legal Category:** UK **POM-V**

Further information is available from the product SPC, data sheet, pack insert or from the prescriber.

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