

Lameness in and after floods

Lameness Priorities

Lameness is a priority issue in your herd if:

- **Lame cows are causing problems for you managing your herd.**
- **More than 7 per 100 cows are visibly lame or being treated for lameness.**
- **Your important laneways / cow traffic areas are in need of significant repair.**

Key points

- Managing lame cows is expensive and time consuming.
- Lame cows produce less, have a lower body weight and are more likely to not to get in calf, affecting the farm's ability to recover from the floods over the medium term.
- Recovery times are minimised by promptly identifying and treating lame cows.
- Prevention is better than cure. Careful stock handling, minimising time on concrete and repairing damaged track surfaces are key aspects of preventing new cases during wet conditions.

For your next step, see the checklist over the page.



Lameness Priorities

Start with this Checklist ...

What is lameness costing me?

■ Have you estimated the cost of lameness in your herd?

- Use \$400-500 per clinical case as a rough estimate.

Last week: _____ Last month: _____ This season (est): _____

For more information go to [The real cost of lameness spreadsheet](#).

■ How much time did you or your staff spend managing lame cows last week?

- Estimate the time in man hours spent on your farm last week. Include the time spent identifying, separating, examining, treating, milking etc. Is this having an impact on the management of other aspects of running the farm?

Last week: _____ total man hours

For more information go to [Managing in wet conditions – Lameness fact sheet](#).

■ How many cows do you expect to cull this season due to lameness – for both direct (for being lame) and indirect (poor body condition / empty) reasons?

- Base a discussion around the impact of lameness on the future recovery of the business. Livestock and reproductive losses can significantly slow recovery. Expected culls: _____ per 100 cows
(as a guide industry has suggested less than 5 in 100 is acceptable)

Identifying and treating lame cows

■ Do you use the 5-point locomotion score to identify (and classify) lame cows?

- Discuss the various degrees of lameness and when the farmer takes action.

For more information go to [Healthy hoof – lameness field guide](#)

■ Is the cow always restrained and the affected foot lifted, washed and examined before the first lameness treatment?

- Discuss the various causes and importance of getting an accurate diagnosis.

For more information go to [Lameness guideline – 5 How to lift a cow's foot at \[www.murraydairy.com.au\]\(http://www.murraydairy.com.au\)](#)

■ Are you confident that the cause is being properly diagnosed, the correct treatment is being providing and records are being kept for each lameness case?

- Discuss the various treatments, veterinary involvement, antibiotic issues, record keeping issues.

For more information go to [The 8 Point – Dairy Cow Hoof Examination, or consider attending a Lameness workshop or get individual instruction from a vet.](#)

■ Are more than 80% of lame cows recovering and moving back with the main herd within 5-7 days of treatment?

- Discuss the treatment outcomes, management of lame cows/sick herd etc.

For more information consider attending a [Lameness workshop or get individual instruction from a vet.](#)

Preventing lameness

■ Has action been taken to repair those areas in laneways and on concrete yards that could damage cows' feet?

- Discuss the condition of tracks on the farm and actions taken to protect cows' (soft) feet from wear.

For more information go to [The Building blocks for good laneways fact sheet](#).

■ Have stockhandling practices changed in response to the wet conditions?

- Discuss the need for increased patience when moving cows over rough areas and on concrete as their feet are softer and more prone to injury.

For more information go to [Managing in wet conditions – Lameness fact sheet](#).

■ Could the cows' diet or other management or infrastructure factors be contributing to lameness in the herd?

- Consider factors that may contribute to lameness, acidosis, herd structure, footbaths, mats or micronutrients.

For more information go to [Managing in wet conditions – Lameness fact sheet](#).