

How to get the most out of your foot trimmer

Recently a few farmers have mentioned that they have been disappointed when lame cows presented to their respective foot trimmer have not improved as they would have liked.

This raises the issue of what you should expect from a professional foot trimmer, and what should be done by the farmer or vet. The business model for a foot trimmer is to trim as many cows in a day as they can in a professional manner for a set price per cow or per foot. The majority of cows presented to them should be routine trims of cows ready for drying off, cows around 100 days and pre-calving heifers. This is an efficient and effective way of ensuring the majority of your routine trimming is kept up together, leaving time available for you to focus on lame cows. Prompt treatment of lame cows is critical for a successful cure, and research has shown that farms which rely entirely on a monthly visit from a foot trimmer to do all their lame cows as well as routine trims tend to have worse rates of lameness than those on which lame cows are trimmed in house.



The obvious comparison is with mastitis. If you spot a case of mastitis but don't treat it for a month, the cow will either have self-cured or be impossible to treat. Most people therefore treat a case as soon as they see it. The same applies to the lame cow, only more so as very few cases of lameness self-cure, and neglected cases are progressive. An injection is rarely successful in resolving a case of lameness, so pick the foot up as soon as you see it!

Trimming a lame cow is a skilled and time consuming job, often taking up to half an hour per cow. It is unreasonable to expect a foot trimmer to accommodate many such cows into a day when he may be trimming 30 or more and still spend the time required getting right to the bottom of the problem.

It is nearly always a lack of time which is a problem rather than a lack of knowledge or skill, as we have worked with most of the professional foot trimmers in the areas and been impressed with them.



Therefore our advice would be to treat lame cows yourself if you are appropriately trained, or ask your regular vet to look at it if not. Several of us in the practice are trained in professional foot trimming, and we are also able to use anaesthesia to trim a severely lame foot painlessly.

If you would like training on how to trim cows' feet using the Dutch 5 step method, then please contact the office as we offer 2 day practical foot trimming courses on farm for £275 per person

