

Lameness queries are a helpful step

Ask the right questions before dispensing treatments, advises sheep vet **Richard Knight**



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One effect of dry, warm, weather generally is that lameness appears to be more prevalent. As with all ailments, it is best to come to an informed conclusion as to the diagnosis, before treatment and control can be considered. Many times the farmer will come to this conclusion themselves, but it does no harm to ask questions before dispensing medicines or treatments such as foot bathing solutions or foot-rot vaccine.

The first question should be, "What did you find when you looked at the feet?"

Further questioning can be about the interdigital skin, coronary band lesions, white line disease, or traumatic



injury. This includes injury from previous, over-zealous, trimming which will lead to a granuloma, or 'cherry', protruding from the damaged area.

Don't be afraid to encourage them to consult their vet to come to a definitive diagnosis and for treatment. Removing things like granulomas requires appropriate local anaesthesia to be done properly, with sometimes even the affected digit requiring removal. To be able to differentiate contagious ovine digital dermatitis (CODD) from

scald, and even scald from foot-rot, is vital, especially when things like foot-rot vaccine are being used.

We've all had cases where vaccination has been dismissed as ineffective, but no diagnosis had ever been reached. You then go on to find that CODD is the underlying cause, so vaccination would never be expected to work alone!

If you have 10 minutes free during a tea-break, I would advise everyone, farmers most importantly, to watch a YouTube video by Prof Laura Green. Search under 'sheep lameness' and it will come up

second on the list (breezeand-freezeinfo). Economics of treatment, along with diagnosis and approaches to treatment are expertly and succinctly covered. Intervention levels are covered well, illustrating how important it is to treat cases as they arise. Viewers are encouraged to understand just how easily we can damage the ovine foot with shears and hoof knives (the last things that should be reached for).

The picture where Laura shows light shining through the sole of a boiled-out hoof specimen demonstrates their

fragility. Even if you've watched it before, it will be good to revise. Get the kettle on now!

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