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## **Dealing with Foot Rot in Livestock**

During the summer months we often treat lame livestock. The effects of lameness may show itself by decreased fertility, weight loss, decreased performance, and increased labor and medicine costs. It has been estimated that 88-92% of lameness stems from the foot. Summer may be a prime time, but we can still see issues anytime animals spend time in moist conditions.

Foot rot is a common bacterial infection that occurs in livestock. These bacteria are found naturally in the rumen and manure. The skin is an amazing barrier that blocks pathogens from entering the body. However, an injury to the skin, specifically the skin in-between the toes, is necessary for the infection to take hold. These injuries can be caused walking in rocky areas, punctures from hard stubble or frozen/dried mud can all be the culprit. Once the bacteria break through the skin barrier, they release a toxin that causes destruction of the cells and leads to inflammation and swelling. Obvious lameness can be observed. Early in the disease process, swelling may be located on the backside of the foot under the dewclaws. Foot rot also has a terrible smell.

Foot rot occurs in wet conditions, and managing the external environment can be extremely difficult. Commonly visited areas of the pasture usually are the offenders. These locations could be wet, muddy areas around water sources, shaded or resting areas, or mineral feeding areas. They will have increased amounts of environmental contamination, particularly from manure. Moving mineral and supplement sites, and monitoring water tanks for leaks can be helpful in limiting these conditions. Controlling access to watering sites in a pond can also reduce the threat.

It has been indicated that supplementing with proper levels of zinc and iodine may help reduce overall occurrence. There is a foot rot vaccine available but there are mixed reports on overall efficacy.

Work with your local veterinarian to choose the proper treatment regimen. The treatment typically consists of an injectable antimicrobial. Foot rot is a painful condition. There is also a new topical flunixin product available to control the pain associated with this condition. Early treatment in the disease process is typically very rewarding. To find these cases, be sure to check mobility of all animals in the herd while checking and monitoring your pastures. Because as the disease progresses, deeper structures of the foot can be involved, making treatment difficult. If left untreated the infection can spread up the leg causing systemic issues or turn into a “club foot”.

For more information on foot rot, or other livestock concerns, please give me a call, Wendie Powell, Livestock Production Agent, at the Wildcat Extension District, 620-784-5337. Or, you can send me an email at [wendiepowell@ksu.edu](mailto:wendiepowell@ksu.edu).

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