



# Footrot in Sheep

Lameness is one of the sheep flock's greatest disease problems. One of the most important causes of lameness is foot-rot, which is estimated to cost the sheep industry over £24 million each year. Foot-rot occurs as a consequence of scald (a more mild lameness lesion). Scald is caused by the bacteria *Fusobacterium necrophorum* which is present in the environment and infects the foot through damaged interdigital skin. Foot-rot occurs when another bacterium (*Dichelobacter nodusus*) invades the damaged skin.

		Signs of disease	Treatment
Scald		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Swelling and reddening of skin between the claws with a grey "scum" on top</li> <li>No under-running of sole or wall of hoof</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topical antibiotic spray (e.g. Terramycin aerosol)</li> <li>Footbathing may be useful if flock problem</li> </ul>
Foot-rot		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Under-running of the sole horn and outer wall, starting at the inter-digital space</li> <li>Foul smelling grey oozing pus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topical and injectable antibiotics</li> <li>Footbathing in some situations</li> <li>Care not to over-trim as this may make things worse</li> </ul>

Photographs courtesy of EBLEX

See the next page for advice about prevention of footrot and scald.

If you'd like to discuss treatment of individual or flock problems, please feel free to contact the Farm Animal Practice.

# Footrot in Sheep

The control of footrot and scald are inherently linked. Measures that prevent scald will also help to prevent footrot.

## Prevention of scald

- Control footrot in ewes, which will reduce scald levels in lambs
- Start regular footbathing as soon as lambs are big enough. This is especially useful in lamb epidemics during the spring
- Avoid areas of poaching and heavily soiled fields
- Lime can be spread around areas of poaching such as feed troughs, gateways and water troughs



## Prevention of footrot

- Prompt identification and treatment of foot rot is essential due to its infectious nature
- Cull sheep which have had the disease more than twice
- Keep underfoot conditions as dry and as clean as possible
- Ideally run a closed flock. If this is not possible:
  - Buy stock from flocks with a low level of lameness
  - After purchase, quarantine animals for 28 days and treat any lameness

**If you have any questions or would like advice on lameness control in sheep and goats, please do not hesitate to contact the Practice.**

