Getting rid of FOOTROT

It is possible to eradicate footrot from sheep/goat farms, but it takes time and commitment. Common strategies include hoof trimming and inspection, foot soaking, isolation, culling, antibiotic therapy, and vaccines. Once footrot has been eradicated, it is important to implement strict biosecurity protocols to keep it from coming back, as it usually walks onto the farm on four legs.







Hoof trimming

It was previously thought that aggressive hoof trimming was necessary to get rid of footrot. This is no longer recommended. Outside of normal trimming to keep hooves healthy and free from excess growth, no additional trimming is needed for footrot. In fact, it is believed that aggressive hoof trimming could spread the disease and cause damage. Frequent inspection of hooves is probably more important than frequent trimming.

Foot soaking

Foot soaking (bathing) is the traditional method of eradicating footrot. Zinc sulfate solutions are preferred to copper sulfate and formaldehyde. Foot baths work best with foot scald and the early stages of footrot. After foot bathing, animals need to be moved to a clean dry area. Infected animals should be separated from clean ones. Repetitive foot bathing is usually required to eradicate footrot.

Culling

Some sheep/goats are more susceptible to footrot. Those with reoccurring infection should be culled. Animals which fail to respond to treatment should be culled.



Antibiotics and vaccines

Antibiotics (all of which require a veterinary prescription) and vaccines can speed up the eradication process but should not be used as standalone strategies. While penicillin and oxytetracycline are effective against the bacteria that causes footrot, nowadays, long-acting antibiotics are preferred for treatment of footrot. For example, research has shown Zactran® to be highly efficacious against sheep footrot. There are also vaccines for footrot, but they are difficult to obtain (in the US) and can be variable in their efficacy, due to the different strains of *Dichelobacter nodosus*.

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