



Following a difficult weather period, there is an increase in the incidence of lameness in dairy and beef farms.

The root causes are both infectious sources such as Interdigital dermatitis (IDD) known as Mortellaro, and non-infectious sources like white line disease and sole bruising (which can later lead to sole ulceration).

The average cost attributed to a case of lameness is believed to be between €210 and €536 per case depending on the disease. This could cost a 100-cow farm between €4,000 and €14,000 depending on the severity of lameness in the herd.

These costs are incurred from treatment and labour costs along with significant loss in production and an increase in animal culling. Furthermore, the visual impact of lame cows in a herd is often detrimental to a farmer's morale, and watching these cows walking last on the roadway or paddock everyday takes away some of the joy in good farming practice.

So what can you do to improve lameness on your farm?

1. Identify the type of disease and the severity of lameness in the herd. This will require a vet or hoof trimmer to turn up feet on all lame cows from mild to severe cases. A gait score on the farm is also helpful in understanding the overall severity of lameness on a herd level.
2. Treatment plan. After diagnosing the lameness carry out the correct course of action, which may be a trim, or a foot bathing routine, or antibiotics and anti-inflammatories.
3. Decide on the follow-up treatment and timeline, book the trimmer or vet for a revisit before they leave the yard (normally within two weeks).
4. Foot bathing will minimise the spread of infectious disease while helping to improve hoof integrity and is recommended even if the incidence of severely lame cows is low.
5. Reducing the degree of body condition score loss after calving and during difficult grazing conditions will reduce the incidence of sole bruising and ulceration.
6. Improving and maintaining roadways is a major factor for reducing lameness, however allowing cows to walk at their own pace is also a critical factor.
7. Putting your cows on a supplement that specifically targets hoof development. Bandon
8. Co-op's Fertility Booster dairy nut includes high levels of protected zinc and biotin to improve the development and integrity of hoof horn so cows develop stronger harder hooves.

