

PREVENTATIVE HOOF INSPECTION AND TRIMMING

Muireann Conneely, Hoof HealthCheck Technical Working Group Member

What is preventative hoof inspection and trimming?

Preventative hoof inspection refers to the examination of a cow's hooves, to identify any overgrowth that might need corrective trimming, or any other potential lameness-causing issues that might need to be addressed.

Preventative hoof trimming refers to the trimming of a cow's hooves that is done to prevent lameness occurring, as opposed to therapeutic hoof trimming, which is done as part of treatment of a cow that is already lame.

Preventative hoof inspection (and trimming if needed) should be carried out as a routine procedure, at least once a year.

Why should I do it?

The aim of inspecting cows' hooves once a year is to identify those that need preventative hoof trimming (or other treatment). The aim of preventative hoof trimming is to correct any overgrowth in the claws of the hoof. Overgrowth of the hoof can alter weight bearing within the hoof, and predispose the cow to becoming lame in the future. Routine hoof trimming is an important part of maintaining healthy hoof shape and growth, which makes the hoof more resistant to injury.

How should I go about doing it?

Ideally, every cow in the herd should have their hooves inspected once a year. This is ideally done around the time of drying off, by a professional hoof trimmer. Any cows that have overgrown claws or other problems can then be trimmed or treated, if necessary.

It is important to note that not every cow will need to have her hooves trimmed. However, ideally inspect every cow's hooves, to identify those that do.

If it is not practically possible to inspect the hooves of all the cows in your herd, an alternative approach is to target lame cows and those cows most at risk or lameness. These include older cows, cows with a history of lameness and cows that are consistently walking at the back of the herd.

Hoof trimming is best done using the Dutch 5-step method of hoof trimming. It should be carried out by somebody who has received the appropriate training. Hoof trimming can do a lot of damage if it is done incorrectly, and often make lameness worse. Do not trim yourself unless you have training in this method.

Being able to trim cows' hooves is a very useful skill for a farmer to have. If you want to be able to trim your lame cows yourself, you can do a hoof trimming course. The Irish Cattle Foot Trimmers Association organise courses for professional hoof trimmers. To find out more, visit www.icfta.ie. Greenway Agritraining solutions run regular hoof trimming courses for farmers. For further information, contact ndunphy@agritraining.ie.

TAKE HOME MESSAGE

- ✓ Preventative hoof inspection and trimming if required should be carried out at least one a year to keep hooves healthy and reduce lameness.