

Stephen Gates 0447 164 701

Nutritionist

Managing Foot Abscess

Sheep producers are well aware of the effect that foot abscesses have on their stock. Traditional, reactive treatments such as foot bathing and paring are not only time consuming, they also can add to stock distress. Additionally, by the time lameness is readily apparent, the sheep producer has already taken a hit in terms of lost production.

Foot abscess in Sheep

Lameness as a result of foot abscess can have a major impact on welfare and productivity.

Abscess is more prevalent in Rams & in fat, twin bearing ewes as well as being generally more common in good seasons where high pasture/forage crop growth does not allow feet to dry out. This results in damage to the hoof allowing the causative agents to enter the hoof, eventually invading the deeper soft tissues causing intense pain.

Abscesses can occur in either the toe or the heel, with heel abscesses being more common. Affected sheep won't move to graze resulting in a loss of condition that then leads to metabolic issues with lambing ewes and can potentially lead to lamb starvation. Rams affected will be reluctant to mate.

In all cases, the affected foot may be permanently deformed leading to reoccurring issues.

'Happy Feet'

Fabstock's '*Happy Feet*' has been developed to assist sheep producers to overcome the debilitating effects of foot abscesses, without the time consuming effort of foot bathing. *Happy Feet* is our *Lactation Pasture Lick* with elevated levels of Biotin and Organic Zinc, to strengthen the hoof from the inside and therefore should be used as a preventative, rather than a reactive treatment.

AT A GLANCE

- *Lameness/Foot abscess have a major impact on flock productivity*
- *Happy Feet is designed to overcome those issues, whilst providing the benefits of Pasture Lactation Lick.*

Happy Feet should be considered where lameness has been an issue in the past.

Hoof horn contains considerable amounts of the structural protein Keratin and Zinc and Biotin play a key role in its formation.

Zinc is also vital for rapid wound healing, epithelial tissue repair and cellular integrity. During the period of active infection, the sensitive lamina and its network of capillaries are damaged and zinc plays a role in increasing blood supply to these damaged areas.

As well, organic Zinc used in *Happy Feet* has proven to be more bioavailable than inorganic zinc forms such as Zinc Sulphate.

Management

As with most nutritional challenges, management also has a role to play in prevention.

- Aim to have ewes at 3 – 3.5 score at lambing - another good reason, if one is needed to ultrasound ewes post joining and thus feed single & twin bearing ewes separately
- Aim to have ewes carrying no more than 4 months wool at the commencement of lambing

Please check out Fabstock's '**Lambing with Fabstock' FabChat** for more information on ewe preparation prior to lambing

For any further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact the author or your local **Fabstock** reseller