

Summary of digital dermatitis control

Control measures

- 1. High standards of biosecurity and hygiene, even if you have digital dermatitis already**
 - a. Once you've got it you have it forever
 - b. Avoid buying in different "strains"/mixture of "strains"
 - c. Ideally closed herd but even then you may have a breakdown (slurry from vehicle wheels, boots, contaminated foot kit)
 - d. Buy from "free" herds but inspect and treat on arrival. Isolate for as long as practical.
 - e. Beware bull (especially old hire bulls), beef stock and sheep – they can all bring it in
 - f. Remember disease can be spread to young stock and dry cows on other units
 - g. Be hygienic when handling or treating lameness and digital dermatitis lesions
- 2. Herd treatment generally means an antibiotic foot bath at the right depth, right concentration and with clean feet. Consult your vet on best treatment protocol for your farm**
 - a. Remember young stock and dry cows
 - b. Always have a pre-wash bath. This triggers the dunging most of which will be in the first bath, preserving the second bath
 - c. If possible make a special job of it so cows are sure not to drink it
 - d. Ask your vet about spray treatments if foot bathing a problem
- 3. Cows at pasture**
 - a. A great method of cleaning feet unless gates/tracks are muddy
 - b. Keep up treatment/disinfection – this is more effective when the feet are cleaned at pasture
- 4. Slurry management**
 - a. Careful scraping important – use a quality box scraper, drive in first gear along kerbs and feed barriers
 - b. Beware increased slurry on slats, with automatic scrapers, with high yielding herds or densely stocked alleys
 - c. Beware stale slurry corners of sheds, AI pens, out-of-parlour feeders, beside round feeders, next to water troughs, along the edge of collecting yards, in crush, around foot bath, in the race
 - d. Beware pools of stale/standing water or muddy gates/water troughs
- 5. Feet cleaned & disinfected**
 - a. In most herds the most practical, time-efficient, cost-effective way of coping with high slurry challenge is to wash it off every day
 - b. Foot bathing is usually the most efficient way to do this, but careful planning is needed to make the job easy (easy drain and clean, easy fill, distant from parlour, concrete baths are more cow friendly, straw used in pre-wash)
 - c. Use the right agent, at the right depth (more than 10cm deep so disinfectant runs down the hair), replaced regularly (200l normally does 200 cows).
 - d. 5% formalin works well under most herd conditions but is not very effective on raw lesions (so use after antibiotic treatments) and is unpleasant to work with. Replace if very contaminated, if more than 1 cow per litre of foot bath has gone through it or within 48 hours
 - e. Copper sulphate seems to work better when acidified (e.g. with dilute FAM30) and used at high concentrations, but will result in copper salts in the slurry tank
 - f. Dilute hypochlorite is probably effective but is best used in conjunction with other treatments
 - g. Consult your vet on the best protocol for you