

HEALTHYFEET



Mobility mentors' guide



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The information in this booklet was compiled with help from Owen Atkinson, Dairy Veterinary Consultancy Ltd.



Section 1: setting the scene

Introduction

The Healthy Feet Programme (HFP) helps dairy farmers reduce the number of lame cows on their farms through improved management of cows and people.

Lame cows cost farmers time and money, are a serious welfare problem and affect staff morale. Dairy farming in the UK generally enjoys a positive image in the eyes of the consumer, which is important to maintain.

However, dairy farming is open to criticism on the basis of current average levels of lameness and we all have a role to play in earning greater trust in terms of how we look after our dairy cows.

The programme was first introduced in 2011 and builds on the widely respected work of the Healthy Feet project, supported by the Tubney Charitable Trust, which concluded at Bristol University Vet School in 2010. It has drawn influences from other lameness reduction programmes around the world and has been developed in consultation with vets in practice and foot trimmers, as well as local and international lameness experts.

Research into practice

The Healthy Feet Programme is evidence-based. Since its inception, it has continued to develop and incorporate new evidence. In particular, more recently, its approach has been informed by the AHDB-funded Research Partnership on Lameness Control in Dairy Cows (2011–2016). This was led by the University of Nottingham and also included the University of Reading, Harper Adams University, Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), the Royal Veterinary College, and Aberystwyth University as delivery partners.

You can also be confident that the HFP approach works in practice. As well as findings from the Tubney-funded Healthy Feet project, in which participating farms reduced their lameness, EU-funded research carried out during 2012/13 at Reaseheath Agricultural College demonstrated that HFP farms reduce their lameness levels by a mean of 20% within one year. This same project uncovered the most important aspects which were associated with the greatest improvements and collected valuable farmer feedback to further refine the programme.

The HFP will continue to be updated and refined as further evidence becomes available. Mobility mentors (programme deliverers) are supported so they can easily access the most up to date research, which will enhance their own personal development and effectiveness.

Basic principles

Lameness is a term that covers many conditions; some caused by infections and some by physical and management factors. An understanding of the types of lameness present, coupled with a structured approach to tackle the underlying causes, is required to overcome lameness effectively.

The HFP is a stepwise approach that helps dairy farmers identify the problems, devise an action plan and develop the skills necessary for long-term lameness control. Trained providers (usually vets with a particular interest in lameness control) facilitate the process, acting as one-to-one advisers. Programme deliverers are called 'mobility mentors'.

The skills of a good mobility mentor are approximately 80% in facilitation and 20% in imparting knowledge. A thorough understanding of the science is still important, but is insufficient by itself to deliver the programme successfully.

The overall aim is to give farmers the confidence necessary to make the **correct** changes to reduce lameness and improve their business performance. Lameness control almost always requires a team effort. Mobility mentor training is bespoke. It is geared towards ensuring understanding of lameness epidemiology is up to date and developing facilitation skills. The programme is supported by various AHDB resources to ensure that the correct and relevant information is always to hand.

The Four Success Factors for Healthy Feet

Central to the HFP are the Four Success Factors for Healthy Feet. These help farmers to recognise the different processes involved in lameness control. In effect, they simplify what is a very complicated and diverse array of risks that contribute to lameness.

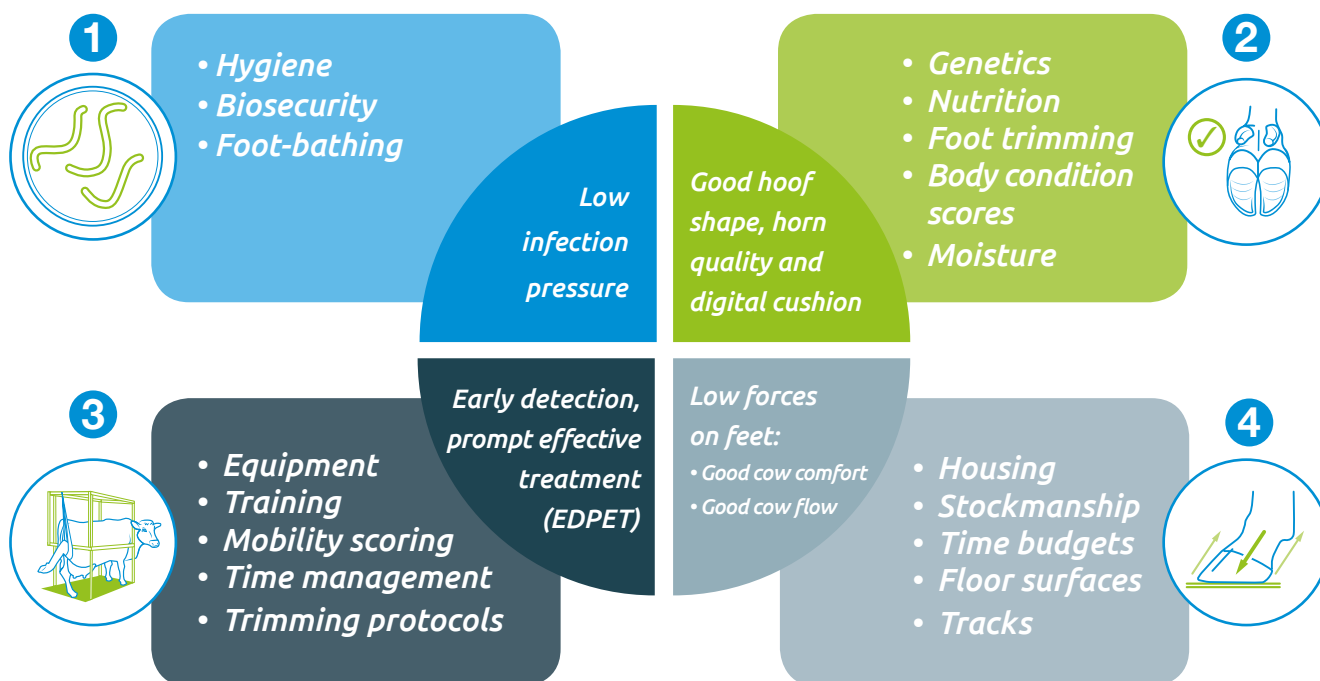
The Four Success Factors are used in such a way that a farm can more easily give priority to those interventions or changes that will bring the most benefit to their herd.

The four success factors are:

1. Low infection pressure.
2. Good hoof shape, horn quality and digital cushion.
3. Early Detection and Prompt, Effective Treatment of lame cows (EDPET).
4. Low forces on the feet (good cow comfort and good cow flow).

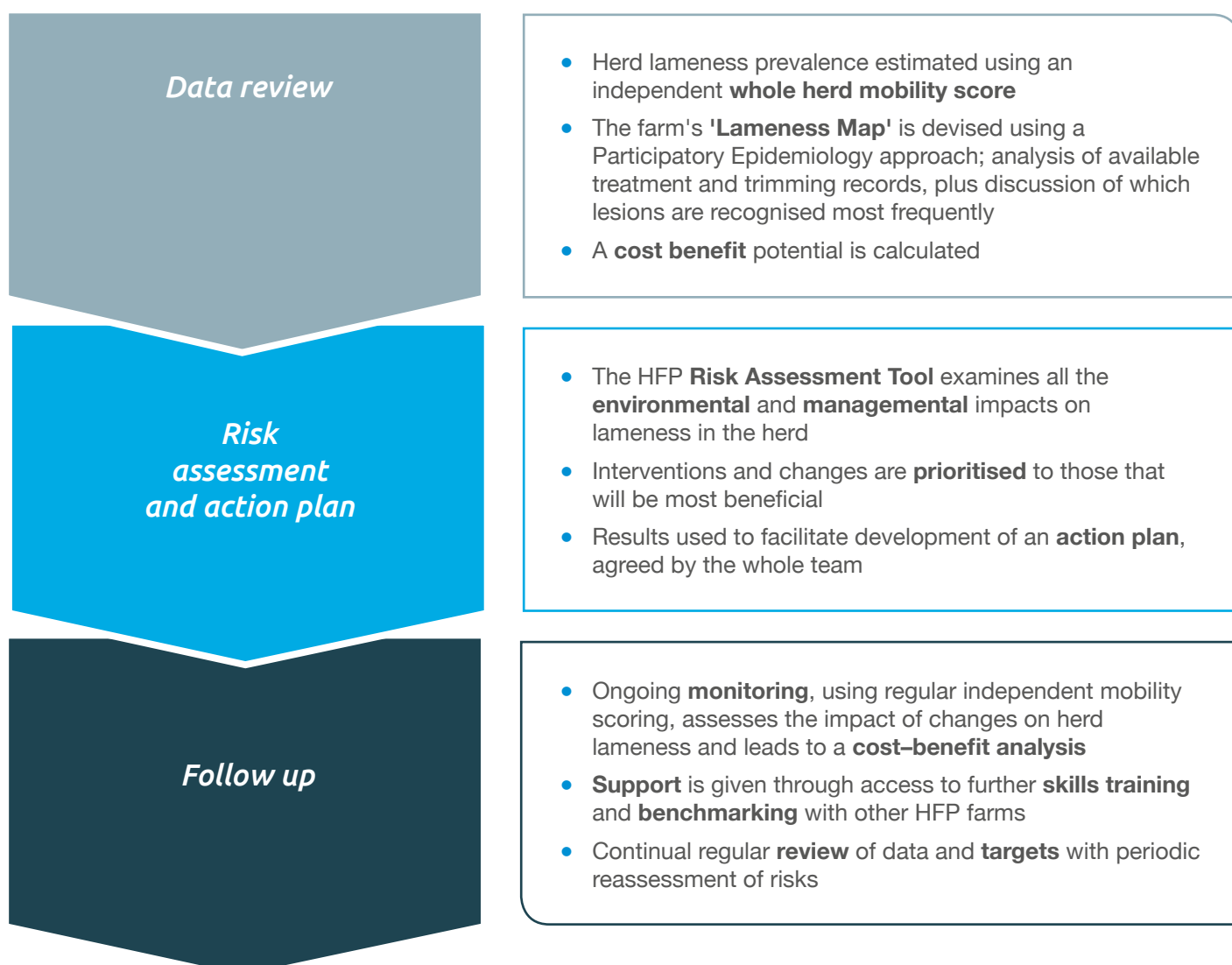
These should be etched into the deep subconscious of every mobility mentor's brain.

The following summary diagram is useful – it includes some of the main control points for each factor. The colours, numbers and icons for each Success Factor are used consistently throughout the HFP materials.



How the programme works

The programme is summarised in the following diagram:



The programme is designed to be a continuous process. For example, no-one would expect an adviser to visit a farm on one or two occasions and be able to sort out its herd fertility forever. In a similar way, lameness control requires ongoing measuring, monitoring, reviewing and refreshing.

The HFP provides a framework to conduct herd lameness control. A step-wise approach to begin the programme is described below. Several visits will be necessary to conduct the first four steps, to the point of developing the action plan. It is suggested that this should be done within 3–4 weeks.

Step one: find your baseline

There are two parts to this:

1. Arranging for an independent **whole herd mobility score** to be completed by a **trained mobility scorer**. This will give your baseline lameness prevalence.
2. Completing the **‘starter interview’** with the farmer. This should be done with the one or two people who are mainly responsible for lameness control on the farm; for example, the farm owner and herds person. The aim is to discover more about the farmer’s perceptions of their herd’s lameness and their current understanding of the problem.

Step two: skills review, diagnosis and costs

Visit the farm and assess a proportion of cows’ feet using the facilities available on farm. You must work alongside the person(s) who normally treats the lame cows. Occasionally, this might be an external foot trimmer, although every farm should have somebody trained in foot first aid.

During this visit you will discuss how different diseases arise, review the foot-trimming process, and what foot conditions are most commonly seen. This is your opportunity to assess the current effectiveness of any trimming and treatments that are carried out and identify needs for further skills training or new equipment and foot first aid facilities.

You should review the available data on lameness treatments on the farm. This may vary from detailed computerised records – for example, those maintained by an external foot trimmer – to none. Use records, plus the farmer’s own perceptions, plus your own observations to devise a **‘Lameness Map’**. This is a simple visual representation of the relative incidence of the most common lesions and is used to identify the most important success factors for the farm. The process is called Participatory Epidemiology, and is described in the mobility mentor training.

Finally, use the herd prevalence score (mobility score) to calculate a cost–benefit potential for reducing lameness to a target level, which you agree with the farm owner and herds person. This is an opportunity to discuss the likely impacts lameness will be having on the herd and learn more about your farmer’s motivations.

Step three: full farm risk assessment

Use the **HFP Risk Assessment Tool** to carry out a thorough risk assessment of the farm’s environment and management with respect to lameness. This visit is likely to take around three hours and part of it should always take place during milking time. You should go everywhere the cows go, working with a checklist and asking plenty of questions.

Step four: agree the action plan

It is suggested that a separate visit is arranged very soon after completing the risk assessment, but this time with the **whole farm team**. Following steps 1–3, you will now be able to help the team understand where the lameness critical control points are. Solutions are discussed and points of action agreed. You will **facilitate** the process, developing the skills you acquired during your mobility mentor training.

The end result of this step is the production of a **‘mobility contract’**, which contains the agreed points of action, time frames and allocated responsibilities. This visit should take **no longer than one hour**.

Step five: recording, monitoring, reviewing and benchmarking

An action plan alone will not reduce lameness. In the first instance, additional visits may be necessary to give training in foot first aid, basic trimming technique or mobility scoring. It is likely that your help will be called upon to give more specific advice for some of the agreed interventions; for example, to devise a new foot bathing protocol.

Remember, to be successful, the HFP should be ongoing.

As a minimum, independent whole herd mobility scores should be arranged on a quarterly basis. You will use the results to monitor changes in lameness prevalence. Benchmarking can be done against the herd’s targets, if possible and, with willingness from the farm, against other HFP farms.

You will need to review progress on the mobility contract. It is suggested that as a minimum this is done two weeks, two months and six months after the date on which it was agreed.

The support given during Step 5 is probably the most important aspect of encouraging effective changes to take place. This step is very vulnerable to being ignored or carried out poorly. The mobility mentor training will help you develop the skills required, including how to use peer groups for motivation and ideas exchange.

Staff changes, alterations in circumstances, or simply needing to tackle new risks that were not the initial priorities, all mean that the initial mobility contract will become out of date after around a year. Therefore, it is good practice to do a new risk assessment and agree a new mobility contract approximately once a year.

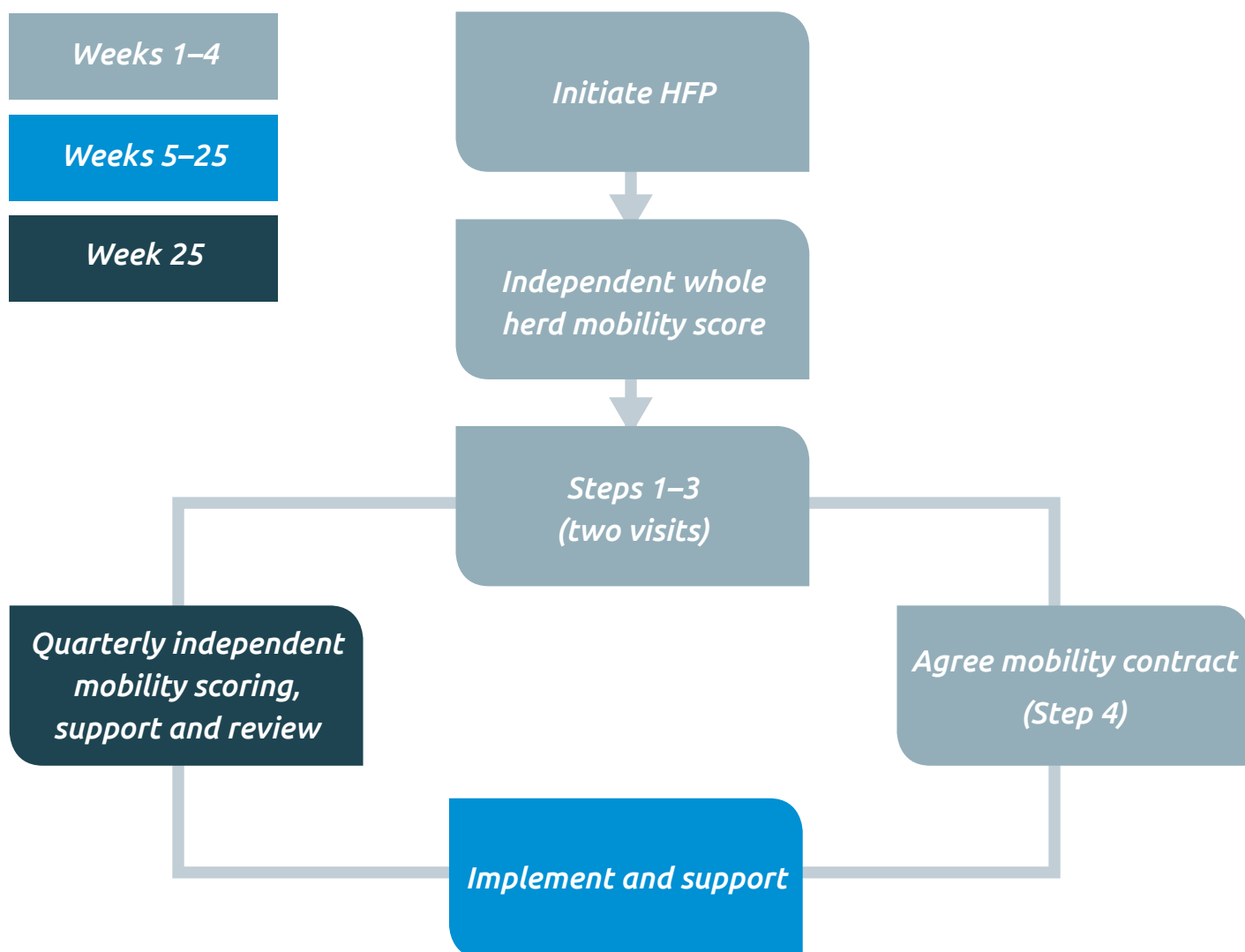


Figure 1. Time frame of programme



Section 2: working with farms using the HFP

Time frame of programme:

Registering a farm for the HFP

It is important to register each participating farm with AHDB. There are several advantages to doing this:

- AHDB can keep a record of how many farms use the programme
- To maintain your place on the register of mobility mentors, you must register (or renew) at least one farm per year
- Registered farms that complete the programme to your satisfaction will get an HFP certificate, which they can display and may use to satisfy farm assurance or their milk buyer's requirements
- Registered farms receive an HFP Toolkit, containing useful resources
- You can access technical support for the farm

Registration has been designed to be as easy as possible and can be done by emailing

healthyfeet@ahdb.org.uk

The HFP Toolkit

This is a resource kit packaged in a physical toolbox. It includes copies of the **Hoof Care Field Guide**, which is a very popular, handy, pictorial pocket booklet for farmers and staff. There is also a **Lesion Recognition and Trouble Shooter guide** that summarises important considerations for the 12 most common lesions the farm is likely to encounter.

Step one

a) Mobility scoring

Mobility scoring is the best way to measure the farm's pre-existing lameness and subsequent improvements. While a very frequent outcome of the HFP is that farms learn to do their own mobility scoring routinely to identify lame cows early, periodic independent herd mobility scoring is also essential. This is useful:

- To "calibrate" and "recalibrate" the farm's own scoring
- To retain a close and continuing relationship with the lameness situation on farm (as the mobility mentor)
- To provide a more objective and repeatable measure of lameness prevalence

You may decide to do the independent scoring yourself, or arrange for another trained operator to do it (for example, a vet technician). The score needs to be **reliable**, so whoever does it **must** be trained in the AHDB Mobility Score system and, preferably, be registered with the Register of Mobility Scorers (ROMS).

Always arrange an initial "baseline" whole herd independent mobility score at the start of the HFP. Subsequently, repeating an independent score every three months is recommended.

b) Starter interview

Use the questionnaire in your mobility mentors' resource pack.

The images of lesions on the printed document are small. If it helps, use a device, such as a laptop, to show larger images – they are all available at good resolution via the mobility mentors' resource site.

The interview should not be intimidating. Be open, non-judgemental and show empathy. Do not use it to test your clients under exam conditions! Try not to get too drawn into providing detailed answers at this stage – you are simply trying to gauge:

- What is likely to be important to your farmers (with respect to lameness)
- What they think are the main problems
- What impact they think lameness has on their business, including financial
- What gaps there are in their lameness knowledge or misconceptions they have that you think might be detrimental to or hinder progress in reducing lameness on their farm

Apart from you being able to gauge these things, your interview will help the farm to start thinking about lameness and how to tackle it on their farm.

Farmers will quite probably already have a lot of knowledge, so that will give you a head start. However, it would be very unusual for the initial interview to not prompt your client to ask more questions. That's great – you want to start the process of **enquiry**. For example, exactly how much is lameness costing us? How many lame cows do we have? Why do some cows get white line disease?

Finally, you do not need to create lameness experts through the HFP. Not everybody wants to become a foot geek. Farmers just need to know enough. Some may want to know lots, and exhaust you with their questions: that is fine. But, only give advice/spout science when directly asked for it, or if you have gained permission to do so (by asking for permission).

Step two

You will need to arrange a farm visit especially for this part.

Objectives:

- A hands-on look at feet: gain quick credibility with the farmer. Show enthusiasm and interest in lameness and cows' feet; hopefully some competence too
- Gain appreciation for the farmer's ability/enthusiasm/interest for foot checking, lesion recognition, routine trims and hoof treatments (we call this part of the HFP the skills check)
- Check understanding on lameness types/causes. This follows on from the starter interview. There is nothing to stop you doing the starter interview at the same visit
- Provide some limited training/teaching. There are various HFP resources that you can use to help explain

some of the essential rudiments of lameness; for example, how sole bruising occurs, or the role of the digital cushion in protecting against claw horn lesions

- Evaluate the facilities available on farm for foot checks and foot first aid (early detection and prompt, effective treatments)
- Build an appreciation of hoof conditions/main lesion problems on the farm. There may be no records, or unreliable records, so your impression of feet problems encountered during this visit might be very valuable
- Identify and validate any available lesion records. Validate in terms of checking if what is recorded is likely to be a reflection of the reality. For example, a farmer may have been erroneously recording sole ulcers as “stone penetration”
- Calculate the cost of lameness to the farm. This must be done in a facilitative style so the farmer can calculate the cost for themselves, given basic (agreed) assumptions
- Conclude by drawing and explaining a Lameness Map for the farm. You will use Participatory Epidemiology skills to do this, which is explained during mobility mentor training

Time frame:

Expect to take around half a day, or 3 hours for this visit. However, it can be useful to spend longer on your first few visits.

Materials:

You will need:

- Approximately six freshly lame cows and foot trimming equipment (sharp knives, nippers, hoof testers, blocks, treatments)
- Hoof Care Field Guide
- Lesion Recognition and Trouble Shooter guide
- PowerPoint slides (plus laptop) – useful but not essential
- Large sheet(s) of paper (eg, flip chart pad) and pens to draw the Lameness Map. You don't need a flip chart itself; you can spread the paper on a table or tape to a wall

Method:

- Arrange a visit involving the main person(s) responsible for hoof care on the farm
- Lift and examine both hind feet of at least six cows. Cows with a Mobility Score of 2 that have not been examined previously would be ideal; ie freshly lame cases. This is an ideal opportunity to demonstrate how early detection and treatment can be successfully used
- If the farmer or herds person is given free rein to identify the cows for trimming, there is a real danger that you will be presented with the most troublesome, chronic cases, which will not be useful. This is not the time to demonstrate your skills in foot surgery

- Use the cattle crush normally used by the farm, but take the opportunity to demonstrate and discuss different equipment and best practice. Use the HFP Hoof Care Field Guide
- Use lesion pictures (eg, Power Point slides or Lesion recognition and trouble shooter guide) to check lesion recognition and discuss which ones the farmer sees/records
- It will be useful to discuss the causes of lesions and check understanding. Draw diagrams if it helps
- Explain and draw the Lameness Map to illustrate the main lesion types on the farm. Use available records or, if no records are available, your observations from today and the farmer's opinion may be used to draw the map. This is a useful facilitation tool to introduce the concept of the Four Success Factors. Check with the farmer to refine the shape of the map if necessary
- Briefly outline the Four Success Factors for reduced lameness. Ask the farmer what might be included with each Success Factor and which lesion types are most relevant for each
- Use records that are available (including the whole herd mobility score) to estimate costs of lameness on this farm – work through the calculation with the farmer. Keep it simple. Discuss realistic targets for reducing lameness and the time frame over which this should be achieved. Calculate the potential cost-benefit
- Fix a date for the second visit (within 2–4 weeks) to conduct the risk assessment

Notes:

- If you have limited experience of, or confidence in, practical cattle hoof care or trimming, work with an experienced vet or an accredited cattle foot trimmer during the visit (see lists at www.NACFT.co.uk or www.hoofcareregister.co.uk) to check the feet and assess the farmers' skills
- Partnerships between the farm's hoof trimmer and vet may be strengthened by working together at the first visit
- This visit is not a substitute for hoof care/trimming training, which would require a lot more time. It might serve as a useful skills refresher for an experienced herds person trimmer
- During the mobility mentor training, you will be shown various ways of calculating the costs of lameness and the best ways to communicate these with the farm team

Step three

You will again need to arrange a farm visit for this part, which is the whole farm risk assessment using the **HFP Risk Assessment Tool**.

Objectives:

- Identify the risks for lameness on the farm
- Use the HFP Risk Assessment Tool to score each of the Four Success Factors:
 - Infection pressure
 - Hoof shape, horn condition and digital cushion
 - Forces on feet: cow comfort, cow flow and surfaces
 - Early detection and prompt, effective treatment (partly done during visit one)

Time frame:

A half day visit would normally be required, typically in an afternoon when cow flow around milking can be observed as well as the opportunity to check the feet of a large proportion of the herd whilst they are being milked.

Materials:

You will need:

- A copy of the Risk Assessment Checklist
- Paper for recording parlour observations
- Digital camera/smartphone to capture photograph prompts (useful but not essential)

Method:

- Use the HFP Risk Assessment Checklist. This will ensure you consider all the important aspects
- Walk everywhere the cows go
- Include a milking period in the visit: this is useful to check cow flow to and from the parlour and collection yard and during milking times. A good proportion of the hooves can be scored for cleanliness and shape during milking – possibly digital dermatitis lesions too; for example, with the aid of a small mirror
- Measure toe length in at least 20% of the herd (or 50 cows) – this is most easily done in parlour
- Allow time to ask questions of all the relevant staff to establish as detailed a picture as possible of the strengths and weaknesses of the farm for lameness control
- If you and the farmer have time towards the end of this visit, you can calculate the final score for each Success Factor and complete the final pages of the Risk Assessment Tool. This can be done later, but before the next visit
- Fix a time and venue for your third visit, which should be as soon as possible after visit two, while your thoughts are still fresh. Make sure that as many members of the farm team as possible are available for visit three

Notes:

- Walking the farm and making observations together with the farmer/herdsperson will be valuable, rather than working alone
- However, do NOT get drawn into giving your opinion or detailed solutions at this stage. This is the time for questions and listening, not answers and talking! Be aware of the balance
- Taking photographs of relevant risk factors you identify can be useful prompts and might be useful during the feedback session of visit three
- Allocating a score of 0–10 for each risk is largely subjective, but guidance is given in the Risk Assessment Tool. It is very effective to ask your client to score the risks. If this differs from the score you would give, discuss why this is the case
- Keep a copy of the completed Risk Assessment Tool. This is useful to compare with risk assessments carried out in the future. Farmers may also wish to benchmark their overall results with other HFP farms

Step four

The culmination of all your work so far is to facilitate the agreement of an action plan, which you may want to term the **mobility contract**.

Objectives:

- Engage with all members of the farm team who might influence lameness, including the person(s) with financial control and those who have day-to-day contact with the cows
- Reflect on what has been learned so far: draw from the team their thoughts on lameness on this farm
- Agree strengths and weaknesses for lameness control on the farm, referring to findings from the risk assessment
- Facilitate the team to construct and agree a mobility contract
- Check understanding. Check agreement. Prioritise the actions

Time frame:

You need to work fast. This visit should be kept to one hour, maximum. It is highly unlikely that you will be afforded longer than this, uninterrupted, for everyone to be present and to keep everyone fully engaged. If more time is required to discuss some aspects, arrange a further visit with the relevant staff only; this is quite likely. Detailed protocols, for example for foot bathing, can be drawn up after the visit.

Materials:

You will need:

- Flip chart, pens, a room away from distractions
- Laptop to show photographs, if considered useful (try to avoid this)
- The completed HFP Risk Assessment Tool

Method:

- The meeting should take place indoors, in comfortable surroundings, with no distractions
- Use a flip chart pad and large, clear writing
- On one sheet, record “things going well” – focus on things to do with lameness only. It is helpful to take an answer from everyone in the room and to take no more than five minutes. Pin the sheet to the wall
- On the second sheet, record “things that could be better” – it is helpful to take at least one suggestion from everyone. Focus on things to do with lameness only and take time to explain “why”, if required (to check understanding). Ensure all the main risks identified during the risk assessment have been covered. Take up to half an hour. Pin the sheet to the wall
- Divide the third sheet into four quarters, labelled as per the HFP Four Success Factors. It might be useful to lightly trace the herd’s Lameness Map to indicate the main areas of attention. Refer to sheet two and ask for possible solutions for each issue. Use your facilitation skills; if you have done your work well so far, you will not have to prompt the ideas because they will come from within the team. Involve everyone (ask them). Put solutions (actions) into the relevant quarter on the sheet (some may fit into more than one). Be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound). For example, rather than “footbath the milking cows better”, say “16kg copper sulphate in each fresh bath, to a depth of 10cm; highs Monday, Thursday; lows Tuesday, Friday; pressure wash feet first”
- You are aiming for no more than around 10 actions, but they must address the risks you have identified. They must also address the most pressing issues (as indicated by the Lameness Map, based on relative incidence of the lesion types)
- Check that all suggestions are practical and if not, check why. Sometimes, something you think is important simply cannot be done and that may be a compromise that can be accepted. However, balance this with ensuring that there are actions on the list that are definitely going to reduce lameness for this farm. The team will have failed the task if the actions are only likely to fiddle around the edges of the problem
- Once the actions are compiled, ask each person to name their top one or two priorities: you can tally these up; for example, by using a different coloured marker pen on the sheet
- In all likelihood, your hour will now be up. Photograph the action sheet. (If you are in the farm office, you can leave it taped to the wall)
- If there is time now, transfer the agreed actions onto the mobility contract. Alternatively, write or type these up as soon as possible after the meeting and

deliver the contract back to the farm at your earliest opportunity

- Check understanding again. Agree who will take responsibility for each action and over what time period. Ask each person to sign the contract
- This should be displayed somewhere where everyone can see it; for example, the farm office
- Fix the first review date(s) (two weeks and two months are suggested for the first two reviews). These can be at follow-up visits to the farm (for example, routine fertility visits), or over the phone (although this is less effective). Ensure the six-month review is done face-to-face

Notes:

- Draw diagrams if necessary. Use HFP resources
- Do not feel you need to cover every risk factor on the farm, but ensure you have covered the most important ones that you have identified, especially with respect to the Lameness Map
- Be confident in yourself that the agreed actions are going to be effective: do not just go for the easy ones because they might not have the desired impact
- To progress the changes you might need to arrange further advisory visits (on cubicle adaptations, for example), or arrange external inputs (for example, foot trimming training)
- Arrange further training visits as required; for example, digital dermatitis treatment, stock handling for the milking team, mobility scoring and recording lesions in a suitable format
- Use farmer advocates, local contacts and HFP discussion groups to encourage the changes to progress

Step five

You must have good discipline to ensure you and your farm complete the processes involved with step five. These are: making the agreed changes, monitoring, reviewing and supporting.

Objectives:

- Check progress against the agreed actions
- Periodic (eg quarterly) independent mobility scoring of the herd
- Monitor and review lesion records and mobility score records
- Re-draw the Lameness Map more accurately (if necessary)
- Review training plans for staff
- Refine, reinforce or review previous actions
- To give encouragement, credit or redirection, where appropriate

Time frame:

Step five involves continual involvement over the weeks and months. As a minimum, expect to spend approximately one hour to review data, plus one hour on farm to review actions, at an approximately six-month interval. After 12 months, at least the risk assessment should be done again. However, it is unlikely to take as long the second time around as on the first occasion.

Method:

- Collate farm lameness records: lesion records and mobility scores. Re-draw the Lameness Map with the farmer or herds manager
- Arrange a meeting with the whole farm team. Review and discuss the changes to lameness that are evident from the lesion records, Lameness Map and mobility scores
- You can involve and engage all members of the farm team by asking them to name one thing that has improved from their perspective (record this on a sheet of paper)
- Repeat the exercise and ask members of the farm team to name one frustration
- Next, take each action point in turn (from the mobility contract) and ascertain progress
- Decide if a new mobility contract or other resources or training are required
- Arrange the date of the next review for six months' time, or a sooner visit to do a new risk assessment, and draw up a new mobility contract.

Notes:

- Check for new farm members. Take the opportunity to review the farm's training plan
- Arrange supplementary training visits as required
- For seasonal calving herds, reviewing and evaluating lameness records at the end of each season is a sensible approach (for example, during the dry period)

Tips for success

The HFP requires you to be a facilitator as well as a scientist. Mobility mentors' training and refresher CPD is designed to help you develop your facilitation skills and how to investigate a lameness problem.

A key concept in facilitation is "handing over the stick". Literally, this means handing over a pointer, pen, chalk or other symbol of authority or means of expression. Metaphorically, it means transferring authority and initiative to the team. Relinquishing the marker pen may be as powerful an act as any exercise itself.

A second key concept, when working with a team, is to develop trust. You do this by trusting others and being open yourself. You do not have to know everything and sometimes it helps to show that you don't. Ask the farmer and, if relevant, members of the farm team, to contribute thoughts and ideas and listen to what people have to say.

In one way or another the solutions to reducing lameness will lie with the farmer and their team.

The research evidence is very clear: farms that have a lower prevalence of lameness have a greater sense of **autonomy**. That is to say, they **feel in control** of lameness. They have a can-do attitude. They do not believe that lameness is caused by bad weather, bad diet, bad luck or any other of a multitude of possible excuses. They do not look for someone to wave a magic wand and make it disappear; for example, with a wonder-feed-supplement.

Four characteristics typify farms with low lameness prevalence:

- They believe that lameness prevalence is down to what they do
- They have a clear understanding of what they need to do to reduce it
- They have a clear understanding of what negative impacts lameness has on their business and their job satisfaction
- They have a clear appreciation of what their lameness prevalence is and how this compares to other farms and their own target levels

The mobility contract

A plan must be practical, agreed by all and effective.

How do we achieve that?

Every farm has a different set of circumstances that lead to their lameness picture. Some actions will influence the lameness picture significantly, while others will be less important. A key skill of a successful mobility mentor is to help a farm team devise their plan, using knowledge and skills to guide them in the right direction. As a mobility mentor, you will act as an "outside pair of eyes", helping people to discover the aspects of their farm that, if improved, will give them the best benefit.

You will guide the whole farm team through the process to devise a plan. This will be the farm's own mobility contract, which identifies the Success Factors that the whole team agrees to implement to reduce the herd's lameness.

How do we implement the plan?

Successful lameness reduction involves change and change can be challenging – harder for some than others. Always keep peoples' goals in sight: less lameness; happier, healthier cows; more profitable milk production and better job satisfaction. These should be your goals too. Your role as a mentor is to help the farm team through the essential process of implementing the plan. Nevertheless, it should be clear that success will ultimately depend on the farm team. Reviewing the contract is vital: if success is not immediately apparent, this may be because the initial actions were inappropriate, misunderstood, or poorly implemented. You must identify where these problems lie and help the team to make the necessary corrections. Keeping records of lameness types and regular, independent mobility scoring will help track progress. Improvements

in some types of lameness at a herd level can be slow to detect – possibly taking a year. Healthy feet require ongoing commitment.

Most importantly, **ask** how things are going and **listen**.

Monitoring lameness

You require two things to monitor lameness:

- Herd mobility score records
- Lesion records

You have an important role in setting both in motion. Both are important because they relay different information.

Targets: the first target for most dairy farms is to record these two factors well so lameness can be measured. The second target will be to see a downward trend in both. There is no such thing as too low.

Benchmarking: some people like to see how they are doing compared to the average, or their neighbours, or the best 5 per cent of herds. Benchmarking can be a motivator, but it can also potentially lead to complacency or despondency. At least, benchmark the farm against their starting point and against their targets, even if you do not benchmark between farms.

Mobility mentors are encouraged to build their own local network of HFP farms to share experience; for example, during farm walks. This may be more valuable than benchmarking data between farms. Inviting new members to such discussion groups is also a good way of recruiting new HFP farms.

If the Programme is working, the farm will see a reduction in lameness prevalence – certainly within a year. Look out for a sudden reduction in severely lame cows (score 3s) caused by a culling clear-out, which – without additional actions – will not in itself bring about a sustained reduction in lameness prevalence.

Expect to see a change in the proportion of different lesion types (changes in shape in the Lameness Map) over time. For example, the farm may initially make good progress in reducing digital dermatitis, so claw horn lesions then become the predominant lesion type. This is a reason why a continual review of the data and the action plan is necessary; there is often a need to shift focus to new areas of risk as progress is made in others.

Ensure the whole farm team knows the results of the monitoring. Give credit where it is due to all staff who contributed to improvements.

Table 1. What? Why? How? and What If? of recording lesions

What?	Why?
<p>What recording is required?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simply a record of lesions found on cows' feet, whether at routine trimming/drying-off hoof checks or lame cow treatments • The layout needs to represent these records in a way that is immediately useful; for example, the Lameness Map 	<p>Why record?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To monitor progress • To work out what type of lameness your cows have • To check the mobility contract is working • To keep track of changes on the farm
How?	What if?
<p>How do we go about it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a system that suits the farm • This could be computers/online recording/hoof trimmers/milk recording bodies/paper records • To record you must first be confident in accurately recognising the lesions 	<p>What if I see the same cow for the same lesion month in, month out?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record it, but when tallying up lesions for the Lameness Map, only count it once <p>What if our lesion records contain a high percentage of uncommon lesions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check lesion recognition again with the person(s) doing the recording <p>What if the lesions are not necessarily causing severe lameness?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are still relevant because they tell a lot about the farm's risks. Each lesion has a different severity and some (for example, sole ulcer) are more costly/longer term than others (for example, heel horn erosion or digital dermatitis). Mobility scoring is more relevant for measuring the impact of lesions on any herd

Staff management and training plans

Tasks relating to lameness control include:

- Detection of lame cows/mobility scoring
- Treatment of lame cows
- Routine trimming
- Daily stock-handling (milking times/herding/bringing to parlour)
- Recording lesions and analysing lame cow data
- Maintaining hoof care equipment
- Liaising between mobility mentor and farm team
- Reviewing mobility contract
- Maintenance of tracks and surfaces

- Maintenance and cleaning of cow accommodation/yards
- Liaising with farm vet
- Identifying staff training requirements

Sufficient staff that have been trained to do these tasks are required. It is likely that every member of the farm team will have some part to play in reducing lameness. It is important that these roles are understood by everyone and that people work as a team. As a mentor, you can help correct gaps in skills by planning training for individuals. Consider whether back-up is required in certain tasks; for example, more than one person is able to mobility score, to cover for staff days off, or using the services of a professional hoof trimmer for routine trims. It is important that the necessary equipment is available. A well-trained individual in hoof care is wasted if they are expected to use unsuitable tools.

Table 2. Example of staff responsibility chart

Name	Detection	Treatment	Stock handling	Other
Rob	Yes*		Yes	Mobility records
Sally		Yes	Yes	
Smithy		Yes*	Yes	Lesion records
Jim				Knife sharpening

* = Key person responsible

Training plans:

In developing a training plan:

- Do not assume that members of staff will gain skills and knowledge as they go along, without training
- Beware of gaps in knowledge that can be detrimental to safety and the farm business
- Be realistic of the time scale required to gain competency, but set target dates to complete specific training

- Use outside assistance to help fill the gaps; eg, vet, accredited hoof trimmer, external mobility scorer
- Use your skills as a mobility mentor to help establish a farm's plan and to help fill in some of the gaps; for example, on-farm training workshops
- Choose a suitable, preferably accredited, trainer. The ability to train is not a skill that everyone possesses

A training plan (see example template) can help establish the level of competency in required areas and the need for further training.

Table 3. Example training plan

Name:

Date:

	Trained?	By Whom?	When?	Qualification	Confident?	Competent?	Training requirement
Mobility scoring							
Routine trimming							
Foot first aid							
Stock handling							
Recognising lesions							

Renew annually for each staff member

Marketing the HFP and charging for your time

While it is not our role to decide how you go about using the HFP in practice or how you charge for it, it is useful to share some successful approaches used by other mobility mentors.

1. Using trained para-professional mobility scorers to routinely collect lameness prevalence data is a huge asset to delivering the HFP. This is a service that farmers value – even more so when the data is used constructively.
2. It is unnecessary to quote one large lump sum for delivery of the whole programme.
3. Some vet practices offer a set monthly fee that includes some or all aspects of the programme and possibly additional services such as routine foot trimming.
4. Alternatively, other practices simply charge for their time in delivering the programme in a piecemeal manner. Even at the beginning, when there is more concentrated time involvement, this is usually spread between two or three months and is unlikely to be an unpalatable amount each month.
5. Some farms are required to have regular independent mobility scores for their milk contract (for example, retailer contracts). The HFP is a simple add-on from offering this service.
6. The HFP provides a framework for you to use. It has been demonstrated to be effective when delivered in its entirety however, there is still plenty of room for flexibility. For example, you can begin by making a visit to use the Risk Assessment Tool as a standalone exercise – let it build from there.
7. View the HFP as a continual service, not a one-off intervention. Give your HFP farms some recognition that sets them apart. All training associated with the HFP can be registered with Dairy Pro, the professional development register for the dairy industry (Dairypro.co.uk), but an HFP discussion group or club among your clients is another way.
8. Finally, do your cost-benefit exercises and you will easily show the value of the HFP. A typical lameness prevalence of 30% will cost around £220 per cow in the herd per year. A typical lameness incident will cost around £330 in lost milk, reduced cull value, reduced fertility and treatment. The full (year one) HFP is likely to cost no more than £1500 in total. This investment is covered by:
 - Just five less new cow lameness incidents over the year, or
 - A 2% reduction in lameness prevalence in a 100-cow herd, or
 - A 1% reduction in lameness prevalence in a 200-cow herd, or
 - A 0.5% reduction in lameness prevalence in a 400-cow herd



Appendices

1. Helping changes to happen

The HFP is a framework for successful lameness investigation and then facilitation to increase the likelihood of changes.

A very well known process called Kolb's Learning Cycle is widely used to describe how learning and – from that – change can be facilitated.

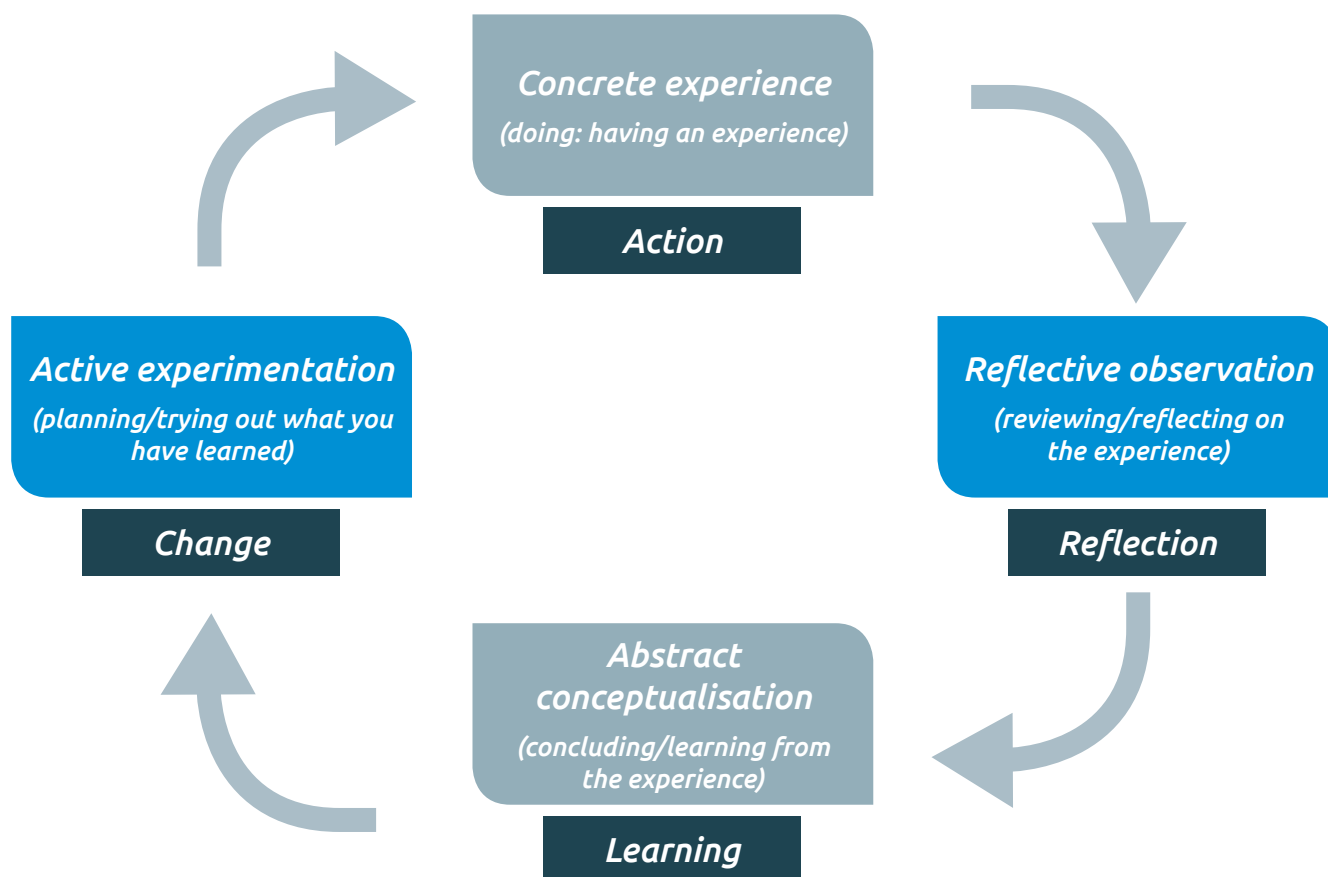


Figure 2. Kolb's Learning Cycle (adapted from Kolb, 1984)

The HFP uses this cycle of action, reflection, learning and change to help reduce lameness. The following article (The cycle of change) may help your understanding of your role, as a mobility mentor, in facilitating the process.

The cycle of change

Reducing lameness on any farm will require members of the farm team to make some changes. All change happens in stages. This diagram, which is similar to Kolb's Learning Cycle, illustrates the flow of change and also how change can be hindered at various points along the way.

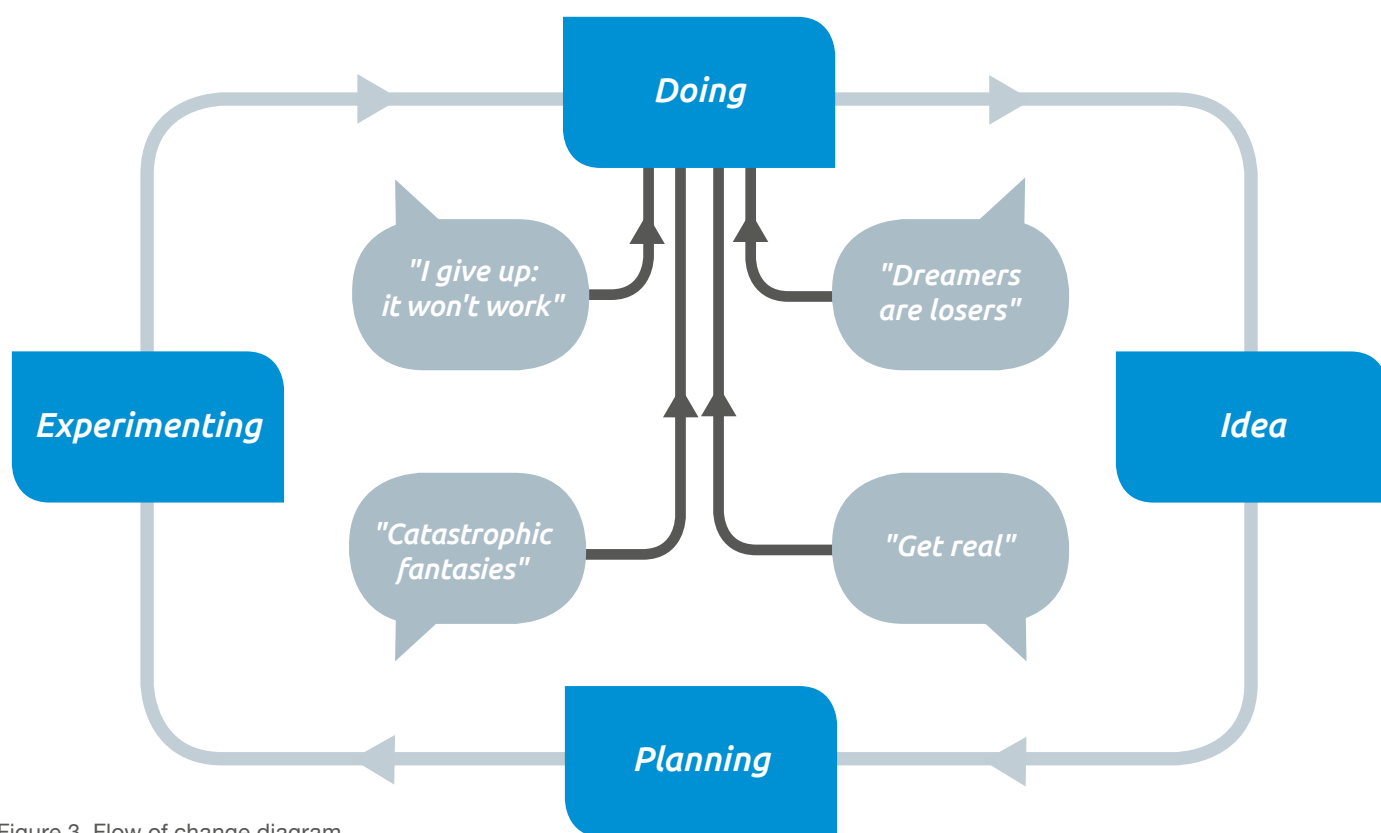


Figure 3. Flow of change diagram

Some people make changes readily, others less so. There is no right or wrong type of person, but it may help to understand what type of person you are working with.

The status quo "doing" phase acts like a magnet, pulling people back so change does not happen.

With any change, we all start at the beginning: the "doing" phase; the here and now. It may be getting up, milking cows, completing chores, eating, washing, going to bed, going out or watching television. It is living your current life.

The first thing needed for change to happen is to have an idea. Some people find this difficult ("dreamers are losers") and prefer to continue in the same way they always have. But let us look beyond this phase. Take, for example, an idea of converting old mattress cubicles to deep sand beds for better cow comfort. Imagine: "Oh, but no way! I can't afford to handle sand – not on my milk price! You must be mad!" This is the "get real" feeling. The farmer will be straight back to "doing" unless they can venture beyond their initial fear of the idea.

The "planning" phase is the rational stage of change. It is when pros and cons are weighed up. Lists are drawn, advice is sought. The feasibility of the change is properly investigated. Often outside help is valuable. It may be that the cons outweigh the pros.

Whether the decision to stick to "doing" is based on rational argument or irrational fear of catastrophe will depend largely on the individual and the quality of input in the planning stage. It is perfectly healthy to get this far around the change cycle and then dismiss the idea. It may be true that, in this case, the problems of dealing with sand in the slurry do outweigh the potential benefits of better cow comfort.

Conversely, the farmer may take the plunge. At some point, the planning phase moves to a point of definite commitment. For the sand cubicles, that may be arranging the finance, appointing the builder and pulling out the old cubicle mattresses. Now the farmer moves into the "experimentation" phase. The change is not completed and it would be foolish to think differently. In our example, the farmer must experiment with different amounts of sand, frequency of bedding and overcome teething problems.

In short, everyone has to make their decisions work for them. After a while though, the circle may complete and it will be back to the "doing phase". It will be part of the normal routine to manage new sand cubicles, deal appropriately with the slurry and hopefully enjoy having happier, less lame cows. At this stage, the farmer will have completed the cycle of change.

Your role as a mentor

If you look at the cycle of change diagram, you might be able to think of how you might tailor your role to facilitate each phase. To progress a farmer to the “idea” stage might require challenging their status quo, showing examples of different ways to do things, farm walks, introducing to farmer advocates, the use of the lameness cost calculator or inviting the farmer to discussion groups.

To move from the “idea” phase to the “planning” phase might require a bit of gentle coaching, recognising that changes can be fearful for various reasons. Ask about and listen to concerns: often, that is all that is needed.

At the “planning” stage, your role is more straightforward in many respects. Be rational, use an evidence base where possible and be practical in terms of costs, feasibility and likely benefits of the change. At the end of this stage, you and the farm team will have devised the mobility contract, outlining the planned changes.

Your next job is to ensure that the farm progresses to the “experimentation” stage and undertakes the agreed changes. Writing something on an action plan is very

different from actually implementing it! Introduction to farmer advocates, or helping in very practical ways, such as providing useful contacts, can be valuable. However, simply ensuring you remember (and pluck up courage) to ask how things are going is likely to be effective.

Your support remains essential at the “experimentation” stage. It is rare that success is immediate. If it is slow in coming do not assume that the change was the wrong one, but investigate how it is being done. Has there been a communication breakdown somewhere? Is there need for some reinforcement or further training? Is there need for some fine-tuning?

You should have an effective monitoring and reviewing process in place to check progress during the experimentation stage. If something has not worked out as you had all hoped, you need to know about it and try and understand the reasons why. Ask open questions and listen.

Finally, when changes bring improvements, be sure to give credit where it is due, celebrate the success and share your results so other farms are tempted to join the HFP.

Table 4. Table of responsibilities of each party

AHDB Dairy will:	Support development of the programme, both initially and with ongoing refinements Appoint an administrator of the programme to manage resources Maintain a register of trained mobility mentors, with an online search facility Provide the support materials and resources Promote the programme, including through the knowledge exchange manager network Support the online aspects of the programme Coordinate a steering group for the programme and maintain an effective group of stakeholders Maintain a record of registered farms and those that complete the programme
Programme providers (mobility mentors) will:	Deliver the programme to dairy farmer clients, consistent with the programme framework Register farms with AHDB Dairy Use the support materials, including the Risk Assessment Tool, for registered farms only Encourage accurate recording of lameness (mobility scoring and lesion incidence) in order to effectively monitor progress on HFP farms Keep up to date with best practice by regular attendance of lameness CPD and mobility mentor refresher workshops
Dairy farmers will:	Commit to the programme by encouraging the whole farm team to be involved Record lameness (lesions and mobility scores) so that progress can be monitored and the agreed actions can be reviewed and if necessary adjusted

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