Footbaths for the Prevention and Control of Digital Dermatitis

Each case costs an average of $170; it’s better to take action quickly!

Digital dermatitis...

Digital dermatitis is a disease caused by bacteria called treponemes.

It is a highly contagious disease that is difficult to control.

The use of footbaths is a sound strategy to control this disease in your herd, but it is not a magic bullet!

FOR A PREVALENCE OF AROUND 20%

THE RECOMMENDED FOOTBATH FREQUENCY IS 4 TIMES PER WEEK

Examples: 2 times per day for 2 days / 1 time per day for 4 days, etc.

If the prevalence of digital dermatitis is HIGHER THAN 20% and/or if the cleanliness score of feet and legs is high (Score of 3 and 4).

If the prevalence of digital dermatitis is LESS THAN 10%.

Score 1
The feet and legs are clean, with little or no manure on the feet.

Score 2
The feet and legs are slightly dirty, with some manure on the lower legs.

Score 3
The feet and legs are dirty, with plaques of manure on the feet extending up to the hocks.

Score 4
The feet and legs are very dirty, with a lot of dried layers of manure on the feet and higher than the hocks.

Footbaths are NOT TREATMENTS, they are a preventive measure. Your veterinarian and your hoof trimmer can help you choose the appropriate products for treating the active lesions and establish a prevention protocol using footbaths.

These are the basic principles you need to follow to improve your chances of achieving better control of digital dermatitis in your herd:

**The protocol**
- Establish a prevention protocol in cooperation with your veterinarian and your hoof trimmer.
- Reassess your protocol regularly and do not forget to include the dry cows and the heifers!

**Replace the footbath solution:**
- At every 150 to 200 passages or according to the manufacturer recommendations, if available;
- Every day even if the maximum number of passages is not reached; and,
- Clean the footbath between solution changes, because it can be a source of contagion.

**The footbath is placed:**
- Far from the exit of the milking parlour or robot;
- Carefully to ensure cows’ flow is not slowed down and does not obstruct cows’ exit from the robot;
- In an alleyway at the end of the rows of stalls; and,
- Close to an area where there is a source of water and a drain.

**Calculation of the concentration**

Footbath volume:
Length (cm) x Width (cm) x Depth of liquid (cm) = X cm³ / 1000 = X litres

E.g.: 310 cm x 60 cm x 11 cm = 204,600 cm³ / 1000 = 205 litres

Amount to be added to a 200-litre footbath according to the concentration of the product:

- **Solid ingredient at:**
  - 3% = 6 kg
  - 5% = 10 kg
  - 10% = 20 kg

- **Liquid ingredient at:**
  - 1% = 2 litres
  - 2% = 4 litres
  - 5% = 10 litres

For approved commercial footbath products, the instructions from the label must be followed thoroughly.

Examples of products to use*:
- 5% copper sulfate
- 3% acidified copper sulfate (pH 4)
- 5-10% zinc sulfate
- 1% thymol
- 2-5% formalin

*Do not mix the products.