

How to Foot Bathe Sheep

The Diseases

Scald

Caused by *Fusobacterium necrophorum*, found naturally in the environment. This bacteria gains entry when the interdigital skin is damaged, e.g. walking over stubble fields. All age groups are vulnerable. Skin between the claws becomes inflamed, moist and swollen, with no separation of the horn from deeper tissues. Treatment: Topical antibiotic spray or footbathing.

Footrot



Caused by *Dichelobacter nodusus*, which invades following Scald infection. Causes separation of the horn from the soft tissue, starting at the sole. Can be very severe. Sheep can act as carriers, and pasture is contaminated for 3 weeks after removal of infected sheep. Treatment: Topical antibiotic spray, footbathing and injectable antibiotics e.g. Alamyacin LA. Control: footbathing. There is a vaccine available.

Contagious Ovine Digital Dermatitis

This is a fairly new, severe disease caused by a Spirochete bacteria. It causes severe lameness and sloughing of the horn capsule starting at the coronary band.

Treatment: requires prompt aggressive treatment with injectable antibiotics – speak to a vet for further advice.

Foot Bathing

What with?

- Use a pre-wash clean water bath to remove loose organic matter. Especially important if using formalin.
- Then use a medicated bath:
 - 3% formalin: not pleasant to handle, cheap, can be disposed of in slurry.
 - 10% zinc sulphate: less dangerous, more expensive.
 - Proprietary footbathing chemical: make sure it is used at the correct concentration.
- DO NOT USE COPPER SULPHATE FOR SHEEP – can cause death if drunk

For how long?

- 3% formalin: sheep should slowly walk through bath.
- 10% zinc sulphate: sheep must stand in solution for at least 15 minutes to prevent footrot and 30mins to treat it.
- Proprietary footbathing chemical: follow instructions on packaging.

How often?

- At least 5 times per year in the absence of problems.
- Once a week if lameness is a problem.

Footbath construction?

- Size: not important
- Non-slip floor
- Fill: deep enough so entire foot is fully submerged in the solution (approx 6cm)
- Can use a sponge mat soaked in footbathing solution. Make sure the stand-in time is followed.
- Use foot baths with a corrugated base to spread the claws and allow penetration of foot bathing solution.

Post foot-bathing?

- Ideally, allow the animals to stand on a hard dry surface for an hour after foot bathing.
- Then turn them out onto a dry pasture.