



DICHELOBACTER NODOSUS

Footrot in Sheep and Goats

Footrot is a highly contagious disease that affects the tissue between the toes of ruminants. It is a common cause of lameness in cattle and sheep, leading to significant economic losses. Once established in a herd or flock, footrot can be challenging to control. This disease poses a costly burden on the sheep and goat industry, with producers investing considerable time and money in its management. However, with diligent management, footrot can be prevented, sparing the flock or herd from its impact and the need for extensive efforts to control and eliminate it.

CAUSES OF FOOTROT

Footrot is caused by two anaerobic bacteria: *Fusobacterium necrophorum* and *Dichelobacter nodosus*. These bacteria infect the interdigital tissue of ruminants, especially sheep. *F. necrophorum* causes foot scald and is commonly found in the soil and manure of pastures. *D. nodosus* can survive in the hoof under anaerobic conditions. The bacteria require interdigital irritation to gain entry for infection, which can occur due to moisture or trauma. Footrot is most prevalent in wet, moist areas, and high moisture levels at temperatures between 50°F to 70°F create an ideal soil reservoir for the bacteria.

PREVENTION OF FOOTROT

To prevent footrot, it is crucial to avoid introducing it to an uninfected herd or flock. Quarantine new animal additions for 30 days and trim their feet before allowing them to mingle with others.

Although less common, footrot can also spread through contaminated boots, vehicle tires, feeders, hoof trimmers, or handlers' hands. Producers should exercise caution if footrot is known to be present in the herd. During the wet season, maintaining sanitary conditions becomes especially important to reduce the risk of footrot outbreaks.



***This is a
Notifiable disease***

SYMPTOMS OF FOOTROT

Footrot can lead to lameness, causing reduced weight gain, decreased milk and wool production, and impaired reproductive capabilities. Severely affected animals may be reluctant to move, affecting their ability to feed properly. They often carry the affected leg or lie down for extended periods, resulting in wool or hair loss on their flanks, brisket, and knees.

TREATMENT OF FOOTROT

To treat footrot in sheep and goats, clean, debride, and disinfect the interdigital tissue. Administering one antibiotic treatment on the first day of the disease is usually sufficient, with recovery observed in three to four days. However, if treatment is delayed, multiple treatments may be necessary. Effective antibiotics include penicillin, oxytetracycline, and sulfonamides.

Sources

Footrot in sheep and goats - Purdue University. (n.d.-d). <https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/AS/AS-596-footrot.pdf>

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**The Idaho Sheep & Goat
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