

Footrot

Strategic prevention

Seek professional advice on a quarantine program for introductions. If biosecurity is impractical, get advice on footbaths and antibiotics.

- Limit sheep and goat entry into flock or property.
- Assume all introductions need to be quarantined.
- Seek Sheep Health Statements when buying sheep.
- Limit the number of sources of purchased sheep and buy on-farm.
- Develop a stray sheep agreement with neighbours.
- Implement good transport hygiene.
- Seek sheep and goat footrot history if buying cattle.
- In cool conditions, quarantine stock for 3–4 weeks provided this period includes 4–5 days with an average daily temperature of at least 10°C and sufficient moisture at ground to keep feet wet.
- In warm conditions, a quarantine period of seven days is recommended.
- If infected sheep have used common facilities/lanes, leave for seven days before use by clean mobs or use portable facilities.

Tactical response

Seek professional advice on control or eradication of virulent footrot and control of benign footrot.

Seek professional advice when detecting red/wet skin between toes (when temperatures are above 10°C) or if paring a misshapen hoof reveals pus or lifting horn.

Also seek professional advice on your responsibilities if you suspect footrot.

- Diagnose early to limit spread.
- Eradication options:
 - Destock for 2 weeks
 - Cycles of inspect feet/treat (vaccine – if available, footbath, antibiotics, dry weather)/cull/inspect.
- Control options:
 - Antibiotics
 - Frequent foot bathing (walk through or standing).

Likelihood

Footrot can start with one infected foot on one sheep. Footrot is more likely if sheep are purchased without a footrot declaration on a Sheep Health Statement or have been on agistment, in contact with straying stock or in shared facilities.

Benign footrot is also known as scald or non-progressive footrot and, although caused by mild strains of the same bacteria as virulent footrot, only causes mild lesions. Virulent footrot is when the bacteria rapidly under-run and separate the hoof horn from the foot.

Footrot spreads or worsens when the foot loses its natural defences against infection due to:

- bacteria type (benign, intermediate or virulent)
- an animal's variation in immunity
- an average daily temperature of 10°C for 4–5 days and enough months of moisture at foot level to weaken the skin and horn.

TIPS AND INFORMATION

Prevent footrot through biosecurity and biocontainment.

TIPS AND INFORMATION

If suspected, seek fast diagnosis and control or eradicate.

continued over page >

Footrot

Impact

- One or more feet on many sheep (at any age) can be affected in recurring years.
- Footrot can cause lameness, weight loss, poor wool growth and quality, poor fertility and flystruck feet.
- Foot symptoms can progress from:
 - red and moist skin between the toes (benign or virulent footrot); to
 - minor lifting of the hoof horn off the heel (benign or virulent footrot); to
 - complete lifting of the horn off the heel spreading to lift from the sole to the outer wall of the hoof and the toe (virulent footrot).
- Footrot must be declared on a Sheep Health Statement if moving into NSW or within South Australia.
- Footrot is notifiable to a government veterinary authority in ACT, NSW, SA, Victoria and WA.

Resources

State and Territory notifiable animal disease lists

www.agriculture.gov.au

New South Wales

Footrot in sheep and goats

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au

South Australia

Footrot in sheep

www.pir.sa.gov.au

Sheep diseases – the farmers' guide

www.sheepconnectsa.com.au

Tasmania

Eradicating virulent footrot using specific vaccines

www.sheepconnecttasmania.files.wordpress.com

Lameness in sheep and goats

www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au

Victoria

Sheep and all things feet – footrot and foot abscess

www.bestwool.com

Footrot in sheep

www.depi.vic.gov.au

Western Australia

Footrot

www.agric.wa.gov.au