

Foot Diseases of Sheep

Disorder	What do you See?	Cause/Transmission	Treatment	Prevention
Foot Rot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> starts as a scald with moist, reddened skin between the claws of the hoof as the infection progresses, it spreads and the outer portion of the hoof wall ('horn) which, starting at the heel, will separate away dead tissue appears as a greyish, moist zone beneath the loose horn there is often a foul odour, but no pus formation maggot infestation is a common complication during the fly season acute lameness, sheep walk on their knees if front feet are infected sheep lose body condition because of pain and some interference with feeding no abscesses form, and the area above the hoof is seldom involved sheep may not be obviously affected but they could be carriers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> both <i>Fusiformis necrophorus</i> and <i>Bacteroides nodosus</i> types of bacteria need to be present to cause foot rot initial scald is caused by <i>f.necrophorus</i> bacteria; scald irritation allows <i>b.nodosus</i> bacteria to enter deeper layers; infection created by <i>b.nodosus</i> allows deeper invasion of <i>f.necrophorus</i> bacteria is picked up from the soil and certain conditions increase likelihood of infection in wet footing (heavy rainfall, marshy pastures) hooves become soft and surrounding skin is easily irritated or injured bacteria grow in the absence of oxygen, therefore overgrown or deformed hooves are more susceptible as there tend to be cracks and pockets in hooves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> foot rot is notoriously difficult to completely clear up - contact your veterinarian for an exact diagnosis and detailed recommendations for treatment. treatment is expensive, labour intensive, and may take weeks to months to be successful footbath is essential (formaldehyde, copper or zinc sulfate) examine and trim feet of all sheep (even those not showing signs - disinfect trimmers between each sheep) identify all affected sheep and isolate as a 'diseased' flock new cases will likely occur, so monitor 'clean' flock closely and remove affected animals as soon as possible 'clean' and infected animals should go through footbath (individual sheep must stand for at least five minutes) your vet can provide a detailed treatment regime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> only buy new stock from known and reputable flocks check feet on new stock for any signs of rot, and keep in quarantine for 2-3 weeks before mixing with the rest of the flock perform regular hoof trimming on the entire flock and/or cull sheep with poor feet avoid wet, muddy pastures and corrals if possible
Foot Scald	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> inflammation of skin between the toes some separation of the hoof from the foot may occur, but there is no greyish rotting and no offensive odour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> caused when <i>Fusiformis necrophorus</i> alone is present seen when feet are wet for a prolonged period (heavy rains, marshy pastures) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> as infection remains on the surface, treatment less intensive than with foot rot put sheep on clean dry ground and they recover quickly foot bath may speed recovery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> avoid using wet pastures and corrals
Foot Abscess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> may separate hoof from sole often causes swelling and rupture of skin above the hoof trimming shows yellowish pus material when abscess is opened sheep may become quite ill and die of blood poisoning in acute, severe cases if chronic infection is deep enough to involve joints and connective tissues, simple treatment will not be effective and chronic arthritis may develop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> infection entry is through broken toes, scald injury, cracked walls, injury on junky yards, wooden sticks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> simple abscesses may be drained, flushed out with 2 per cent tincture of iodine and an injection of antibiotic given into the muscle sheep with badly swollen foot may need to be treated by a veterinarian 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintain pastures (clear junk etc)