



## Code of Working Practices: Cattle Foot Trimming

First drafted and agreed October 2006. Updated June 2016

### 1. General Principles:

- 1.1 We encourage professional hoof trimmers to belong to the National Association of Cattle Foot Trimmers (NACFT), and declare their qualifications.
- 1.2 The NPTC qualification of Level 3 Certificate of Competence in Cattle Foot Trimming is recognised as the standard UK qualification in cattle foot trimming which professional foot trimmers should have attained, as a minimum. The Dutch Diploma is also recognised (currently awarded via Embryonics and Pieter Kloosterman in the UK).
- 1.3 Professional hoof trimmers without a Dutch Diploma or NPTC Certificate should undertake study for qualification.
- 1.4 We encourage vets to recognise the role of professional cattle foot trimmers, and encourage farmers to use NACFT members.
- 1.5 We encourage vets and professional hoof trimmers to work in conjunction with each other wherever possible to reduce lameness on farms.

### 2. Understanding the Veterinary Surgeons Act:

- 2.1 The 1966 Veterinary Surgeons Act is designed to safeguard the welfare of animals by limiting what procedures and medical treatments non-veterinarians can undertake.
- 2.2 Section 19 of the Act provides, subject to a number of exceptions, that only registered members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons may practise veterinary surgery. 'Veterinary surgery' is defined within the Act as follows:

“veterinary surgery” means the art and science of veterinary surgery and medicine and, without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, shall be taken to include—

- a. the diagnosis of diseases in, and injuries to, animals including tests performed on animals for diagnostic purposes;
- b. the giving of advice based upon such diagnosis;
- c. the medical or surgical treatment of animals; and
- d. the performance of surgical operations on animals.'

2.3 Professional hoof trimmers are able to carry out their trimming work largely under an exception, made in Schedule 3 of the Act:

"the animal owner or person engaged in caring for animals used in agriculture may carry out medical treatment or minor surgery not involving entry into a body cavity, in accordance with Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966".

### 3. Recording observations and sharing information:

3.1 Hoof trimmers should record their findings during the routine trimming of cows. As a minimum, the following conditions should be recognised and recorded where appropriate:

Digital dermatitis

White line disease including white line abscesses

Foul of the foot (interdigital necrobacillosis)

Sole ulcer

Sole bruising (haemorrhage)

Toe necrosis

In addition, it is helpful to record further details, such as if a particular farm has a lot of heel horn erosion or thin soles, for example.

3.2 The format in which the observations are recorded is down to the foot trimmer, as long as they are in a form that can be made readily available to the farmer's vet *with the farmer's permission*.

3.3 Vets should similarly allow foot trimmers access to their findings in relation to lameness on a particular farm if the *farmer's permission has been given*.

3.4 We do not consider that the observation and recording of lameness lesions made by a professional foot trimmer constitutes a contravention of the 1966 Veterinary Surgeons Act.

- 3.5 However, trimmers should remain aware of the limit of their expertise and should be careful not to be drawn into providing veterinary advice or diagnoses.
- 3.6 Notwithstanding any obligations to respect client confidentiality, we encourage active and regular communication between vets and foot trimmers working for the same client. It is within everyone's interest, and the interest of the cattle, to develop a team approach to lameness reduction which involves vet, farmer and trimmer.
- 3.7 Communication should be real not nominal and it is important that each party makes this communication as easy as possible, for example by sharing appropriate contact details and seeking clients' permission for communication in the first instance.

#### 4. Corrective foot-trimming techniques

- 4.1 We consider it appropriate for a properly trained (and qualified) professional foot trimmer to correctively trim lame cows' feet which have lesions, as well as routinely trim overgrown claws.
- 4.2 The principles of corrective trimming are well defined in the "Dutch Method" or "5-step method" of bovine claw trimming. In essence, where a lesion exists, this involves trimming to reduce weight bearing by the affected claw, and reduction of pressure around the site of the lesion.
- 4.3 The use of foot blocks on the contra-lateral claw is an integral part of reducing weight bearing by an affected claw. Foot trimmers and vets should encourage their use.
- 4.4 Where blocks are applied, it is the responsibility of the person who applied them that the farmer has clear instructions for their removal or appropriate monitoring of such animals. We strongly encourage that animals with blocks applied have rechecks scheduled to assess any need for further treatment.
- 4.5 There is evidence that the inclusion of non-steroidal anti-inflammatories in the treatment of claw horn lesions speeds recovery and reduces the risk of relapse. The use of these medicines is to be encouraged but must be prescribed by a veterinary surgeon.

## 5. Applying treatment to infections:

- 5.1 A professional foot trimmer would reasonably be expected to treat cases of digital dermatitis that they encounter by the application of a suitable licensed topical antibiotic or other licensed product provided by the farmer, that has been prescribed by the farmer's vet.
- 5.2 We encourage vets to devise treatment protocols for the commonly encountered conditions, such as digital dermatitis. We would expect these to be available in written format on farm for a trimmer to read and use.
- 5.3 A professional foot trimmer would be expected to recognise a case of simple foul of the foot. The foot trimmer should notify the farmer so that he/she can treat the infection with suitable antibiotics prescribed for that purpose by the farmer's vet.
- 5.4 If in doubt as to the nature of the infection, the foot trimmer should always advise the farmer to seek advice from his/her own vet.
- 5.5 A foot trimmer should never advise on the use of an antibiotic or carry/supply antibiotic.
- 5.6 It is strongly advised that the farmer or farm worker should administer any antibiotic injections so that there is no confusion as to whose responsibility it is to ensure that withdrawal times are adhered to, for example.

## 6. Knowing when to call in the vet:

- 6.1 We do not consider that corrective foot trimming of lame cows constitutes an act of veterinary surgery, but professional foot trimmers may at times find themselves under pressure from farmers to break the law by undertaking procedures that should only be performed by a vet.
- 6.2 It is important that the foot trimmer recognises when veterinary treatment is required. Examples are:
  1. Infection into the pedal joint, or any procedure involving the joint.
  2. Removal of interdigital growths.
  3. Any procedure requiring anaesthetic. This includes any procedure or surgery involving the sensitive tissues of the foot (e.g. corium or laminae). If such surgery is required, it must always be done by a vet or under *direct veterinary supervision* (with the vet present).

4. Lameness not involving the foot.
5. Infections other than digital dermatitis or simple foul of the foot.

## 7. Miscellaneous: use of bandages; rotary rasps; footbath advice

- 7.1 The use of bandages by foot trimmers may be appropriate in some circumstances (e.g.: holding in place topical antiseptic for the treatment of digital dermatitis). However, their routine use by professional foot trimmers should not be necessary, and excessive use would imply that the foot trimmer is using methods other than corrective foot trimming using the Dutch method.
- 7.2 Where bandages are applied, it is the responsibility of the person who applied them that the farmer has clear instructions for their timely removal. We strongly encourage that animals with bandages have rechecks scheduled to assess any need for further treatment.
- 7.3 The use of rotary rasps (grinders) for foot trimming is commonplace amongst professional foot trimmers. Their use should be limited only to trimmers who have received correct training in the Dutch method and have gained previous experience in the use of knives. Rasps should be of the cutting disc variety rather than abrasive discs, which tend to produce excess heat that can be dangerous to the foot. Anyone involved in the care of cattle feet should be aware of the severe injuries to the cow or operator that can result from incorrect use of a rotary rasp or grinder.
- 7.4 We recognise that professional hoof trimmers may reasonably advise farmers about foot bathing to promote good hoof health, based on their experience (for example frequency, foot bath dimensions, suitable disinfectant, location etc.). Hoof trimmers should not, however, offer any advice on antibiotic use in footbaths.