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## Foot scoring

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### ***Introduction***

Foot health related problems, including footrot can be assessed by scoring feet (left front and hind and right front and hind) into a range of categories describing increasingly severe definitions of footrot.

### ***Foot scoring***

Scoring should be carried out on all adult sheep including hoggets. The following are categories by which an animal may be recorded:

0. Normal hoof. No signs of any foot lesion, infection or irritation
1. Mild interdigital dermatitis ('scald') with some loss of hair. Slight to moderate inflammation confined to inter-digital skin and may involve erosion of epithelium
2. More extensive interdigital dermatitis and necrotising inflammation of inter-digital skin
3. Severe interdigital dermatitis and under-running of the horn of the heel and sole
4. Severe interdigital dermatitis and under-running of the horn of the heel and sole and with under-running extending towards the walls of the hoof

### **Contemporary group**

Sheep Ireland does need to know if there have been systematic differences between groups of animals that are foot scored within a year. These may be due to different management (feeding groups) or a different operator scoring them for foot health. These treatment differences can be accounted for by assigning animals to different groups. You can think of them as "groups" on the basis of whether they were run together, or not, during the period when foot lesions developed, on whether some sheep were treated while some were not, and on the basis of who performed the foot scoring. As with lambing group, the grouping of animal involves assigning ewes to a group from group 1 upwards (depending on the number of groups). It is as simple as ensuring the ewes in the same group get the same group number, not the group number itself.

It is beneficial to attempt to treat all animals the same. Foot bathing can be carried out, but score the animals prior to this, and then bath all animals

### **When to collect data**

Scoring should be carried out on all adult sheep including hoggets routinely twice a year, once pre-mating and once at weaning (hoggets should be included at these times regardless of whether they are mated or not). This will ensure that accurate estimates of genetic merit for footrot resistance. In addition any observations and/or treatments for foot health problems should be recorded outside the routine check time. The more data collected the better in this case.

## **You or the technician**

Foot scoring should be carried out by you as a breeder.