
Foot scoring – MALP

Introduction

Foot health related problems, including footrot can be assessed by scoring feet into a range of categories describing increasingly severe definitions of footrot.

Foot scoring

Scoring should be carried out on an incidence basis throughout the year on any recorded progeny. When an incidence occurs, all feet should be assessed and the animal should be scored based on one foot (the worst affected one) falling into one of the following categories:

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 that you observe to have foot health problems first and then bath all recorded lambs.

When to collect data

Scoring should be carried out on an incidence/ observation basis throughout the year on any recorded progeny. This can either be when incidences are recognised at animal handling events (e.g. at weighing) or on a continuous basis throughout. Scoring should be carried out on all recorded progeny, throughout the lifetime of that animal. Multiple incidences (if they occur) should be recorded for the same animal. This will ensure that accurate estimates of genetic merit for footrot resistance. The more data collected the better in this case.

You or the technician

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