

## HOOF HEALTH IMPORTANCE



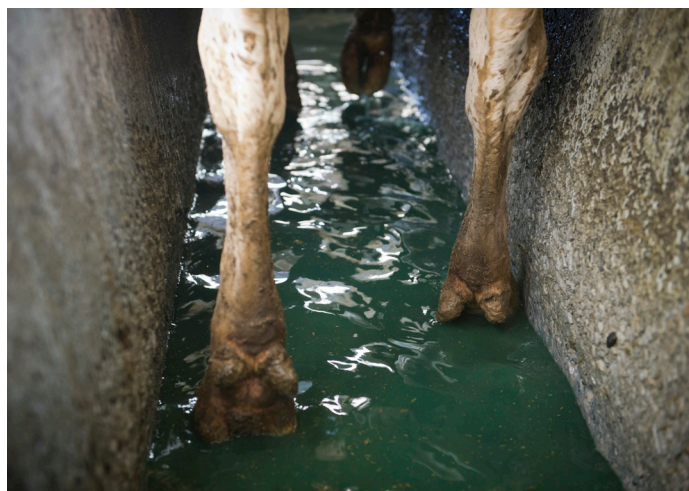
A hoof maintenance schedule is one of the most important contributors to successful dairy operations. Foot health is directly related to production and ignored lameness in a herd is far more costly than the price of a hoof health program.

The most common factors leading to lameness:

- Terrain and travel distance to the parlor
- Acidosis brought on by faulty nutrition
- Improper or lack of a footbath protocol

### Minimize Rough Terrain

Excessive travel, especially over rough flooring wears the hoof horn faster and results in thin soles and abscesses. Poor sanitation and overcrowding can also lead to foot rot and sole overgrowth. Animals standing in manure for extended periods are often stricken with foot rot, and/or digital dermatitis. Consider using rubber mats to increase cow comfort and frequently clean alleys to eliminate excess manure.



### Prevent Acidosis with Nutrition

Laminitis is inflammation of the sensitive tissues of the foot lying immediately under the horn of the hoof. It is recognized by a yellow discoloration or blood spots in the sole. The cause is often rumen acidosis that is the fault of nutritional imbalances. To prevent acidosis, gradually increasing the grain to forage ratio over time is the best way to prevent this problem. Your herd's nutritionist can offer advice to control/minimize acidosis in your cattle.

### Establish Footbath Protocols

Footbath protocols vary, but are instrumental for healthy feet. Formaldehyde, copper with acidifiers, and zinc-based products are most commonly used. Frequency of footbaths differs from farm to farm, but using a footbath four days a week is widely accepted. For high incidence rates of digital dermatitis, continual use may be necessary until the outbreak is under control. Also take into consideration product rotation. Traditional formaldehyde isn't effective under 50° F. For the farms operating a four-day cycle, consider switching out copper sulfate with zinc for a day.

Also be mindful of improper use of footbaths. Footbaths should be no less than 10 feet long to ensure two dunks per foot and 5 inches deep is necessary to ensure complete coverage of the entire foot. Tunneling the bath will lessen the chance of the cow side-stepping the footbath. Footbaths are often set up in the return ally of the milking parlor.

To successfully know when a footbath solution should be changed, pH strips are an inexpensive and fast indicator. The pH level of the footbath determines the effectiveness and when the pH is too high, the chemicals in the footbath become ineffective. The pH should remain between levels of 3-4 while cows are passing through the foot bath. Generally a pH of 4 is exceeded after approximately 200 cow passes but using pH test strips throughout the process can give an accurate assessment of how many cows can pass through effectively. A general rule is the chemicals used should be 5% of the total volume. To determine the volume of your footbath, simply multiply length by height by width (in inches) and divide by 231.

Visit [armoranimalhealth.com](http://armoranimalhealth.com) or call to request a catalog for the latest hoof product offerings.

# DETECT. DEFEND. DELIVER.