

EXPERT INSIGHTS

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EPIVETS



“LAMENESS REMAINS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT HEALTH AND WELFARE CHALLENGES ON NEW ZEALAND DAIRY FARMS,,,”

Dairy cattle lameness remains one of the most important health and welfare challenges on dairy farms. It reduces cows’ ability to move normally and compete for feed, which can flow through into lower milk yield, poorer body condition, reduced reproductive performance, and earlier culling. It is also a **major welfare concern, and it places real pressure on farm teams who are trying to do the right thing while managing time, labour, and cost.** At an industry level, lameness contributes to lower efficiency and higher emissions intensity per kg of milk, and it is increasingly part of the public conversation about the social licence to farm.

Despite lameness being **widespread on New Zealand dairy farms**, there has historically been limited NZ-specific research to explain why it occurs in our pasture-based systems and what we can do to reduce it. That gap is what drove Winston Mason, a farm veterinarian turned epidemiologist, to focus much of his career on lameness and complete a PhD on reducing the burden of dairy cattle lameness in New Zealand. A clear message from that NZ research is that, while we still cannot fully account for all the drivers of lameness, the most effective lever we have right now is to improve how we identify and treat lame cows.

Winston recommends the ED-PET approach, which is considered to be the best practice. Early Detection followed by Prompt Examination and Treatment, so cows return to soundness sooner and fewer become repeat cases. This is not just “treatment”, it is a practical, evidence-based prevention strategy that applies whether a farm has one lame cow or one hundred, and this approach is reflected in the updated DairyNZ **PREVENTING AND MANAGING LAMENESS GUIDE.**

Below is a list of reference materials published by Dr Winston Mason

01: Repeatability of Whole-Herd Lameness Scoring

How reliable whole-herd scoring is across NZ dairy farms. [Link](#)

02: Age, Calving and Lameness Risk

How age and time since calving affect lameness risk. [Link](#)

03: NSAIDs in Lameness Treatment

Review of anti-inflammatory use in claw horn lameness treatment. [Link](#)

04: Exercise Before First Calving

How pre-calving exercise influences lameness risk in heifers. [Link](#)

05: Recovery from Claw Horn Lameness

Treatment recovery outcomes for lame dairy cows. [Link](#)

06: Meloxicam and Lameness Recovery

Effects of meloxicam on recovery and reproductive outcomes. [Link](#)

07: Farmer Motivation and Lameness Prevalence

How farmer attitudes influence herd lameness levels. [Link](#)

08: Claw Lesions in Dairy Heifers

Case study of claw lesions occurring after calving. [Link](#)

09: Lameness Prevalence on NZ Dairy Farms

Observational study of lameness across pasture-based systems. [Link](#)

10: Farm-Level Risk Factors for Lameness

Management and treatment factors associated with lameness. [Link](#)

