

# Footrot: A Stinky Situation

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You walk out into the pasture and notice a ewe or nanny is holding her foot up. You see another limping around. You look at the hoof, notice it is swollen, the hoof layers are separated, and it stinks something awful. If it is or was recently warm and wet outside, there is a good chance it is footrot.

Footrot is caused by an infection from two bacteria that has been introduced to the farm. Typically, the bacteria can be introduced via new animals that were infected. Poor sanitation, warm temperatures (above 50°F), and wet conditions provide the perfect anaerobic (lack of oxygen) conditions for the bacteria to spread. It spreads from an infected animal to the ground and picked up by a noninfected animal. Outside the hoof, the bacteria have a short life span. If you can identify the pasture or part of the pasture where animals seem to be contracting the infection, if left alone for two weeks it can be considered noninfectious.



Since the bacteria thrives in anaerobic conditions, introducing oxygen helps in elimination. Proper hoof trimming is important to help in prevention. Keeping hooves from being overgrown will aid in eliminating mud and manure compaction. Overgrown hooves also stress the skin to be damaged providing another means of entry for the bacteria. Additionally, keeping your flocks and/or herds away from areas of standing water or areas that are constantly damp will aid in prevention.

Injectable antibiotics and foot baths are highly effective treatment methods if used properly. Consult with a veterinarian to understand products available, dosages, and timing of treatments. Once an animal has been treated, it should be kept in a clean, dry environment for at least 24 hours.

Once footrot is introduced to your farm, it can be hard to eliminate. Culling is a good way to help in elimination. Animals that are chronic should be culled as they are repeat offenders costing time and money and most likely the ones spreading the infection. It is important to utilize proper sanitation methods. Clean and disinfect hoof shears between animals and practice proper biosecurity measures when introducing new or recently transported animals to your farm. No one likes a stinky situation especially when it is footrot.