

River View Veterinary Service Newsletter

April 2019

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 4

215 N Main Street
PO Box 250
Port Byron, IL 61275
Office: 309.848.9093
Fax: 309.848.9094
www.riverviewvets.com



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*Welcome to the River View Veterinary Service Newsletter,
designed to provide cattle producers with
timely information and education on a variety of topics.
Sarah Foust, DVM and Terry Foust, DVM*

Toe abscesses need more attention

(Adapted from Alan Newport, Beef Magazine Oct 26, 2018)

Lameness probably continues to be an undertreated ailment in cattle.

Historically, feeders tend to pull lame cattle only when they fall behind the rest of the pen, says Dr. Shane Terrell, a veterinarian and staff member of Production Animal Consultation at Gothenburg, Nebraska. The problem with that methodology is when you wait so long those primary injuries become secondary injuries such as septic joints. He believes there is quite a bit of room for improvement across the industry.

In the slow-to-pull and slow-to-treat model of handling lameness, toe and sole abscesses aren't often differentiated from leg injuries because of similarity of pain reaction. The misdiagnosis of abscesses as stifle problems, in fact, continues to be a problem, Dr. Terrell says. To a degree the same things could be said of a lack of differentiation between hairy heel wart (digital dermatitis) and foot rot.

Abscesses have four contributing factors, Dr. Terrell says.

1. Rough or improper processing surfaces
2. Poor handling
3. Dehydration
4. Length of haul

Some concrete surfaces create what Dr. Terrell calls a "slip-and-catch" circumstance, wherein cattle hooves slip on a smooth surface and then catch on a bump. Handling should be slowed down to remove stress from the cattle. Dehydration, such as occurs with long-haul trucking, is a major contributor to abscesses because the first place cattle lose circulation is in their extremities, he says.

Treatment options

Abscesses need to be drained by nipping off the toe of the damaged hoof for toe abscesses, or the majority of the sole for sole abscesses. When left without drainage, the infection only has two options: Travel up into the leg or leak out at the top of the hoof along the coronary band.

If your herd is struggling with toe abscesses, give us a call! We'll help get to the bottom of it!