



"A Lamé Article"

Just how serious is a lame bovine, and do I need to treat it? Obviously, it depends on what's causing the lameness. In my experience, I've seen anything from mild muscle sprains to torn cruciate ligaments, or a wire wrapped and embedded into purulent tissue that should've been taken out two weeks ago. Assessing the mobility of your critters and knowing what's an emergency and what's not can be difficult. A lame breeding bull this time of year, for example, is an emergency, as it can affect his ability and desire to mount a cow, being detrimental both to his health and your calving season next year. If your lame critter is completely non-weight bearing on one limb, it definitely needs attention. One way to assess which limb is affected is to watch their head while they walk. Remember "Down on Sound," as their head will bob down when they're bearing weight on the sound limb, but will bob up when they put weight on the "lame" limb in an effort to take weight off the sore limb. This is most pronounced on the front limbs. Also, look for swelling in the leg or around the foot. A swollen leg could mean muscle sprain, ligament issues, abscess, or a nasty infection that got into the joint. Cruciate ligament (in the stifle joint) issues tend to have a poor prognosis due to the inability to repair a torn ligament and the affects they have on a cows ability to get around. Swelling around the foot could mean foot rot, toe abscess, or even a foreign object (wire, etc). Buckling of one or both of the rear legs at the point of the fetlock usually means nerve trauma in the pelvis. It's usually caused by a difficult calving or sometimes from being rode by the bull or a fellow herd-mate. Hairy-heel warts (aka strawberry warts) usually show up between the claws on the heel, and are very painful. Cows usually will walk on the tips of the affected foot to avoid putting weight on the heel. Usually warts only show up in dairy facilities, but will find their way into beef cattle that are housed in an old dairy barn or in a place where there's a lot of year-round moisture. There are a few inherited foot problems to watch out for. Long claws or corkscrew claws can be inherited, especially if more than one foot is involved. These cows can still live long lives, but require yearly hoof trimming. Vertical hoof cracks (aka sand cracks) are more evident in cattle living in the more arid, sandy areas, but there is also a genetic factor to them also. Again, there's usually more than one foot involved in an inherited trait. It is good to be aware of the various foot and leg ailments, so that you can speed the time of recovery. An injection of antibiotics definitely doesn't cover all the possible issues with feet and leg problems, so if there's any question consult your veterinarian or local hoof trimmer. Hope your summer isn't a lame one!