

HEALTHYFEET



# Healthy Feet Programme Farmers Guide



DAIRY



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The information in this booklet was compiled with help from Owen Atkinson, Dairy Veterinary Consultancy Ltd.

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# Introduction

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The Healthy Feet Programme (HFP) has been developed to help you reduce the number of lame cows on your farm by identifying and applying the right solutions.

Lame cows cost time and money and are a problem. No-one wants to see cows that cannot walk properly. Herd lameness affects staff morale and the image of dairy farming.

Lameness is a term that covers many conditions: some caused by infections and some by physical and management factors. An understanding of the types of lameness present on your farm, coupled with knowledge of the most beneficial changes you can make, will help you to tackle lameness effectively and permanently.

The HFP is a stepwise approach to help you diagnose the problems, devise an action plan and develop the skills needed for long-term lameness control. Trained programme deliverers facilitate the whole process and act as one-to-one advisers or 'mobility mentors'.



## What is a mobility mentor?

A 'mobility mentor' has been trained specifically to deliver the HFP. They are usually vets with a special interest and expertise in lameness control. They will work with you to introduce the most appropriate working and management practices to reduce lameness on your farm.

### How does it work?

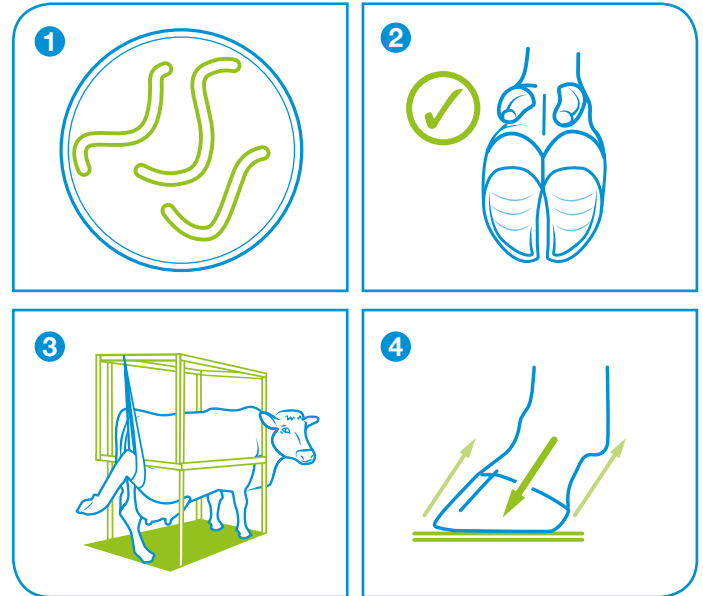
- Working with your mentor, you will use the HFP Risk Assessment Tool to work out which changes will be the most productive to reduce lameness on your farm
- Every farm is different and there are often many people on a farm who influence lameness levels – everybody needs to be involved. Your mentor has been trained to guide you and your team so that the changes you make will be effective
- Your mentor will help you find ways to measure and monitor improvements. You will be supported to ensure the changes work. If you wish, you may become involved in benchmarking with other farms so you can learn from the experience of others and share what works

### The programme provides you with the materials you need to:

- Recognise, treat and record lesions properly (the Hoof Care Field Guide)
- Mobility score effectively and ensure your staff can too
- Understand foot bathing and make sure it works for your herd
- Cost out lameness in your herd and calculate a cost-benefit for the changes you consider

### The programme is based around Four Success Factors:

1. Low infection pressure
2. Good hoof shape, horn quality and digital cushion
3. Early detection and prompt, effective treatment of lame cows
4. Low forces on the feet (good cow comfort and good cow flow)



*The aim of the programme is to help you make the necessary changes to reduce lameness and improve your business performance.*





## Summary of the programme

### *Data review*

- Herd lameness prevalence estimated using an independent **whole herd mobility score**
- The farm's '**Lameness Map**' is devised using a Participatory Epidemiology approach; analysis of available treatment and trimming records, plus discussion of which lesions are recognised most frequently
- A **cost benefit** potential is calculated

### *Risk assessment and action plan*

- The HFP **Risk Assessment Tool** examines all the **environmental** and **managerial** impacts on lameness in the herd
- Interventions and changes are **prioritised** to those that will be most beneficial
- Results used to facilitate development of an **action plan**, agreed by the whole team

### *Follow up*

- Ongoing **monitoring**, using regular independent mobility scoring, assesses the impact of changes on herd lameness and leads to a **cost-benefit analysis**
- **Support** is given through access to further **skills training** and **benchmarking** with other HFP farms
- Continual regular **review** of data and **targets** with periodic reassessment of risks



"The whole dairy team here at Manor Farm got involved and we now have a mobility contract on the dairy office wall with 15 action points, who is responsible for each action, by when and a progress column. Some of the actions we were able to implement straightaway and some are more long term. We are now all much more focused on lameness and we have already seen a 40 per cent reduction in cows with mobility score 2 and 3. We all helped draw up the plan so we feel we have ownership and a set of achievable targets."

**Mark Humphry, Manor Farm, working with Synergy Farm Health Vets, Dorset**



## The HFP in more detail

### Step one: find your baseline

This will include having an independent **whole herd mobility score** calculated by a trained mobility scorer. This will give your baseline lameness prevalence.

### Step two: skills review, diagnosis and costs

Your mobility mentor will visit and assess a proportion of cows' feet using the facilities available on farm. Together, you will discuss how different diseases arise, review the foot trimming process and the foot conditions that are most commonly seen on your farm.

Many farmers find this a useful process to review how they undertake trimming and foot treatments, allowing them to refresh their techniques and practices.

Your mobility mentor will also review whatever data is available on lameness treatments on the farm. These can include data maintained by an external foot trimmer and could be either paper or computerised records. You will use these records, plus your own perceptions, to devise a '**Lameness Map**'. This is a simple visual representation of the relative incidence of the most common lesions and is used to identify the most important success factors for the farm.

Finally, you will use the herd prevalence score (mobility score) to calculate a **cost-benefit potential** for reducing lameness to a target level, which you agree is realistic. This is an opportunity to discuss the likely impacts that lameness will be having on the herd and your motivations for reducing lameness.



### Step three: full farm risk assessment

With your mobility mentor, you will use the **HFP Risk Assessment Tool** to carry out a thorough risk assessment of the farm's environment and management with respect to lameness. This exercise is likely to take around three hours and part of it should always take place during milking time.

### Step four: agree an action plan

It is suggested that the **whole farm team** is included. Following steps 1–3, you will now be able to see where the lameness critical control points are.

The culmination of this step will be the production of a **'mobility contract'** that contains the agreed points of action with time frames and allocated responsibilities.

### Step five: recording, monitoring, reviewing and benchmarking

An action plan will not in itself reduce lameness. The HFP is most successful when it is ongoing.

As a minimum, obtaining independent whole herd mobility scores on a quarterly basis allows you to monitor changes in lameness prevalence. Benchmarking can be done against the herd's targets and, if desired, against other HFP farms. The support given to you by your mobility mentor during step five is probably the most important aspect for seeing that lameness levels reduce.

Staff changes, alterations in circumstances or simply needing to tackle new risks that were not the initial priorities, all mean that it is good habit to do a new risk assessment and agree a new mobility contract approximately once a year.

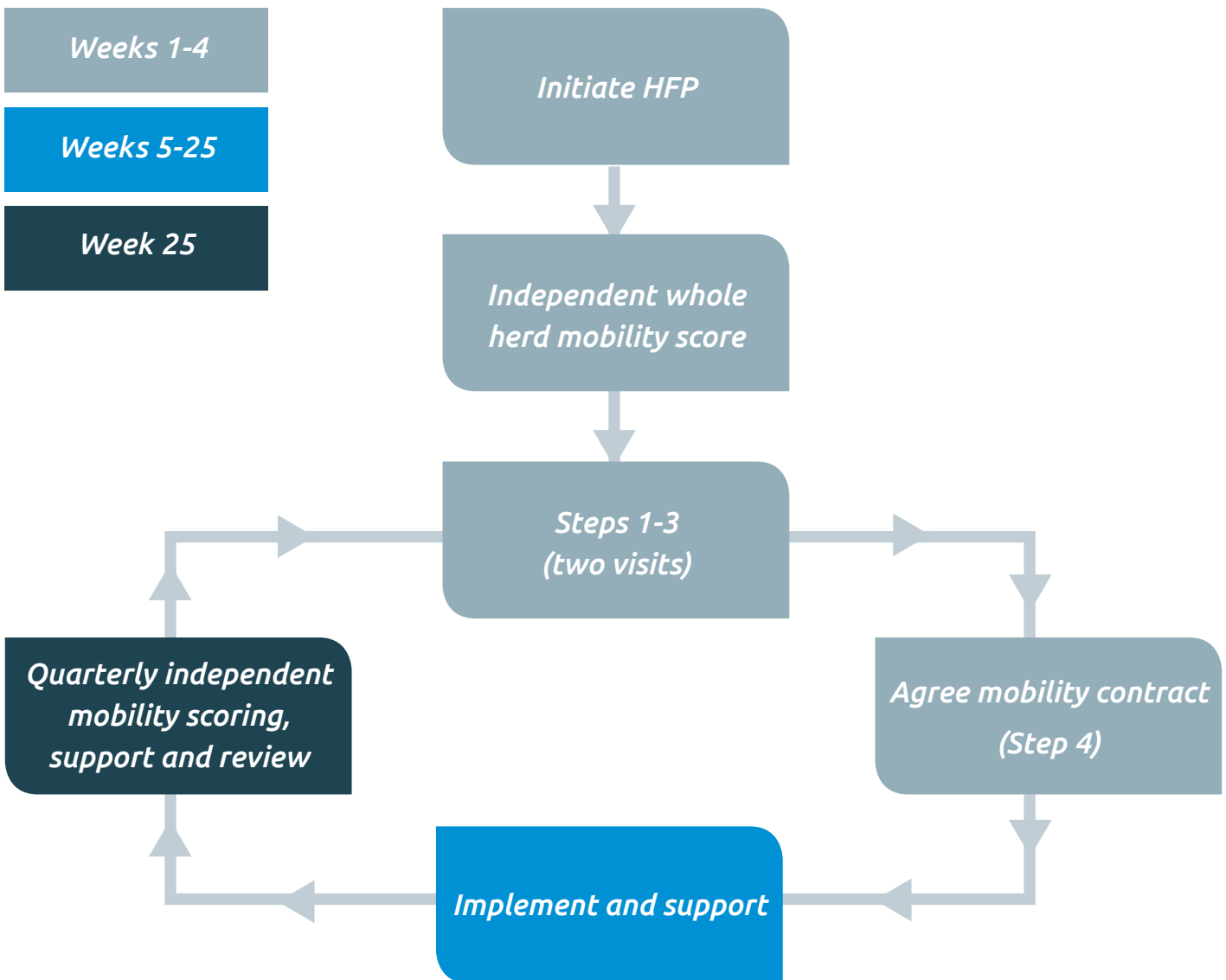


Figure 1: Time frame of programme

## Qs and As about the HFP

What?	Why?
<p>What is the HFP?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A proven approach to lameness reduction</li> <li>• Targeted assistance using external input (mobility mentors)</li> <li>• An array of resources to increase understanding and knowledge (mobility toolkit)</li> <li>• A systematic approach tailored to individual farms</li> </ul>	<p>Why use the HFP?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reduce the number of lame cows (severe, chronic or new)</li> <li>• To save time and money and improve staff morale</li> <li>• To reduce new lame cases rather than just dealing with those already lame because this is a more valuable use of your resources</li> </ul>
How?	What if?
<p>How does the HFP work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It increases skills and knowledge so the whole farm team knows what to do to reduce lameness</li> <li>• It uses trained facilitators (mobility mentors) to guide the process</li> <li>• It brings the farm team together in a structured way to implement the necessary changes</li> <li>• It provides a framework to measure lameness, monitor progress and motivate all staff</li> </ul>	<p>What if it is not for me?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You may feel confident that you already have good lameness control or that you have little to gain by reducing lameness further. However, there is no such thing as too few lame cows and even a small reduction in lameness is likely to give a substantial cost and time benefit</li> <li>• You may feel this is for large herds only. It is for all herds</li> <li>• You may be concerned about your ability to commit to the HFP. Feedback from other farms is that it is very worthwhile and the HFP has brought very real benefits</li> </ul>

## Qs and As about the mobility mentor

What?	Why?
<p>What is a mobility mentor?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A mentor is a trusted counsellor or coach, with expertise in a particular area.</li> <li>• Mobility mentors are usually vets with an interest and expertise in lameness who have undergone further training in how to deliver the HFP and the latest research in lameness control</li> </ul>	<p>Why use a mentor?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reduce lameness on your farm you will need to make some changes</li> <li>• You will need guidance to work out which changes to make and what is likely to be effective</li> <li>• You will need someone with expertise and experience</li> </ul>
How?	What if?
<p>How does it work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobility mentors are trained in effective methods to reduce lameness in herds</li> <li>• They will use their skills and knowledge to help you decide your action plan</li> <li>• They will guide you so that the changes you make are likely to be effective and you will be helped to measure and monitor this</li> <li>• They will be able to give you back-up support</li> </ul>	<p>What if I just want an expert to tell me what to do?</p> <p>Experience shows that this approach does not work well. People do not respond to being “told” what to do – however “expert” the advice.</p> <p>Here are some reasons why:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You may not agree with the recommendation</li> <li>• You may not feel they are practical or relevant to you</li> <li>• You have not had the opportunity to think them through first</li> <li>• Other members of the farm team may not be on board</li> <li>• The chances are you will not make the changes</li> </ul>



## Appendices

### 1. Recording lesions

What?	Why?
<p>What recording is required?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Simply a record of lesions found on cows' feet, whether at routine trimming/drying-off hoof checks or lame cow treatments</li><li>• The layout needs to represent these records in a way that is immediately useful; for example, using the Lameness Map or milk recording packages</li></ul>	<p>Why record?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To monitor progress</li><li>• To work out what type of lameness your cows have</li><li>• To check the mobility contract is working</li><li>• To keep track of changes on your farm</li></ul>
How?	What if?
<p>How do we go about it?</p> <p>Recording increases skills and knowledge so the whole farm team knows what to do to reduce lameness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Choose a system that suits you</li><li>• You could use computers/online recording/hoof trimmers/milk recording bodies/paper records</li><li>• To record you must first be confident in accurately recognising the lesions</li></ul>	<p>What if I see the same cow for the same lesion month in, month out?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Record it, but when tallying up lesions for the Lameness Map, only count it once</li></ul> <p>What if our lesion records contain a high percentage of uncommon lesions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Check again your lesion recognition with your mobility mentor</li></ul> <p>What if the lesions are not necessarily causing severe lameness?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• They are still relevant because they tell you a lot about your farm's risks. Each lesion has different severities and some (for example, sole ulcer) are more costly/longer term than others (for example, heel horn erosion or digital dermatitis). Mobility scoring is more relevant for measuring the impact of lesions on your herd</li></ul>

### 2. Staff management and training plans

Tasks relating to lameness control include:

- Detection of lame cows/mobility scoring
- Treatment of lame cows
- Routine trimming
- Daily stock-handling (milking times/herding/bringing to parlour)
- Recording lesions and analysing lame cow data
- Maintaining hoof care equipment
- Liaising between mobility mentor and farm team
- Reviewing mobility contract
- Maintenance of tracks and surfaces
- Maintenance and cleaning of cow accommodation/yards
- Liaising with farm vet
- Identifying staff training requirements

Sufficient staff that have been trained to do these tasks are required. It is likely that every member of the farm team will have some part to play in reducing lameness. It is important that these roles are understood by everyone and that people work as a team.

Consider whether back-up is required in certain tasks; for example, using a professional hoof trimmer for routine trims. It is important that the necessary equipment is available. A well trained person in hoof care is wasted if they are expected to use unsuitable tools.

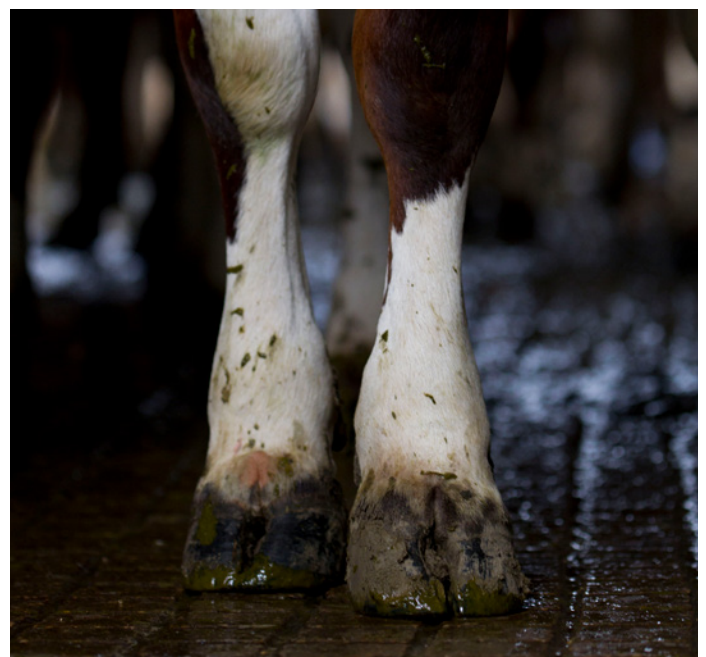


Table 1: Example staff responsibility chart

Name	Detection	Treatment	Stock handling	Other
Rob	Y*		Y	Mobility records
Sally		Y	Y	
Smithy		Y*	Y	Lesion records
Jim				Knife sharpening

\* = Key person responsible

**Training plans**

In developing a training plan:

- Do not assume that members of staff will gain skills and knowledge as they go along, without training
- Beware of gaps in knowledge that can be detrimental to safety and the farm business
- Be realistic of the time scale required to gain competency, but set target dates to complete specific training
- Use outside assistance to help fill the gaps; eg, vet, accredited hoof trimmer, external mobility scorer
- Choose a suitable, preferably accredited, trainer. The ability to train is not a skill everyone possesses

A training plan (see example template below) can help establish the level of competency in required areas and the need for further training.

Table 2: Example training plan

Name:

Date:

	Trained?	By Whom?	When?	Qualification	Confident?	Competent?	Training requirement
Mobility scoring							
Routine trimming							
Foot first aid							
Stock handling							
Recognising lesions							

Renew annually for each staff member

Table 3: Table of responsibilities of each party

<p><b>AHDB Dairy will:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support development of the programme, both initially and with ongoing refinements</li> <li>• Appoint an administrator of the programme to manage resources</li> <li>• Maintain a register of trained mobility mentors, with an online search facility</li> <li>• Provide the support materials and resources</li> <li>• Promote the programme, including through the extension officer network</li> <li>• Support the online aspects of the programme</li> <li>• Coordinate a steering group for the programme and maintain an effective group of stakeholders</li> <li>• Maintain a record of registered farms and those that complete the programme</li> </ul>
<p><b>Programme providers (mobility mentors) will:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver the programme to dairy farmer clients, consistent with the programme framework</li> <li>• Register farms with AHDB Dairy</li> <li>• Use the support materials, including the Risk Assessment Tool, for registered farms only</li> <li>• Encourage accurate recording of lameness (mobility scoring and lesion incidence) in order to effectively monitor progress on HFP farms</li> <li>• Keep up to date with best practice by regular attendance of lameness CPD and mobility mentor refresher workshops</li> </ul>
<p><b>Dairy farmers will:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commit to the programme by encouraging the whole farm team to be involved</li> <li>• Record lameness (lesions and mobility scores) so that progress can be monitored and the agreed actions can be reviewed and if necessary adjusted</li> </ul>





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