



# Second survey steps up focus on mobility

Producer input is key to improving herd mobility across the dairy sector. Find out how you can help by filling out the second national survey that's designed to help develop strategies to support hoof health.



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The Stride national dairy mobility initiative is launching its second survey to better understand the challenges of dairy cow mobility and offer a fuller picture of how producers are addressing hoof health in their herds. The results will help develop practical strategies to reduce the consequences of compromised mobility and poor hoof health. Founded in 2024, Stride is a not-for-profit initiative established to challenge the status quo on lameness. Its objectives are to increase understanding of the issues surrounding dairy cow mobility, to contribute to industry knowledge, and help develop clear management strategies that deliver sustained improvement in foot health. Stride's partners are Ceva, HerdVision, Hoofcount, Kersia, IVC Farm Vets, Neogen, NoBACZ Healthcare, Teemore Engineering, and CowManagement.

Matt Dobbs:  
**“Survey will help to develop approaches to tackle mobility issues”**



“We set up Stride because mobility issues remain a major drain on dairy performance and profitability, and it was time for an increasingly practical and pragmatic approach,” says dairy vet Matt Dobbs, who is chair of Stride's technical board.

### Endemic problems

“Reduced mobility and compromised foot health remain endemic problems impacting around 30% of cows and they are a major cause of premature culling. These incidences have hardly changed for more than 30 years and lameness costs the dairy sector an estimated £250m per year through impaired fertility, reduced production, premature culling, and treatment costs,” he explains. “Not only does compromised mobility have a financial burden at farm level – some £330 per case per year – but producers say that it also weighs heavy on their minds.”

He says that it is disappointing that mobility issues remain at such high levels. During this 30-year timeframe we have seen major developments in prevention and treatment strategies for both lameness and clinical mastitis. Why have mastitis rates decreased during the past three decades, while lameness has not?” he asks. “Perhaps the major factor is that dairies were prepared to

incentivise improvements in udder health. Or maybe the multifactorial nature of mobility issues and the unique nature of the UK climate and farm systems make them a particularly intractable problem?”

Mr Dobbs says the industry's understanding of the causes of lameness and management strategies to prevent problems, as well as improved knowledge of effective treatments, all offer the potential to reduce the incidence and consequences of poor hoof health. “Despite the specific challenges faced by UK dairying, producers should have hope that solutions can be successfully implemented.”

There has been marked success in breeding cows for improved fertility and longevity in recent years. It's possible to breed cows that are genetically disposed to have improved feet, but bringing this solution to producers requires evidence and a bespoke approach on a cow-by-cow and herd-by-herd basis.

More is also known about the impact of buildings and the cow environment, including flooring, cubicle design, lying times, space availability, track design and cow comfort. “But with stretched budgets, producers need information on the cost-benefit of investments in these areas and the margin improvements possible after making a new investment,” says Mr Dobbs.

### Central pillar

Hoof hygiene is a central pillar of minimising mobility issues, with significant benefits from regular and effective dipping. The role of footbath design and technology in ensuring effective foot immersion, and footbath-solution chemistry have both improved significantly in recent years. Knowing how best to deploy these to support foot health is key to success.

Mobility scoring has traditionally been used as a way to identify issues early and can be used to spot trends and pinchpoints. Camera technologies allow more repeatable, timely, objective and regular scoring allowing cows to be treated sooner. The goal when identifying cows with mobility issues is to ensure early diagnosis and prompt effective treatment (EDPET) and new vision technology ensures this can be part of every dairy unit's routine.

“Research has developed greater insights into how we can better understand foot trimming, particularly how and when to do it,” adds Mr Dobbs. “But practicalities can limit the benefits. New developments in cattle-crush design makes it easier to undertake routine trimming, ensuring that it becomes a routine and regular part of hoof health management.”

He acknowledges that all herds are challenged with immobile cows at times, so understanding the benefits of pain relief in lame cows must be part of effective treatment protocols on all dairy units. To treat these cows effectively, producers should also know about

the developments in bandaging and treating foot problems, helping to keep treated hooves cleaner, and allowing speedier recovery.

“The technologies and knowledge now available to producers and their staff should mean it is practical for any herd to develop protocols and approaches to tackle mobility issues,” says Mr Dobbs. “Faced with considerable milk-price volatility, businesses will need to focus more closely on the factors within their control to maintain margins. Improving mobility is a good place to start, reducing costs, increasing output, and reducing culling and replacement rates.

In 2024, the Stride initiative carried out the first UK National Dairy Mobility Survey, which confirmed that to varying degrees, producers are using the range of tactics to help reduce the risk and incidence of compromised mobility. These include footbathing, foot trimming, mobility scoring and effective treatment of problems.

### Proactive approach

Survey respondents said they were largely confident in their ability to address the issues. But with rates of lameness still stubbornly high, the 2026 Stride Survey hopes to identify the best way forward for each producer, allowing them to take a proactive and tailored approach to mobility health.

For many herds there will be an opportunity to make relatively small changes to see a positive downturn on lameness incidence – for others, it may require more robust action.

“On all dairy units, the crucial question is what can be done differently or better to help reduce mobility problems? In the 2026 survey, which was launched at Dairy-Tech in February, we want to try and understand more about why mobility is remaining such a stubborn nut to crack. What are the reasons it is not given a higher priority and what needs to be done to increase the focus on mobility and foot health?”

“It may be accessing better support services, or it could be training or more grants to fund investment. The 2024 survey indicated that clear delegation of responsibilities is an area which could underpin accelerated improvements.

“It may not take a lot to change mobility management and deliver some big improvements, but just doing the same things in the same way is unlikely to result in improved performance,” stresses Mr Dobbs.

“We will use the results to help develop practical approaches to help dairy teams improve foot health and we will be running series of on-farm events later in the year.”

The survey will run until April 30, 2026. To complete the survey scan the QR code or go to [www.stridemobility.co.uk](http://www.stridemobility.co.uk). All respondents will be entered in a draw to win one of five pairs of Apple AirPods. |

