



TEXT PHIL EADES

Despite a better understanding of the causes and effects of lameness, and a growing number of producers participating in mobility-focused conferences and workshops, hoof-health issues remain stubbornly high in UK dairy herds.

Reduced mobility and compromised foot health remain endemic problems, and they cost the dairy sector an estimated £250m per year through impaired fertility, reduced production, premature culling, and treatment costs. Not only does compromised mobility have a financial burden at farm level, with a typical case of lameness costing £330, but producers also say that poor hoof health weighs heavily on their mind.

In response, the Stride Dairy Mobility Initiative was 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, IVC Farm Vets, Neogen, NoBACZ Healthcare and Teemore Engineering.

The initiative carried out the first UK National Dairy Mobility Survey in 2024, which confirmed that, to varying degrees, producers are using a range of tactics

Take a fresh approach to improve mobility

Make 2026 the year to do things differently to tackle lameness. That's the key message for producers looking to improve herd mobility in 2026.

available and proven to help reduce the risk and incidence of compromised mobility. These include footbathing, foot trimming, mobility scoring and effective treatment of problems. Survey respondents said they were largely confident in their ability to address the issues.

For many herds there will be an opportunity to make relatively small changes to see a notable reduction in lameness incidence. But for others it may require more robust action. Whichever is needed, the survey made it clear that attitudes and consistency are fundamental to good herd mobility.

This prompted the question: what can be done differently or better to help reduce herd mobility issues?

• Commit time

A good start point is to review current mobility issues and management on-farm. This should identify causes and effects, decide where changes to protocols and action can be made for most effective progress, and look at key performance indicators, as well as set targets.

• Whole-team approach

Ensure that everyone involved in managing the cows,

ideally including the vet and foot trimmer, is around the table to discuss mobility management. What is the true picture of mobility issues in your herd and what are the main causes of lameness? Ask for everyone's opinion about the biggest challenges to mobility and where changes could be made to improve. Be prepared to take ideas on board and to do things differently. There is no such thing as a bad suggestion – every thought or idea may have some merit.

• Assign responsibility

Have one team member take charge of monitoring foot health and mobility. Who is keen to progress their skills and responsibilities? Don't always look to the top – a young or new team member will be more effective than a farm manager with limited time and an already long list of priorities.

• Address training needs

Is the farm team adequately trained in the key tasks needed for good mobility management? Can someone mobility score and/or trim hooves? The better the team is trained, the more effective treatment and prevention will be. Invest in industry-standard training.

• Check protocols

Producers should also check that hoof-health management protocols are up to date. Do the protocols set out how tasks should be carried out, as well as

when and who is responsible? A consistent approach will underpin more effective mobility management.

• Set targets

Where are you now and where do you want to be in 12 months' time? Set realistic targets and share them across the team – and regularly review progress with the whole farm team.

• Communication

Communication is also vital. Without good communication even the best-laid plans fail. Make life as easy as possible for everyone with a simple way to highlight issues and action to take. Consider a foot health WhatsApp group, for example. 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. |

Keep in touch

The Stride Dairy Mobility Initiative will continue to help producers to identify key pinch points in mobility management and develop mitigation strategies throughout 2026.

To stay up to date visit www.stridemobility.co.uk or our stand at Dairy-Tech 2026.



YOUR PARTNERS FOR BETTER MOBILITY

An industry wide not-for-profit initiative, we are committed to helping improve dairy cow mobility and energise the industry to act to reduce lameness in the national herd.

Visit us at Dairy Tech
Wednesday 4th February
Stand P156



Our Partners



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