

Practice Tips

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Radial or Crossply? Put Tread on Their Soles

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The use of rubber hoof blocks is growing in most large dairy practices in the UK as it offers a cheap, rapid and effective way to deal with a wide selection of foot disorders.

It can, apart from very special orthopaedic cases, completely replace the use of other artificial blocking aids, not to mention bandages and routine dressings used on feet.

The following table shows some of the various options available and how they compare for time taken to apply them, length of action and cost. All costs are in US Dollars.

Type of Block	Unit Cost	Application Time	Time on Foot	Total Cost
Demotec/Technovit Block	\$12.74	15 - 25 Mins	4 - 12 Weeks	\$37-\$52
Cowslip	\$9.20	15 - 20 Mins	4 - 8 Weeks	\$34-\$43
Wooden Block + Bandage	\$6.20	10 Mins	2 - 10 Days	\$23
Rubber Block	\$5.00	5 Mins	2 - 8 Weeks	\$13

The rubber hoof block is rapid and easy to use with a perfectly acceptable length of action that makes it a standard part of routine hoof care and treatment. You use the block in all cases where there is an indication for pain relief or simply to help with faster healing. Many practitioners no longer use other forms of hoof dressing such as bandages as this technique is so quick and cheap.

The main drawback with rubber blocks is that they require quite a lot of skill to apply properly and many veterinarians have given up at the "learning hurdle" instead of persisting in practicing the technique and mastering it. If they are not properly applied then there is a great danger of :-

1. Puncturing the sole and affecting the live tissue producing an abscess and a profound lameness very soon after fixing.

2. The block comes off after only a few days leaving the cow as bad as ever.
3. The block rotates on the foot causing pressure on the diseased claw and then requires removal or repositioning.

The rubber block can become a very efficient method for treatment or a disastrous experiment in client patience and temper if not used expertly.

There are a few tips to learn about the blocks to speed up the learning process. Firstly get some feet from the abattoir and practice at home in the garden. Clamp the foot up and make sure you are very familiar with the blocks and nails before ever going near the real cow.

1. The block needs to be a reasonable fit to the foot but as it is rubber it will mold to the surface well if fixed securely.
2. Put in one of the anterior nails first. They are much easier to fix and then the block is firmly in place to go onto the other more difficult nail sites. The nail is first pushed through its locating hole in the block until just about 5mm is protruding. This point is then carefully and accurately applied to the white line on the anterior part of the foot.
3. Be careful not to put the block too far forward - this only causes excess wearing at the heel and problems later. Put them well back.
4. Keep the block in contact with the sole while driving in the nail - if there is any gap between them the nail will bend and will not go in straight. The nails are marked to show the correct bevel and orientation for fixing.
5. Use a small size hammer. A 3-4 ounce claw head

hammer is quite big enough and gives good accuracy.

6. After the block is fixed by the anterior nail rotate it carefully to align the posterior nail holes over the white line.
7. Continue to fix with nails working posteriorly. The very back nail is the key one. It has a much greater angle of wall to go into and, more important, come out of. Often the back nail needs to be slightly bent or angled outwards before fixing. There should be 5 nails used in total.
8. Inspect the job and only be satisfied if:-
 - all nails have come out through the wall
 - they have exited at least 20mm above the sole - preferably 25 - 30mm

- the block is well back and does not touch the diseased claw next to it
 - all the nail heads are level with the rubber block.
9. The nail heads are bent over with the hammer so that there are no sharp points protruding.
 10. Remove the block after 3 - 5 weeks.

If the horn is very hard - such as in very dry weather - then greasing the nails can make the job much easier.

Recognize the standard needed with the technique and make sure you achieve it. I have never had a claim against the practice for tractor punctures yet!

The Various Uses of an Ultrasound in a Mixed Animal Practice

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We have a mixed animal practice in Southwest NE. We have been using the ultrasound in our practice for three years, on both small and large animals.

Small Animal Uses

The machine is used a great deal in our kennels. We use the ultrasound for many uses, but primarily for a diagnostic aid and pregnancy detection in dogs and cats. We use the machine prior to a C-section to determine if the pups or kittens are alive. This helps us in the choice of sedation. I like to use the machine on emergency calls to pick up enlarged livers, gastric torsions, pyometras, etc.

Large Animal Uses

I use the machine in early pregnancy diagnosis as well as fetal sexing. We have also started to do some backfat measurement in the feedlot. The machine is very durable and mobile. We video tape the pregnancies for a hard copy record.

I also have started to ultrasound a lot of mares for early pregnancy diagnosis. The machine is very safe for the patient and the handler. We continue to find new uses for the machine. I foresee the ultrasound machine becoming very useful.