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Locomotion Scoring of Dairy Cattle



Locomotion scoring is based on the observation of cows standing and walking (gait), with special emphasis on their back posture. This system is intuitive and easy to use and implement.

Use of locomotion scoring is effective for early detection of claw (hoof) disorders, monitoring prevalence of lameness, comparing the incidence and severity of lameness between herds and identifying individual cows for functional claw (hoof) trimming (</lameness/dairy/hoof-trimming/>).

Dairy Cattle Locomotion Scores and Descriptions



Normal

Stands and walks normally with a level back. Makes long confident strides.

**Mildly Lame**

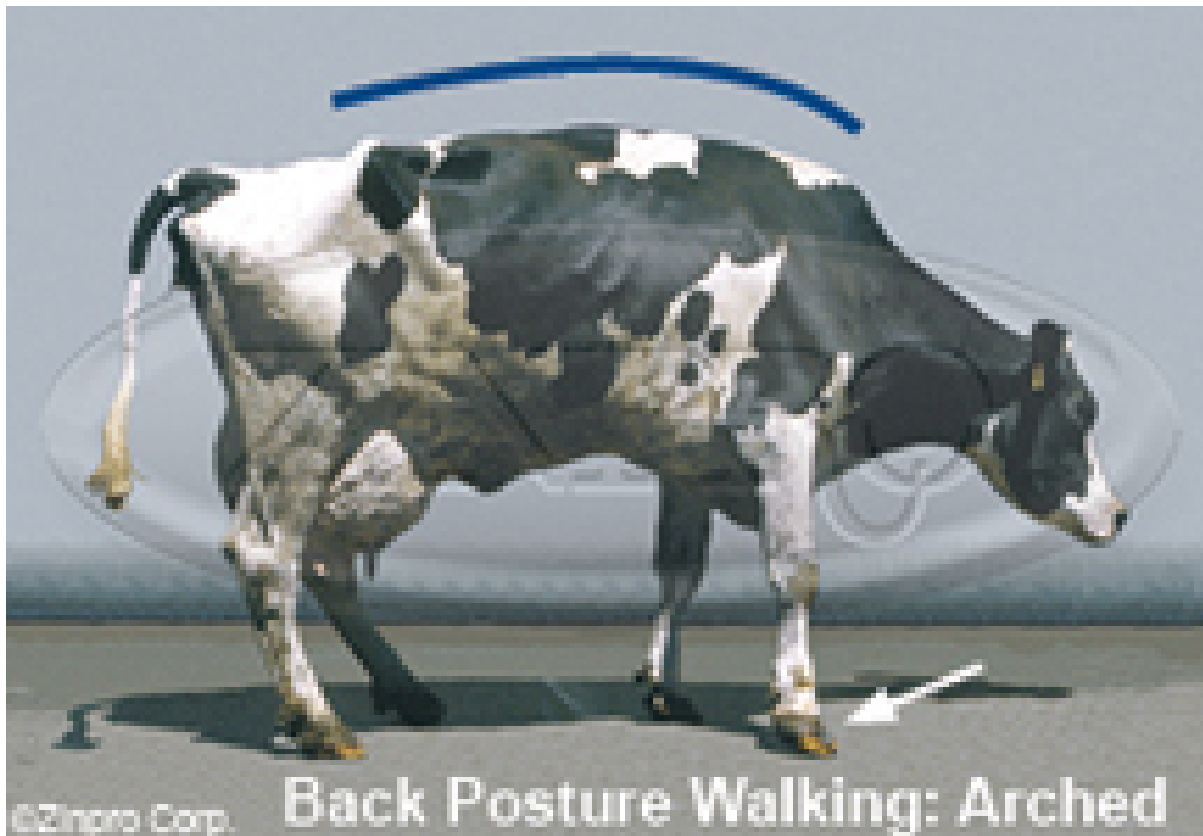
Stands with flat back, but arches when walks. Gait is slightly abnormal.

**Moderately Lamé**

Stands and walks with an arched back and short strides with one or more legs. Slight sinking of dew-claws in limb opposite to the affected limb may be evident.

**Lame**

Arched back standing and walking. Favoring one or more limbs but can still bear some weight on them. Sinking of the dew-claws is evident in the limb opposite to the affected limb.



Severely Lamé

Pronounced arching of back. Reluctant to move, with almost complete weight transfer off the affected limb.

Locomotion Scoring of Dairy Cattle: adapted from Sprecher, D.J.; Hostetler, D.E.; Kaneene, J.B. 1997. Theriogenology 47:1178-1187 and contributions from Cook, N.B., University of Wisconsin.

Animal observations should be made on a flat surface that provides good footing for cows. Cows scoring 2 or 3 should be examined and trimmed to prevent more serious problems. Trimming should be done by a competent hoof trimmer with the goal of returning the claws to functional weight bearing and conformation.

Factors Influencing Lameness Incidence

Lameness is a multifactorial disease. The following management factors will influence the incidence of lameness.

Cow Comfort

- Avoid overcrowding
- Provide properly designed and maintained stalls
- Minimize heat stress
- Flooring should provide good traction, but minimal wear

Claw Care

- Practice maintenance trimming (2X/year)
- Provide therapeutic trimming
- Properly maintain and administer foot baths
- Maintain a clean and dry environment

Transition

- Minimize abrupt ration changes to reduce rumen upsets
- Strive to maximize animal health

Nutrition

- Provide nutritionally balanced diets
- Provide properly mixed and delivered rations
- Formulate rations to minimize sorting
- Feed diets with proper micronutrient fortification
- Feed trace minerals from Zinpro Performance Minerals® sources for improved claw integrity