

Prognostic indicators and the importance of trimming in non-infective claw disorders in cattle

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Abstract

A cross-sectional study was conducted in 32 smallholder dairy farms in Nairobi and its environs, in which 300 cows were examined for claw disorders. The objective was to evaluate characteristics of claw disorders in dairy cows in smallholder production units in Nairobi and its environs. After a purposive selection of the farms and a systematic sampling of the cows, hind limb claws of all the 300 cows were examined for disorders. Thorough washing and trimming of the claws were done. Claw disorders that were chronic in nature were the most destructive and incorrigible by claw trimming. Apart from chronic nature of the disorders, other prognostic indicators were the laminitic features of claw damage which mainly included invasive erosions of the horn leading to excessively thinned sole, excessively softened and crumbling horn of the sole, widespread penetrating sole haemorrhages and crookedly shaped claws. These features of chronic laminitis occurred concurrently with heel or sole erosion, white line separation, sole ulcers, horizontal hoof wall fissures and double soles. In most smallholder farms, cows with these disorders were neglected to the extent that trimming was inadequately corrective. Regular claw examination and corrective trimming should be adopted as routine procedures in dairy cow production.