

# Demonstration Site Project

**Demonstration Site:** GRAIG OLWAY, Usk

**Technical Officer:** Gwenan Evans

**Project Title:** Focus on feet: reducing lameness in a robotic milking dairy herd

## Introduction to project:

On dairy farms, lameness continues to be a major health problem and has a negative impact on overall cow health and production. There is a need to implement new tools and take a whole farm approach to reduce the impact of lameness on cow welfare and production.

At Graig Olway, reducing lameness levels and improving cow comfort have been identified as two of the key goals in improving the welfare of the dairy herd whilst also increasing the milk yield. Due to the farm's voluntary milking system, lame cows are likely to visit the robot on fewer occasions than healthy cows, therefore, lameness has a greater impact on the herd than other systems.

The aim of the project at Graig Olway will be to implement the AHDB Healthy Feet Programme, and assess the impact of implementing key recommendations on lameness and mobility within the herd. Based on current lesion data at Graig Olway, it is expected that a 'blitz' treatment approach to digital dermatitis (DD) will be required. Monitoring the response to this will create the first case study of its kind within a robotic milking dairy herd.

## Project Objectives:

The main objective of the project is to determine the accuracy of DD scoring. At the beginning of January 2020, all cattle were mobility scored and DD scored at the feed barrier (Fig. 1). These scorings will then be compared to scoring at the foot trimming crush (Fig. 2) to determine the accuracy of lameness scoring techniques.

Following scoring at the foot trimming crush, all cattle with signs of DD will go through the 'blitz' treatment; using licensed topical antibiotics treatment prescribed by the farm vet. They will be re-examined for two consecutive days and repeat treatments given where necessary. Following the initial 'blitz' treatment, all cattle will be mobility scored quarterly to monitor their progress. A mobility management timetable will then be created to ensure that all aspects of lameness management are part of the normal farm routine.

The effectiveness of implementing a targeted lameness control programme will be determined by the lameness levels within the herd. The short-term cost benefit of implementing the 'blitz' treatment control approach to DD in a robotic milking dairy herd will be calculated.

Cow comfort has also been identified as an area for improvement which affects lameness, specifically sole ulcers and DD, therefore, some amendments to management and comfort will be undertaken.

## Key Performance Indicators set:

- Reduce Lameness % to <10% (currently 39%)
- Reduce DD % to <10% (currently 39%)



Figure 1. Scoring DD at the feed barrier



Figure 2. Scoring DD at the foot trimming crush

## TIMELINE AND MILESTONES:

