

Heel Erosion in Dairy Cattle

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INTRODUCTION:

Heel erosion is a common problem in dairy cattle. An eroded heel provides less shock absorbance and increases the risk of other hoof injuries. Heel erosion is associated with standing in moisture and manure, but little is known about other risk factors.

METHODOLOGY:

The hind hooves of 58 animals were scored at least once pre-calving, early lactation (0-100 DIM) and mid-lactation (100 – 200 DIM). We noted grooving on the four hind claws (medial and lateral, left and right), and if these grooves were irregular or oblique. Any claw with oblique grooves or major loss of heel structure was classified as having severe erosion.

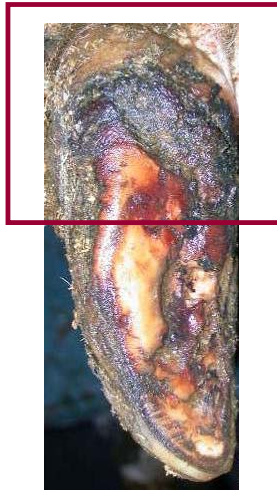
RESULTS:

The number of claws per cow with severe heel erosion increased from pre-calving to mid-lactation. Erosion was also related to parity; older cows experienced higher scores ($P < 0.001$), especially in early and mid-lactation.

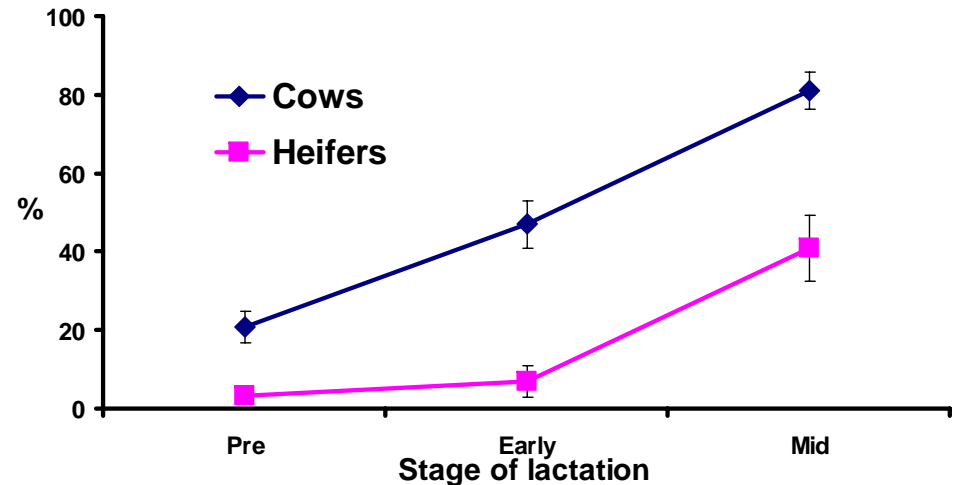
Healthy heel



Severe heel erosion



Claws with Severe Heel Erosion



IMPLICATIONS:

Mid-lactation cows are especially affected by heel erosion. Future research should address prevention and treatment of heel erosion, especially for high-risk cows.