**What to look for when you do lameness score in cows:**

The scoring system focuses on six indicators of lameness – walking speed, walking rhythm, stride length & foot placement, weight bearing, back alignment and head position.

Many of the early indicators of lameness are subtle and only seen with careful inspection of walking cows.

* **Walking speed.** Cows should be able to keep up with the herd at a similar pace to a person.  Reduced speed will be more easily noticed when cows are walking at their own pace back to the paddock.
* **Walking rhythm.**  Cows normally have a regular rhythm in all four legs and walk confidently with a fluid motion.  If she becomes lame the rhythm will be interrupted and become uneven.
* **Stride length and Foot placement.**  When cows walk on an even surface and at their own pace, they’ll ‘track-up’. Cows with lameness scores of 1, 2 and 3 may have a shortened stride and their rear foot may fall short of the front foot placement.
* **Weight bearing.** Cows with healthy feet, place and weight- bear evenly on all four legs while standing and walking. Lame cows will favour the lame leg.  This leg will not fully weight-bear and the opposite leg will take more weight – the dew claws will sink closer to ground level.
* **Back.** Non-lame cows tend to stand and walk with a straight back, whereas an arched back can indicate lameness.
* **Head.** A cow will normally hold her head slightly below the back line.  When she’s walking the head only moves a little. Lame cows may lower or bob their head.

**When to lameness score cows**

* Lameness scoring should take place throughout the year on flat, even surfaces.
* Cows can also be observed when being brought in for milking and as they enter the shed.  In a rotary, look out for uneven weight bearing as cows stand in the bail.
* When bulls are being used for mating, they should also be observed for lameness regularly.

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