Lameness

Lameness on the farm is the 3rd highest cause for economic loss behind reproduction and mastitis. There are many contributing factors as to why cows become lame, the main reasons being, the average weight to our dairy cows, walking long distances, rocky/uneven races and pushing cows while they're walking to and from the shed. Cows naturally walk with their heads lowered. When walking at their natural pace, she will be tracking up (placing her hind feet into her front feet tracks). When this is taken away from them by pushing them too hard, the chance of lameness is significantly increased.

Most lameness cases are generally caused by lesions in the claw, typically in the hind limb, outer claw. This mostly diagnosed as white line disease (foot rot) and will frequently occur during the calving season when the hoof takes in the moisture of the soil, creating a soft, easily worn sole. It is especially important during this time to seriously limit the amount of walking they do when possible.

Like most thing cases, prevention is always better than a cure. Here are some contributing factors for lameness on farm that could be prevented;

- . Tight corners in the raceway or shed
- . Pushing cows too hard
- . Large gravel on the race
- . Excessive mud that softens the hoof
- . Nutrition

The economic loss from lame cows, it is estimated to cost around $350 per case, and cost much more for repeat offenders. Below are some of the costs associated with treating lame cows;

- Treatment and their withholding periods
- Culling
- Poorer performance and production rates
- Reduced BCS

Once you have identified your lame cow, you will need to have got facilities for either you or the veterinarian to be able to lift up the hoof and properly examine it. Hoof testers are a good way of indicating if the lameness is in fact in the hoof, and where the most pain is located.

If you have any concerns about an increase of lameness on your farm, please ring the clinic and one of our vets will happily provide you with a lameness consultation.