

Karl Burgi

- Making sure your Jerseys are foot perfect...

Having grown up on a dairy farm in Switzerland and then furthered his career in the dairy industry in America Karl Burgi began specialising in hoof health when he launched his hoof trimming business in 1989. He co-founded the Dairyland Hoof Care Institute in 1995, a comprehensive hoof trimming school, training over 4,000 hoof trimmers, veterinarians, dairy producers, herd managers, consultants and agriculture professionals from over 50 countries. With a wealth of experience in hoof care we asked him the following questions...

Q. How important are good feet to maximising production and performance in Jerseys in your opinion?

Good feet are very important to maximising production and performance in Jerseys. Jerseys are more vigorous and resilient from a hoof structure and conformation standpoint than Holsteins. If they can't walk, obviously their production and performance decreases. Jerseys are also less susceptible to digital dermatitis compared to Holsteins.

Q. What are the essentials a farmer needs to know or do, to try and prevent problems in the feet of his Jersey cattle?

For prevention measures, Jerseys have to be watched as heifers more so than Holsteins because of their black toes. They are more likely to have longer toes, which reduces the foot angle, and if nothing is done about it when they are young, they will break down in the pastern and get a sickled hock. Farmers need to make sure they properly trim down the feet during close-up and calving period in Jersey cattle. The back feet should for sure be looked at three times per year depending on toe length, wear, and growth. Looking at the feet this often will help tremendously in preventing problems.

Q. If you could give a Jersey breeder only one piece of advice when it comes to looking after the feet and legs of his herd what would it be?

If I could give only one piece of advice, the Jersey breeder should start by looking at the feet when the Jerseys are still heifers and then continue to assess and trim every cow two to three times per year.

Q. What 'best practise' should a Jersey farmer adopt when it comes to foot trimming, in terms of frequency, equipment, technique and restraining the animal?

It would be best for the farmer to trim their Jersey cattle six weeks prior to grazing season. As more heifers enter the herd, they should be trimmed six to eight weeks

prior to calving. As for techniques, functional and therapeutic trimming should be applied two to three times a year in adult cattle, as I said earlier. Proper and safe restraining equipment should be acquired so the hoof trimmer can do a sufficient job.

Q. Have you seen particular issues with Jerseys feet that are more prevalent in our breed?

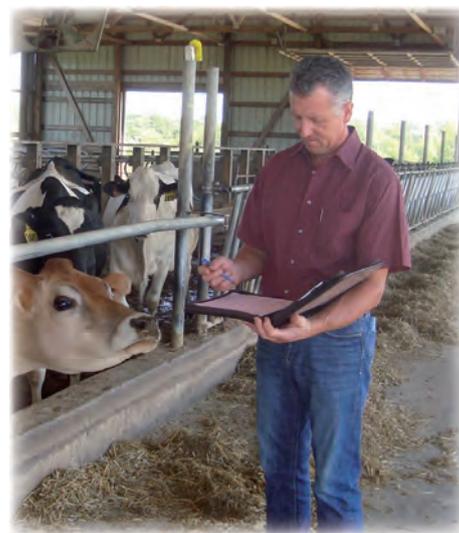
Yes, Jerseys have a generally lower foot angle on their rear feet. Generally, they are two to three degrees lower in angle than Holsteins. For the Jersey cow, the claws are not that much smaller when compared to 500-550kg Holsteins, so there are no prevalent issues from that standpoint.

Q. How many external factors such as feeding influence the need for foot trimming?

For external factors, the environment is key. An example of something that has a direct effect on cow foot comfort is the floor surface. Floors should not be slippery and it is encouraged to have rubber floor surfaces when possible to decrease wear. Another thing to look at for external factors is the time batches of the cattle within the herd that are standing versus laying down. If the time batches for standing are high, it will directly increase the need for more regular hoof trimming.

Q. Do the methods and techniques used for dealing with Jerseys differ at all to Holsteins?

Again, Jerseys have a slightly lower angle on their rear feet. We would not, however, necessarily change the technique used in going about fixing the hoof angle on those feet. You would still approach it the same way you would a Holstein cow. When dealing with foot injuries, you would most likely use a smaller block due to the fact that you



are dealing with a smaller sized cow and a slightly smaller foot.

Q. You've obviously travelled extensively throughout the world, how much does the system and particularly housing or lack of it affect Jersey cattle's feet and problems associated with them?

Housing should always have traction on the floor and rubber matting if possible. Where I have seen more wear on Jersey feet is on larger operations and grazing facilities. Jersey feet are smaller than Holsteins and I see less of an issue with them in general. Because they are a smaller cow, I find that they adapt to less suitable environments more efficiently than larger breeds. Like I said earlier, my experience with Jersey cattle shows that they are less susceptible to digital dermatitis.

Q. Do certain problems manifest themselves more in the UK cattle population than in other parts of the world, and furthermore are there parts of the world where things affect feet which we don't see in the UK?

Of the two or three Jersey herds that I have observed in the UK, they were all well-managed herds and had very few issues. This is how it is all over the world; if the herd is well-managed, we see fewer problems in lameness within the cattle herd. Throughout the world, I've found that Jerseys are more resilient and do better in harsh environments compared to other cow breeds.

