

## Cow Hoof Care: 7 Tips to help you find the time to combat lameness – Koos Vis

Lack of time is the number one reason I hear farmers give for not having a preventative hoof care plan in place.

However, some farmers have found a way to do all their daily chores plus implement a hoof care plan.

### How do they do it?

I've put some valuable time management tips together from my experience dealing with both big and small farmers. My hope is that you can use these seven tips to create time in your day to create and implement a hoof care plan.

These tips are a practical priority guide to take charge of your time, your day, your focus and your life.

The reality of today's world is that we have to do more, better, faster, and with less.

Typically we are all striving to balance these three factors: time available, quality of work and cost to make things happen.

This tension is especially true during hard economic times, the speed in which the world is changing and the always returning business during the farming season.

Often, one or two of these factors take priority and play a prominent role in our planning, setting priorities, decision-making, and other time-management issues.

### TIME MANAGEMENT: REVIEWING YOUR PRIORITIES

Here are some quick tips to help you prioritize tasks so that you can work more efficiently.

The average farmer can add thousands to his bottom line each day, simply by reducing lameness. It's a very effective way to increase the profitability of your enterprise- a top priority.

It's likely done without noticing that your priorities and the way you spend your time are not in sync.

- 1. Record All Chores:** Write down all your multiple 'daily' or 'seasonal' chores, competing priorities, tasks, and activities for the day, week and season. Even the little chores that take much of your time as manager: painting, cleaning, repairs, etc.





**2. Determine Primary Goals:** List your primary goals for the day or the week. Do not forget to allocate goals for your family and relaxation. What is your farm going to look like in 1 or 3 or even 10 years from now? How much time would you like to spend with your family? What expansions are in the plan? Are there any future remodeling plans of your facility to make life easier?

**3. Evaluate Important vs. Urgent:** Some of your activities are more important than others. For example, regular herd health visits are more

important than painting your barn door. Also take into account how certain items affect others and the consequences for not accomplishing certain tasks. For instance, if you are late with sorting cattle for the hoof trimmer, he will have a late start as well. Some chores are already present before they become an urgent task. For example, if you keep up maintaining the hoof health of your herd, you prevent the scenario that you urgently need to treat lame cows.

- 4. Rank your tasks:** Use a ranking system to begin planning. For example:
- “A” tasks have high priority and must be completed immediately: feeding, breeding, hoof trimming, seeding, harvesting, etc.
  - “B” tasks are moderately important and therefore can be done after the “A” tasks: organizing the shelves, sweeping the floors, cleaning, meetings, etc.
  - “C” tasks are of low-level importance and can be tackled in your spare time or allocated to a farm-hand: cutting and spraying your lawn.
- 5. Create a Schedule and Delegate when needed:** Indicate deadlines for each task and estimate the time involved to complete the task. Create a schedule, keeping in mind any tasks that may be linked together to increase productivity. For example, can you couple something of lesser priority with something of greater importance? Be a master at not putting all the tasks in your busy day but learn how to delegate.

A boy from the city is capable of doing the lawn, cleaning the calf pens. They work for a lower hourly rate than you can work for. You are a professional farmer: **watch that you are not doing the 10 dollars per hour jobs and get mentally and physically over-worked.** Focus on the high-level professional tasks that you just love doing. For some producers, this is hoof trimming; for others, it is feeding, and again for others breeding and heat detection.

- 6. Revisit Goals and Adjust On-The-Go:** Review your goal(s) and perhaps the rewards of doing the task on time and make any necessary adjustments. Put out initiatives for your

team. I've met a producer who gave his herdsmen a two dollar bonus for every lame cow they found in the herd. His philosophy was that their mindset is always, "what's in it for me? -They do not care about my milk cheque". What do you think happened? They started to pay close attention to what happens at 'floor level.' They were interested in *their* bonus, and the results were phenomenal. And you know who made the most profit on the end: the producer. His final statement to me was: "as soon as they run out of finding lame cows, it is time to give them a raise in their wages. A simple lesson: get others involved and you accomplish more!"

- 7. Purge and Clean-up:** Get rid of items on your list that remain at the bottom and will realistically not get done.

To sum it all up: time escapes minute by minute and hour by hour. There are no shortcuts to managing yourself, your family, and farm more effectively.

The key is to invest your time in the most productive way, not only for the sake of your farm but also your peace of mind. I have often pondered the fact that some people have an abundance of time and some are always on the go and never seem to get done. I respect both of these categories, you are both producing food for the world, and I wish you success in managing your time and farm.

*"Time is the scarcest resource of managers.  
If it is not managed, nothing else can be managed."  
—Peter Drucker*