

October Question about Foot Mats

Dear Neil,

A client has asked our office about copper sulphate concentrations for his new hoof mat. When he heard what Shoof recommends (4kg/25lt mat, and he's got a 50Lt mat) he almost choked. I will ring him back about it but would have liked your thoughts. My impression is that CuSo4 doesn't really harden feet much, and mats don't cover the whole hoof so I don't think it would have much impact on footrot. The mats need to be topped up regularly during milking and CuSo4 is getting expensive.

Regards

F.

Dear F,

Re. CuSO4 I totally agree with you. I saw one farm up north that used so much copper sulphate on his mats that his settling pond was dead! And still he had a lameness problem. I am certain you can't get enough solution up between the claws to treat or prevent foot rot and to date I can't find an article that convinces me that you can harden a claw with copper sulphate (or formalin) in a bath or mat. Some farmers put the mat at the beginning of the H/B shed and put CuSO4 crystals on the mat. The cows have the crystals under their feet all milking - maybe this will have some effect to harden. The mats however upset cow flow until the herd gets used to them. Also the copper ends up rusting through the pipe work with time.

The last thing is that I take every opportunity to visit farms with very low lameness to find out what they are doing. I have never been to a low lameness farm that is using a mat. At most high lameness farms there is a hoof mat hanging over the rails!

Hope this is of help,

Neil.