Inter-observer agreement between foot trimmers on foot lesions in cattle

JER Rossiter\(^1\), M Burnell\(^2\), NJ Bell\(^3\), S Van Winden\(^3\)
\(^1\)Pomice Cottage, Bridport, \(^2\)Cattle Lameness Academy, \(^3\)The Royal Veterinary College

**Introduction**

In order to research the epidemiology and risk factors for specific causes of lameness, a standardised protocol for categorising foot lesions is needed. Furthermore, the use of paraprofessional foot trimmers is becoming increasingly popular, meaning lesion-specific herd management changes and future research studies will rely on their recording ability. The aim of this study was to evaluate the inter-observer agreement between 5 foot trimmers from one vet practice who were regularly recording foot lesions in cattle.

**Materials & Methods**

The assessment was carried out using a picture quiz including 6 photos each of 13 different lesions. Each observer was compared with a gold standard which was set by a vet at the practice. Percentage agreement (sensitivity), specificity and kappa statistic were calculated for each lesion and the strength of agreement was determined.

**Discussion**

Finding poor observer agreements is useful in alerting us to the need to improve training for foot trimmers or redefine the categorisation of these lesions. The variable results between the lesions emphasises the importance of recording inter-observer agreement when carrying out studies focussing on specific foot lesions. The specificity of the lesion scoring was high, suggesting that when a lesion is identified, it is identified correctly. The low sensitivity for some lesions suggests that a lot of lesions are missed by the foot trimmer or may reflect the limitations of assessing a lesion by looking at a photo rather than seeing, smelling or touching the foot and observing the pain response of the cow during examination.

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**Reference**