

FIELD REPORTS OF CHEMICAL BURNS

~ Karl Burgi
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A few weeks ago I received a call from a bewildered trimmer who reported that digital dermatitis (DD) in his area was extremely prominent. This type of call is rare and usually the opposite is reported. Over the years, we have learned how to manage our dairy operations to keep DD under control. So what could be the reason this trimmer was seeing such a high prevalence of DD?

I asked the typical questions: How is the hygiene on the farms? Are these farms closed herds or do they purchase animals? What are they doing for prevention? The answers to my questions indicated the farms were generally well-managed. When I asked the trimmer if he saw good results post-treatment, he indicated that DD was eliminated quickly within 5-8 days of treatment. However, the rate of reoccurrence was about 80% within 3-6 months. Which led me to the obvious question to him – What is YOUR treatment protocol for DD? He reported the following regime:

1. Cleaning the lesion thoroughly
2. Soaking lesions with hydrochloric acid (Muriatic® Acid)
3. Applying tetracycline powder
4. Applying a wrap

Now I had the answer to his problem. Hydrochloric acid was causing chemical burns to the lesions, but also to the healthy skin surrounding the lesions. The treatment was very effective, short-term but the chemical burn was damaging the healthy skin creating a perfect environment for bacterial growth and new DD infections.

As DD first appeared in my area in 1994, I tried the acid treatment after a fellow trimmer in New England reported good results with this treatment. After three months, I discontinued treatment because of a reoccurrence rate of over 90%. Using acid to directly treat warts is obviously a very poor choice. But there is another lesson to be learned here. Trimmers who stay current with hoof health issues wouldn't make this type of mistake. And if they did, they would not let something like this go on for any length of time without stopping to ask – WHY?

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