

Hoof trimming is a must



The work of caring for and pruning socks is done with a one-handed angle grinder equipped with a newly developed steel disc that is adapted to the task. Photo: Unitron a/s.

A pruning shears beats nowhere when it comes to caring for and trimming hooves in the sow, says the hoof consultant.

- Everyone needs a hoof trimming box for their sow team. People only really become aware of it once they have bought and installed it.

That's what consultant Jan Volmer from the company Unitron a/s says, who has been selling the PiggyTrim hoof trimming box for sows for a number of years.

- When you first get the sows lifted up, and you quietly see the abnormal things on their hooves, you really open your eyes to the necessity of hoof care, he points out and adds:

- The argument for not investing in a hoof trimming box for the sows is often that you walk around with pruning shears. But it just so happens that hoof care with loppers gives a 10 percent improvement to the hooves at most.

- Also, everyone knows how uncomfortable it is to get your fingers caught in a lopper, says Jan Volmer.



Jan Volmer assesses that there are sores in all herds that require hoof trimming. Here, treatment is definitely needed. Photo: Unitron a/s.

Bigger litter, but worse hooves

- The breeding companies have had resounding success in breeding for fertility and larger litters, he continues.

- There is only one downside to that medal, namely that the sows have got worse hooves. This has led to much more focus on the sows' hooves, also among advisers, says Jan Volmer, who estimates that there are sows in all herds that need hoof trimming.

- The big challenge here is that it is a lot of work to carry out systematic hoof trimming in sow herds, he says.

Set aside time in the weekly schedule

- Before investing in a hoof trimming box, it is therefore important that you set aside time for hoof trimming in the weekly schedule. If you don't do that, it easily happens that you don't get it done, he says and continues:

- Once you have acquired a hoof trimming box, hoof care must be put into a system. My advice here is that you find the sows that need to have their hooves trimmed in the farrowing barn and mark them. Then they are easy to find for the employees who have to carry out the task.

If you want to work professionally here, you must look for growths on the hooves and hoof balls, cracks in the edge of the hoof and the length of the hooves.



The treatment is now complete, and the sow can stand and walk better on her legs. She can now rise more easily and get to the drinking water, allowing her to produce enough milk for the piglets. Photo: Unitron a/s.



Stop physical harm

- If there is physical damage to the hooves of some sows, you have to find out if it is due to something in the furniture or the floor, for example, and then get it fixed, reads the advice from Jan Volmer.

- A typical sign that there are too many sows with hoof damage is that the nursing pens are full. The consequence of this is that there is no room in the nursing paths for other litters that are sick or need relief - and then you are in a vicious circle, points out Jan Volmer and adds:

- The vicious circle continues in the next cycle inside the farrowing barn, where sows are seen standing and tripping and lying down too quickly because their legs are sore. Then they get too little to drink and produce too little milk for the pigs.

At the moment, there are over 100 PiggyTrim hoof trimming boxes from Unitron in use out in the herds, most of them in Denmark.

- When people start with systematic hoof trimming in a sow herd, there are of course extra many sows that need to have their hooves trimmed right from the start. But the number usually drops significantly once you have gone through the first round.

- People talk about a lower consumption of medicine in the farrowing barn and that the sows milk better because they come up and drink to a greater extent.

To oversee

- Once you have got hoof care in your sow team properly set up, it's actually not that unmanageable. If you take just 15-20 pieces per week in a herd with 1,000 sows, you actually go a long way, points out Jan Volmer and adds:

- With our hoof trimming box, which is gentle on the sows and practical to use, you can typically reach around eight sows per hour.

- An important requirement for a hoof trimming box for sows is that it must be easy to get the sow into it. In addition, the sow must lie quietly inside the box and have the correct leg position. Then the work of caring for and trimming the sow's hooves is easy to do.



It is advisable to place the hoof trimming box in a place that is appropriate in relation to the internal logistics of the stable facility. Photo: Unitron a/s.

The box is raised hydraulically

Once you have got the sow into the PiggyTrim hoof trimming box, the entire box is raised hydraulically. The sow now lies lengthwise on a strong, longitudinal pipe construction with a large diameter with its legs out to the sides.

- The sow completely calms down when she is lifted up, and the floor disappears under her, Jan Volmer says.

When the hoof trimming box is raised to full height, you can walk undisturbed under it and do your work. This means that it does not get in the way if, for example, it is mounted in a corridor.

The PiggyTrim hoof trimming box is operated with two buttons and there are no locking mechanisms to remember. The box locks automatically when it is raised. It is also a legal requirement that the safety equipment is checked once a year.



Unitron a/s has recently started experimenting with getting people to put bandages on hoof blisters and damage to the sows. It saves some sows from being euthanized so that they can be sent to slaughter instead. Photo: Unitron a/s.

Hoof care with a one-handed angle grinder

The actual work of caring for and pruning socks is done with a one-handed angle grinder equipped with a newly developed steel disc that is adapted to the task. In the past, flap discs were used, but they were not nearly as efficient as the new steel discs.

Jan Volmer's advice is to choose a location for the hoof trimming box that is appropriate in relation to the internal logistics in the stable facility.

- Recently, we have started experimenting with getting people to put bandages on hoof boils and damage to the hooves, he says and adds:

- It makes sense, as sows that used to have to be euthanized can now be cured so that they can be sent for slaughter instead of being destroyed.

- In addition to the animal welfare aspect, there is thus also a considerable financial gain to be gained by applying bandages, points out Jan Volmer.