

E-MAIL FROM: John F. Robins, Secretary, Animal Concern Advice Line (ACAL), c/o Animal Concern, Post Office Box 5178, Dumbarton G82 5YJ. Tel 01389-841111. Mobile: 07721-605521. Fax: 0870-7060327. Animal Concern Advice Line (ACAL) is a recognised Scottish charity: No. SC030982. Animal Concern Advice Line was established in 2001 to take on the charitable work of Animal Concern which was founded as the Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society in 1876.

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Richard Lochhead MSP,  
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and the Environment,  
The Scottish Government,  
Holyrood,  
Edinburgh

Dear Minister,

One of the most common types of call we receive from the public is to do with lame sheep. Every year, especially during the summer, we are contacted by tourists visiting the countryside who are shocked to see so many sheep limping along at the side of the road. We don't get many calls from people who live in sheep farming areas as lame sheep are commonplace and accepted by many as normal.

However, no matter how frequently it occurs, lameness in sheep is not normal. It is usually a very painful and debilitating symptom of foot rot or some other avoidable or treatable condition.

On 6th July the BBC TV programme Countryfile broadcast an item about foot rot in sheep. This featured sheep farmer and veterinary surgeon Ruth Clements. Ms Clements described her 5 point plan to reduce or eradicate foot rot in sheep. This requires farmers to:

1. Avoid buying sheep with foot rot.
2. Culling out and not breeding from those sheep which are worst affected.
- 3: Vaccinating to stop animals becoming affected.
- 4: Quarantining all new animals being brought onto the farm.
- 5: Treating animals with antibiotics as soon as symptoms show.

Ms Clements said that the most common treatment for foot rot in sheep, foot trimming by the farmer, can actually make the situation worse. She claimed that she has almost eradicated foot rot in her flock of 1,000 ewes over a period of just three years.

Can you tell me if the Scottish Government is aware of the work of Ruth Clements and if you are using her work to implement improved welfare protocols for sheep in Scotland? If not, I strongly suggest that her 5 point plan be evaluated as it could vastly improve welfare standards in the Scottish sheep sector.

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins,  
Secretary