

## Foot Rot Versus Foot Scald in Sheep and Goats

**Foot rot** is a highly contagious disease that affects the interdigital and digital zones. It is caused by exposure to contaminated soil.

**Foot scald**, also known as interdigital dermatitis, is a noncontagious inflammation between the toes. It is caused by a microorganism found in ruminant feces.

### Signs and Symptoms

Both foot rot and foot scald start with an injury or trauma to the hoof in addition to moisture from the environment.

- Damaged interdigital skin allows microorganisms to enter.
- Problems start with the presence of *Fusobacterium necrophorum*, leading to foot scald.
- Foot scald can predispose to foot rot with the addition of a second bacteria, *Dichelobacter nodosus*.
- Foot rot can be benign or virulent depending on the strain of *D. nodosus*.

Problem	Symptoms	Diagnosis
Foot Rot	Fever, loss of appetite, hoof deformity.	Severe odor, pus, erosion of tissue between the sole, the toe, and the wall horn.
Foot Scald	Lameness, reduced weight gain, grazing on front knees.	Skin between toes appears pink to white, moist, raw, and sensitive to the touch, and has a bad odor.

### Prevention and Control

- Move animals to dry pastures.
- Ensure pens are clean and well-bedded.
- Trim hooves frequently and disinfect trimming instruments.

### Treatment

Consult your veterinarian for treatment options.



In this recently trimmed hoof, the scald is confined to the interdigital space and has not underrun the hoof tissue. (Photo by Terry Hutchens, Extension Goat Specialist, University of Kentucky)



A hoof that has been pared fairly severely to remove necrotic and infected tissue. (Photo by Terry Hutchens, Extension Goat Specialist, University of Kentucky)

M2498 (POD-02-26)

By **Ryen Greer**, former student, Animal and Dairy Sciences; **Kenisha Gordon**, former student, Animal and Dairy Sciences; **Derris Burnett**, PhD, Tuskegee University; **Leyla Rios**, PhD, Assistant Professor, Animal and Dairy Sciences; and **Michael Pesato**, DVM, Four State Veterinary Services. Photos used with permission from Purdue University Extension.

[Mississippi State University is an equal opportunity institution.](#)