



## Lameness Scoring Guidance

Corresponds with requirement AW4.5

### Introduction

The RWS requires that flocks are monitored for lameness on a regular basis and that stock people are able to recognize lameness, assess severity and take prompt action to resolve the lameness.

This document provides guidance on assessing lameness. The assessment guidance is also applicable to RWS auditors.

### Description

Lameness describes an abnormality of movement and is most evident while the animal is in motion. Although lameness may be as a result of injury, the majority of lameness in sheep is a result of infections of the hoof. These can be assessed by examining each hoof for the presence of infection, but for welfare assessment purposes lameness is assessed by scoring gait. Lameness indicates that the sheep is feeling pain and is unable to bear weight completely on the affected limb. This reduces the ability to use one or more limbs in a normal manner, with severe cases reducing mobility or resulting in an inability to bear weight on the limb(s).

### How to assess (flock and individual)

Locomotion scoring can be used to assess lameness severity in individual sheep and severity and prevalence of lameness in flocks.

**Flock:** The flock is observed first in an undisturbed condition to identify animals that cannot bear weight on a foot when standing. They may either hold the foot off the ground, or be grazing in a kneeling position. Animals should then be gently encouraged to walk away from the assessor and gait is observed.

**Individual:** Individual animals should be encouraged to walk along a race, preferably on a hard, flat surface if this available, and gait scored.



## How to score

Lameness is scored on four levels:

Not lame (0)	Movement is smooth, weight is borne equally on all four feet with no shortening of stride. Some minor head nodding is acceptable if walking on uneven ground.
Minor lameness (1)	Clear shortening of stride with obvious head nodding or flicking as the affected limb touches the ground.
Lame (2)	Very obvious head nodding and not weight-bearing on affected limb while moving, foot may be held up while standing, may be grazing on knees with front leg lameness. Steps are uneven and the stride may be shortened.
Severe lameness (3)	Recumbency or reluctance to stand or move. The affected limb or limbs are clearly identifiable and may be held off the ground while walking or standing.