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**Characteristics of Lameness**Lameness is best observed when cattle are walking on a clean, hard surface. Initially, a cow should be watched in progression from the side. If the cow is not lame, the back will be flat; if she is mildly lame, the back will be slightly arched. If a cow is moderately lame, her back will be arched both when she is standing and when she is walking. The truly lame cow will either bear some weight on the affected foot or, if acutely lame, refuse to bear weight at all. There will be some bobbing of the head as the animal attempts to bear weight on a painful foot.Recognizing the region of the foot in which the seat of lameness is located is derived from the principles described under abnormal posture above. For example, if there is pain in the toe, the retraction phase of the stride (when the foot passes behind the phase of vertical weight-bearing) is reduced considerably. In contrast, if there is pain in the heel, the protraction phase of the stride is reduced or the foot is not carried as far forward as is normal. Usually the gait of one limb can be compared with that of the contralateral limb when viewed from the side. However, lameness that is simultaneously present in contralateral limbs tends to appear less severe than is actually the case. It is not unusual in cases of subacute laminitis for all limbs to be affected more or less equally. In these cases, no specific gait change is seen, but the animals tend to place their feet at each step with care; they are said to “plod” or have a stilted gait. |

<http://www.merckmanuals.com/vet/musculoskeletal_system/lameness_in_cattle/diagnostic_procedures_in_cattle_lameness.html>