

REARING ORPHAN LAMBS

Orphan lambs can be reared successfully if care is taken in the first few weeks of the lamb's life. This requires considerable time in providing freshly prepared milk, clean utensils, warm, dry shelter, fresh water and pasture.

Lambs are on a liquid diet for the first few weeks of life. Intake of solid foods doesn't begin until the lambs are about 3 weeks old. They can be weaned at a minimum of 4 weeks onto concentrates and then onto pasture at a minimum of 6 weeks. If weaning onto pasture alone before 6 weeks there can be a high death rate. Changes in the diet should always be introduced gradually over 2 – 3 weeks to allow the rumen to adapt to the new feed type.

Ideally the lamb should receive colostrum or first milk from its mother for the first 24 hours, but a continued supplement of vitamins up to 2 weeks of age could be beneficial to protect the lamb from disease. Multi-vitamin drops, added at the same rate for babies, are a safe and convenient way of adding vitamins. Care should be taken not to overdose.

Alternatively, frozen cows colostrum or an artificial substitute can be used.

SUBSTITUTE COLOSTRUM RECIPE

- 1 raw egg
- 300ml warm water
- 600ml warm cows milk
- 0.5 teaspoon cod liver oil
- 0.5 teaspoon glucose

Give in 4 feeds or 150 ml/day for 2 – 4 days

MILK REPLACERS

1. Commercial animal milk replacers eg, Venavite, Ultragro
2. Powdered milk; dissolve 230gm of full-cream milk powder in one litre of warm fresh water
3. Fresh cows milk; dissolve 100gm full-cream milk powder in each litre of full-cream cows milk. Shake well to disperse cream

FEEDING

- Do not feed very young lambs too much at once
- Overfeeding causes more scouring and sickness than modest underfeeding
- The amount of milk given and the number of feeds a day should depend on the size of the lamb, not its age
- Newly born lambs should be fed at least four times a day for the first 2 or 3 days
- As the lamb grows, the frequency of feeding can be reduced to twice daily over a three week period

SUGGESTED FEEDING RATES

AGE	LIVEWEIGHT(kg)	AMT PER FEED	No.OFFEEEDS\DAY
1-2	2-3	100ml	4
	4-5	130ml	4
3-7	3-4	160ml	3
	5-7	200ml	3
8-21	6-10	300ml	3
21-42	18-15	600ml depending on size of lamb and it's appetite	2

- In the event of diarrhoea (scours) the addition of electrolytes, especially Albicalb will assist in replacing fluid loss and preventing further diarrhoea.
- After 6 - 8 weeks of feeding, lambs are usually ready for weaning by gradually reducing the amount and frequency of their milk diet, while ensuring there is plenty of good quality, short, green pasture or concentrate.
- In summary, freshly prepared milk, clean utensils, warm, dry shelter and pasture and “not too much at once”, are the main factors leading to the success of hand rearing orphan lambs.