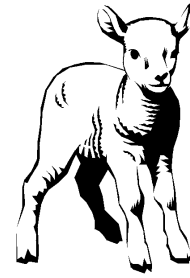


## Rearing Orphan Lambs



### Options

#### 1. Adoption by Foster Mother

You will need a ewe that has just recently given birth

- Either: (a) Confine ewe and lamb  
 (b) Rub head of lamb in birthing fluids from the ewe  
 (c) Drape ewe's lamb's skin over the orphan lamb

#### 2. Rearing by Handfeeding

First Priority- Provide shelter, feed and warmth (gentle warm air or hot water bottles).

##### Initiate Feeding

If the ewe was removed or it deserted the lamb within 24 hrs- the lamb will require colostrum to develop immunity to diseases, as a laxative and a concentrated nutrient source.

(Colostrum is the thick rich milk available from the ewe in the first two days after lambing)

Lambs that don't receive colostrum, their survival rate is only 50%, they will often be unthrifty, and are more susceptible to diseases.

Feed colostrum 75-100 ml 6 hourly for 3 feeds. If the lamb is very small or is not inclined to suck for long from a teat on a bottle, feed less and more often until the lamb gains a strong suckling reflex. If the lamb is particularly weak, you may need to feed by stomach tubing.

Colostrum may be obtained by milking the lamb's mother or any ewe that has recently lambed (up to 250mls of colostrum can be taken from a ewe without detriment to her own lamb). Milk the ewe within 2 hrs of lambing. Colostrum collected may be frozen for several months for later use when the opportunity occurs, by thawing in water at 37°C.

Alternative sources of colostrum are from freshly calved cows

##### Feeding

Liquid feeding is required for the first few weeks of life as the intake of solids generally won't begin until the lambs are 3 weeks old.

Ewe's milk contains more fat than cows' milk but cow's milk can be made similar to ewes' milk by adding 25 g full cream powdered milk to 400ml cows' milk. If using full cream powdered milk, use 250 g of powder added to 1 litre of water. There are also commercial milk replacer products for feeding lambs eg Di-vetelac®, Veanavite®.

The most common problems in feeding lambs are those of feeding too much too infrequently (Never more than 600mls/feed). The amount to feed depends on breed and size of lamb. As a guide:

Day	Feed	Amount/Feed	No. of feeds/ day	Total amount/ day
1	Colostrum	75-100 ml	4 or 5	
2-7	Milk/milk replacer	60-90ml	5	300-450ml
8-14	Milk/milk replacer	120ml	4	480ml
15-21	Milk/milk replacer	200ml	3	600ml
22-28	Milk/milk replacer	250ml	3	750ml
29-35	Milk/milk replacer	300 or 450ml	3 2	900ml 900ml
36-42	Milk/milk replacer	600ml	2	1200ml
Until Weaning	Milk/milk replacer	600ml	2	1200ml

A rough guide of amount to feed per day if you don't know the age of the lamb is 10% body weight per day. For example:

A 4kg lamb would need 400grams or 400mls of milk.

### **Temperature of milk**

Give warm milk (37°C) at least for the first week, then very gradually change to cold milk if desired.

### **Hard feed**

Pellets or crumbles (lamb or calf) can be introduced from 2 weeks of age but they should be changed regularly so they are always fresh.

### **Weaning**

Early introduction to solid feeds e.g. fibre and concentrates, will aid rumen development so they can be weaned early at about 6-10 weeks.

- Minimum of 4 weeks of age (onto concentrate feed)
- Minimum of 6 weeks of age (onto pasture)

Preferably wean lambs at a minimum of 8 weeks of age.

Wean the lamb(s) by shortening the feeding time or reduce the amount of milk given.

### **Weight gain**

Aim for at least:

Crossbred- 450g/day

Merino- 6kg on the first 3 weeks of life

### **Scouring**

Often follows in a lamb that has not had colostrum. If the lamb is otherwise well, is growing and shows no other problems then ignore it or reduce the feeding slightly. If there is an obvious problem then halve or withdraw the milk ration and replace temporarily with an electrolyte replacer. If the cause is infectious then antibiotic treatment may be indicated eg neomycin/tetracycline soluble powder in the milk ration.

### **Bloat**

Sometimes occurs after bottle fed lambs get to about 3-4 weeks, the number of feeds is reduced to two per day and the lambs guzzle their bottle milk. It is caused by *Sarcina spp* multiplying in the gut. Treatment is by slowing the drinking rate eg by a smaller teat orifice and/or feeding the milk cold.