

# Lamb and sheep care

## Feeding Orphan Lambs

Under natural conditions a lamb will suckle the ewe up to 40 times every 24 hours. Therefore small, frequent feedings are more beneficial than a few large feeds. An indication of 'fullness' occurs when the lamb's flanks are level with its sides. Lambs should never look bloated. If a lamb refuses a feed, it must never be forced as this can indicate health problems.

Use the feeding program in the table below as a guide. For lambs that are small and weak, it is better to feed a smaller quantity more often (say every four hours). Feeding more than the recommended amounts can cause scouring or bloating of which can be fatal.



**Table of quantity and frequency of feeding.**

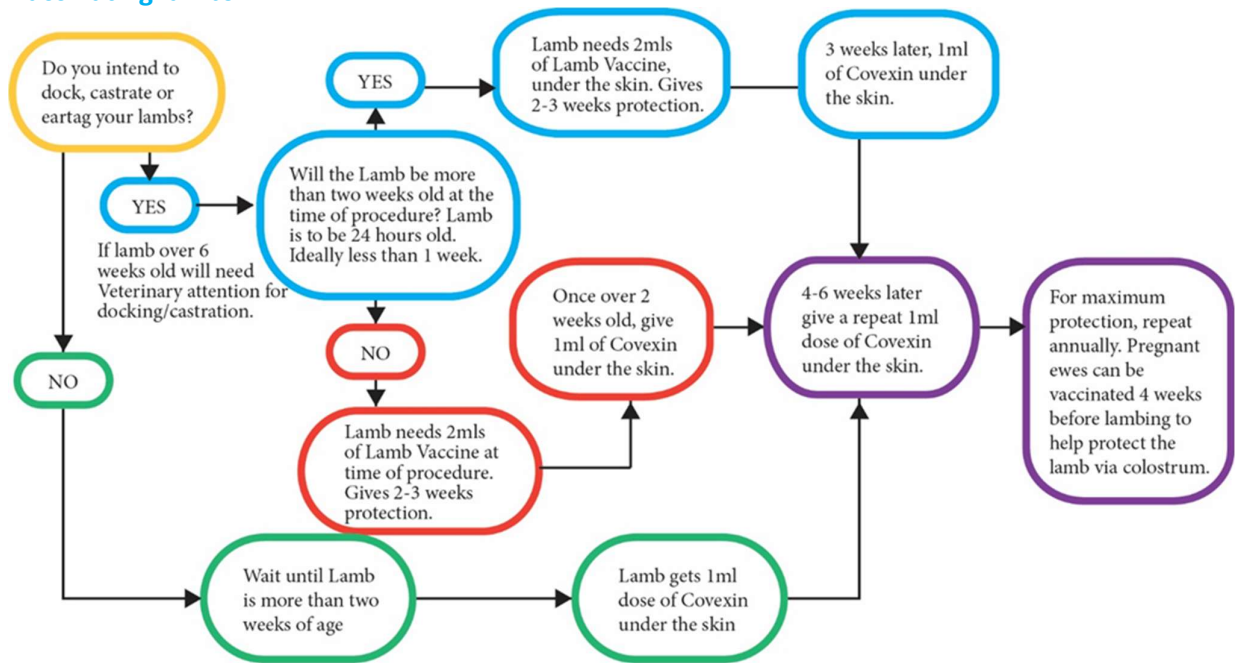
Age (days)	Body Weight (kg)	Volume of milk per feed (ml)	Total volume of milk per day (ml)
0-4	2.5	75-100	300
	3.5	110-150	450-600
	5	150-200	
4-5		160-250	500-750
6-14		250-330	750-1000
15 plus		500-660	1,500-2,000

## Shelter

It is important to provide shelter from wind and rain.



## Vaccinating lambs



The lamb will need a Lamb Vaccine at docking time. This vaccine provides an immediate short term (2-3 weeks) passive protection against *Clostridium tetani* (tetanus) and a sensitising dose for *Clostridium perfringens* type D (pulpy kidney). Once the lamb is over 2 weeks old it can be vaccinated with a Covexin 10 which protects it long term from a range of diseases. This must be repeated four to six weeks after the first shot to achieve complete vaccination. This can be repeated annually to protect the animals from the clostridial diseases.

## Drenching

Give lambs their first drench at weaning (10-16 weeks). After the first drench, continue drenching at 4 weekly intervals. Make sure the drenching at 4 weekly intervals. Make sure the first drench used includes cover for tapeworms, e.g. Oxfen, First Drench, Genesis Tape.

Drenching families should be changed annually to avoid development of resistance, or use a combination drench.

## Tail docking and castration

This should be done at 3 to 4 weeks of age. Typically, a rubber ring is placed over the tail with an elastrator applicator. For female lambs the remaining tail should cover the vulva. In a male the equivalent length.

## Scabby mouth

Single dose can be given at docking if considered necessary. Consult your veterinarian before using as this is a



live vaccine and can cause lesions in humans.



### Sheep general health

#### Fly strike

This can be reduced by keeping sheep free from dags by regular drenching and crutching at drenching and annual or biannual shearing.

Prevent by applying an IGR (Zapp) in December to the back, 2 weeks after any shearing.

If sheep become flystruck (attacked by maggots), clip the wool back from the affected area and dust with Asuntol, Flystrike Powder or Maggo wash.

#### Lice

Lice numbers tend to build up in autumn and winter months and are spread during close contact e.g. ewe to lamb, yarding etc. Shearing reduces most of the lice burden and those remaining tend to die when exposed to the elements. However, the use of Zapp to control lice is a good idea.

#### Ticks

Tick cause skin irritation in non-wooled areas such as the head, ears and crutch. Clinical diseases is uncommon and is usually associated

with unimproved pasture or re-growth of scrub.

#### Footrot

Sheep and lambs that are standing in wet muddy conditions are more susceptible to footrot. Keep claws pared back if they get over grown. Consult your veterinarian if lambs appear lame especially with swelling above claws. They will require antibiotics and trimming. A vaccine is available.

#### Facial Eczema

Caused by fungal spores on pasture which produce a toxin which attacks the liver. Rapid spore production occurs in warm, humid conditions between February and May. Many will not show clinical signs of the disease. However, those affected will appear restless, rub/scratch at affected skin and actively seek shade. More severe cases may have swelling of the face and ears, and some may die. Control by avoiding warm, north-facing slopes and sheltered paddocks in high-risk periods. Avoid hard grazing and provide supplement feed as "safe forage." Ryegrass- dominant paddocks are higher risk than clover, lotus and chicory.

Zinc may be used to limit liver damage. This is easily done by using a zinc boluses. It is extremely important to use the correct dose. Overdosing can be fatal.





### 0-4 weeks of age

#### Enterotoxaemia/pulpy kidney

- most cases the lamb is found dead
- may be caused by diet change, particularly a sudden increase in quantity of feed, low roughage diets or heavy tapeworm burdens

#### Navel ill

- lambs born in wet muddy conditions are more susceptible
- consult your veterinarian if the navel is hot, swollen or painful.
- Prevent by spraying with Iodine when lamb is born

#### Entropion/weepy eyes

- similar in appearance to pink eye
- inverted eyelids causing damage to eye and if not treated, blindness.
- Treatment usually very successful

#### Scours

- common problem in young lambs
- may be caused by overfeeding, or sudden change in diet, incorrect milk replacement, viral or bacterial infection.
- Treatment is based on rehydration using electrolyte solutions
- If scouring cut back milk quantity. DO NOT dilute milk mixture-feed normal concentration.
- Consult your veterinarian for advice

### 4-7 weeks of age (often associate with Docking)

#### Clostridial diseases

##### Tetanus

- docking wounds are a common site if tetanus infection
- infection travels up the nerves causing muscle spasm progressing to rigidity and death.

Blackleg/ Malignant Oedema  
(occurs after bruising)  
Fatal Haemorrhage (rare!)

##### Pinkeye

- contagious eye infection (weeping eyes, cloudiness, pink discolouration)
- Occurs most commonly in dry conditions
- Most cases recover spontaneously, but treatment will prevent complications
- Differentiate from a grass seed in the eye or entropion
- Antibiotics may be necessary





**7-16 weeks of age: (often Parasitic disease)**

**Tape worms**

These are the most common worm found before weaning and must be treated with the first drenching at weaning.

**Coccidian**

- affected animals present with acute diarrhoea (+/- blood), ill thrift and sometimes death
- outbreaks usually associated with high stocking rate, warm moist conditions, and/or poor nutrition
- infections are easily treated

**Nematodes**

- affected animals present with loss of appetite, weight loss, dark diarrhoea +/- anaemia (Haemonchus)
- consult your veterinarian to determine the most effective drench programme for your situation.

When a vet may need to be called  
Pregnancy toxemia in ewes.

Primary cause is undernutrition in late pregnancy. Anything that interrupts feed intake may induce the disease. Early signs are difficult to detect and the usual course lasting 2-5 days includes listlessness, inappetence, grinding teeth, blindness, collapse and lastly coma and death. Early in the disease treat with gentle handling and an oral propylene glycol treatment see the clinic for products like Head Start and Ketol. Palatable feed, water and shelter are imperative.

Try and avoid having ewes obese in early pregnancy and provide adequate good feed during the last 6 weeks of pregnancy.

**Hypomagnesia- grass staggers**

A condition characterized by low magnesium. Apparently normal grazing animals suddenly gallop around appear blind and collapse convulsing and death follows in a few hours. Less affected animals are hypersensitive. Milk fever due to low calcium also occurs. Intravenous magnesium/calcium solutions are treatment. Shelter, a salt lick and hay should be provided.

**Parturient Paresis in ewes-**

Milk fever is caused by low hypocalcemia. Occurs 6 weeks before to 10 weeks after lambing. Onset is sudden after changes in food, weather or condition enforcing starving. Early signs are excitability followed by dullness, regurgitation, coma then death.

Treatment is calcium solution intravenous ideally or at least under the skin. Handle to sheep with care and avoid predisposing causes.



