



SHEEP SHEET

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All sheep producers are faced at some stage with orphaned lambs or lambs with mothers unable to feed them because of mastitis or damaged teats (i.e. shearing cuts). Whether it is worthwhile trying to save these lambs will depend on how many there are, how much time can be spared and how much they will be worth once reared. If something is to be done, lambs can be reared by fostering or hand rearing.

One in 10 lambs in the United States die of starvation. Bonus lambs come from:

1. Quadruplets and triplets,
2. Weak twins,
3. Orphan or unclaimed lambs,
4. Dams with no milk,
5. Twin from a mother in her first lactation.

Fostering

Fostering is the easiest option in the long run if a suitable ewe is available. Various means can be tried to encourage the foster mother to accept the lamb. A traditional ploy is to attach the skin of the ewe's own dead lamb on the orphan until the ewe accepts it. Alternatively, the ewe's sense of smell can be overpowered or confused by smearing a strong smelling substance such as aniseed, various aerosol type products, or even the ewe's own milk on the lamb around his nose, face, and the tail and dock area. The same material should also be placed on the ewe's muzzle. A few special commercial products are also available for this purpose.

Confine the ewe and lamb in a restricted area with food and water until the relationship is firmly established. Hold the ewe several times a day to ensure that the lamb has a suckle, or tie her head up in such a way that she cannot butt or repel the lamb, but still reach her food and water.

SOLVE THOSE FOSTERING PROBLEMS.



Rearing Orphaned Lambs

Sheepdex L-2

The first feed - colostrum

Every lamb needs a first suckle (drink) of colostrum, the thick milk available from the freshly lambed ewe. Colostrum is rich in energy and protein. It has a milk laxative effect to move the fetal feces (dung) and to prevent the formation of a hard rubbery blockage (clot-like) of milk in the stomach.

Colostrum also carries disease-fighting antibodies produced by the ewe. These antibodies give the lamb short-term protection against gut (intestinal) and bowel infections until it is able to build up its own resistance. If the ewe has been properly vaccinated, her antibodies will protect the lamb from clostridial diseases such as enterotoxemia (overeating), tetanus and others until it is vaccinated.

If a lamb is to be hand reared, or fostered on to a ewe that has previously suckled a lamb for more than two days, first give it at least one feeding of colostrum. The lamb may die after a few days with an intestinal blockage (partially digested milk clot) in its gut if this is not done.

If a freshly lambed ewe is available, the orphan lamb can be suckled on one side without affecting the survival of her own lamb. Better still, milk out one side by hand and give the orphan lamb 100-150 ml (3-4 oz) of colostrum, using a coarse (large) "eye dropper," a plastic pop bottle with attached teat, or teaspoon. Store the remainder in small, clean, sanitized containers in the freezer. Colostrum should keep for at least six months and up to two years or more without deteriorating, so that a "bank" of colostrum will last right through the lambing season.

Carefully thaw frozen colostrum in a lukewarm water bath no hotter than 104°F (40°C) so the vital antibodies are not destroyed. Do not thaw frozen colostrum in a microwave oven!

Cow's colostrum can be used if ewes' colostrum is not available. It can also be stored frozen until needed. However, because antibodies are dam (mother) specific, do not expect the same level of disease protection, as is found with the birth mother.

Artificial colostrum

The following artificial mixture can be used as a substitute for the first day's feeding if natural colostrum is not available:

- One quart of fresh raw cows' milk,
- One beaten egg,
- Two teaspoons of glucose or lactose (if unavailable, use sugar)
- One teaspoon of cod liver oil (or castor) oil.

Condensed milk, appropriately diluted, can be used instead of fresh raw cows' milk.

Mix (shake) well, and divide the mixture into four equal feedings for the first day's feeding. Divide it into six equal feedings instead of four if the lamb is small or weak.

Artificial rearing

Choice of feed

Full cream cow's milk is the obvious choice for small numbers of lambs if it is available and is not normally sold.

Calf milk replacer can be used if full cream milk is not available.

Cow's milk is weaker than ewes' milk, and contains about 4% fat and 8% solids-not-fat, compared with 7% and 12% for ewes' milk. So, if using calf milk replacer for lambs, make it up at a more concentrated mix. Do not water-down cows' milk - if anything, strengthen it with milk replacer. However, do not overdo this as overstrong milk can cause constipation and death.

Choose a high-fat calf milk replacer where possible; some are too low in fat for lambs.

A producer can also choose to simplify the matter by purchasing any of the commercially manufactured 'lamb milk replacers' available at livestock feed supply businesses. These commercial lamb milk replacers are scientifically formulated to meet most, if not all of the suckling lambs nutritive needs, except mother's companionship. They usually run 24% protein and 30% fat (homogenized).

How to feed

The standard plastic pop drinking bottle fitted with a artificial lamb teat can be used to hand feed each lamb four times a day if only a few lambs are to be reared. This works well but is very demanding and time consuming.

Use of self-feeding "lamb bars" if more than three or four lambs are to be reared may be made or purchased. Lamb bars can handle up to about 30

lambs and consists of a metal or pvc plastic tank with ewe size artificial teats attached. The "lamb bar" can be shortened or only one side used if only a few lambs are to be reared.

Each teat has a washer foot-valve inserted into its base to prevent leakage. This can be inserted quite easily by holding the teat open with the pliers normally used to expand lamb elastrator rings (used for docking and castration). Commercially, ready-made teats or nipples are also available for quick attachment to lamb bar milk holding tanks.

As an alternative, the teats can be set into the tank above milk level, with suction tubes instead of valves. This is quite satisfactory but the lambs may be a little harder to start.

Lamb bar buckets, both round and square buckets fitted with teats are available from sheep supply houses in the United States too.

All teats or nipples from artificial devices should be at least 14-15 inches above the ground level. It is best to group lambs by age and allow 2-3 lambs per nipple in groups of 10-20. Thirty lambs per grouping is alright as long as space permits.

When to feed and how much

Milk may either be fed warm and fresh, four times a day to begin with, or made available to the lamb at all times when convenient ('*ad lib*' feeding). Milk should be chilled (to prevent souring) before filling the "lamb bar" if it is to be available all the time. If the weather is warm it may help to insulate the tank.

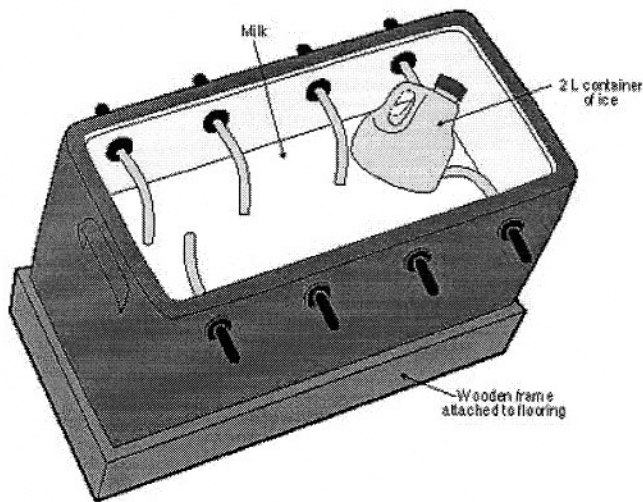
Lambs soon get used to chilled milk and the best lamb growth rates (nearly 1 pound/day) have been achieved with this method. The lambs take a little milk every hour or so, as they would from their mothers, and soon learn to regulate their intake.

All equipment must be thoroughly cleaned each day to prevent the spread of intestinal infections whichever method is adopted.

Start with four 4-6 oz feedings per day if the lambs are to be given several definite feedings each day (periodic feeding). Gradually build this up to four 16 oz feedings per day, depending on appetite. This should take about two weeks. Then go on to three 24 oz feedings per day before worming and weaning onto clean pasture or range.

Feed little and often where possible, because more lambs die from eating too much than from underfeeding. Overfeeding can also bring about serious scouring conditions with artificially reared lambs of any age.

Self-feeding dispenser for rearing orphan lambs.



Weaning and general management

Four to eight weeks of milk feeding will be enough in most cases; well-grown lambs can be weaned after four or five. A producer may also use the figure of 25 lbs. in weight would be an adequate benchmark to wean artificially reared lambs. Weaning should be abruptly, and get the lambs on a dry starter, not straight onto lush pasture. Do not forget to dock, castrate (if buck lamb), vaccinate and drench artificially reared lambs at appropriate times.

Lush pasture could be made available if possible. If not good quality hays (preferably legumes, i.e. alfalfa, clover, pea, peanut, or vetch) or silage may be used. Lambs being fed harvested roughages like hay or silage, should also have access to grain or grain mixes, which could include a calf starter. All lambs should have free-choice 24 hours per day good clean fresh water. A coarse ground trace mineral salt should also be accessible to the lambs at all times.

For more information write The Navajo Sheep Project, Inc. PO Box 4454, Logan, UT 84323-4454. The Navajo Sheep Project is a registered non-profit Utah corporation.