

4-H Bottle Lamb Resource

(Source UNL Extension – Holt-Boyd County)



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CARE OF LAMBS

Management of Lambs when Weaned to Milk Replacers

- Colostrum - The need for and benefit of colostrum cannot be overemphasized! A source of colostrum should be obtained and frozen for use if lamb is obtained within 24 hours of birth. If colostrum is available, it can supply the entire liquid feeding program. Since the antibodies in colostrum are capable of being absorbed from the intestinal tract only during the day after birth, it is essential that the lamb be given 1 ounce of colostrum per pound of lamb weight, during the first 24 hours of life (first 12 hours preferred). Frozen ewe colostrum would be preferred, but frozen cow colostrum also provides adequate antibodies.
- Place lambs in a warm, dry, enclosed area.
- Lambs may require assistance the first day in learning to nurse the replacer pail.
- Avoid placing very young lambs in the same pen with older lambs that may deprive them of adequate milk replacer.
- Inject lambs with the following when placed in nursery:
 - Iron-dextran
 - Vitamin ADE
 - Combiotic

Composition of the Milk Replacer

There are a number of commercially prepared lamb milk replacers on the market. Lambs will perform satisfactorily on some calf milk replacers that are on the market. However, most calf milk replacers do not contain enough fat to be used successfully with lambs. Listed below are some recommendations for preparing milk replacers:

- Best results have been obtained with milk replacers containing a minimum of 30 percent fat and 25 percent milk protein.
- Fat can be added to milk replacers in the form of choice white grease (lard) or butterfat. Vegetable oils should not be used.
- The replacer should be diluted with water to a minimum of 20 percent dry matter. (Two pounds milk replacer per gallon of water).
- Mix replacers thoroughly before feeding. Avoid using replacers that will not stay in suspension. Mix the powder in warm water and cool immediately to about 33 degrees F. This helps to eliminate the problem of ingredient separation during storage. (Make certain that milk replacer contains a high level of antibiotics to avoid scours and other digestive disorders).

Method of Feeding Milk Replacers

- Use nipple feeder pails to prevent the lamb from gulping milk and to reduce digestive upsets. However, if the nipples and valves are not properly cleaned, possible bacterial infection may out-weigh all advantages obtained from their use. Keep the lamb pails as clean as the dishes you eat from.
- Recent research has suggested that lambs perform better on cold milk (35-40 degrees) than warm milk. Cold milk does not sour as quickly and lambs consume only a small amount of cold milk replacer solution at each nursing, but much more often. This reduces digestive problems. The one problem with feeding cold milk is getting the lambs to start nursing adequate amounts. Warm milk may be used the first week and cold milk thereafter. In a free-choice system, each lamb will consume ½ to ¾ pounds of milk replacer powder in solution daily (2-4 pints of liquid milk).
- Research results have not shown any advantage for feeding more often than twice daily after lambs are one week old if lambs are hand fed.
- Restrict intake of milk replacer after lambs are two weeks old to encourage consumption of dry feed.
- The lamb should gain ½ - 2/3 lb. daily while on milk replacer.
- Lambs should be provided constant access to fresh water and high quality palatable solid feed to accustom them to eating dry feed and to minimize weight losses during the weaning period.

Starter Rations

- The following ration has proven quite satisfactory for encouraging young lambs to eat and could be fed until lambs reach about 60 pounds.

INGREDIENT	PERCENT	POUNDS
Ground Shelled Corn	45	900
Ground Alfalfa Hay (good quality, 18% protein minimum)	20	400
Soybean Meal	25	500
Molasses	8	160
Bone Meal	1.5	30
Trace Mineralized Salt	0.5	10
Aureomycin or Terramycin	2.5 grams/100 lbs.	2000 plus 50 grams of Aureomycin or terramycin

- As soon as the lambs are eating dry feed well, wean them to a high quality, dry ration and manage them as early weaned feeder lambs. Lambs can be weaned from milk feeding at 25-30 pounds body weight or when they are 30-45 days of age. Lambs have been weaned successfully at lighter weights and fewer days of age. Post weaning rations, until lambs reach about 60 pounds, should be high in protein (15-20%) and energy. See Table 1 for nutrient requirements.

- There is some evidence that antibiotics help reduce the incidence of enterotoxemia (Ott, 1968). Chlortetracycline can be used at a level of 22 mg/kg of feed for this purpose and oxytetracycline can be used at a level of 25 mg per lamb per day.
- When lambs are unthrifty, check for external and internal parasites.
- Vaccinate for enterotoxemia. A second vaccination 2 weeks later may be advisable.

Table 1 - Nutrient Requirements of Sheep

Nutrient Concentration in Diets for Sheep (expressed on 100 Percent Dry Matter Basis).

Nutrient Concentration in Diets for Sheep (expressed on 100 Percent Dry Matter Basis)											
Body Weight	Weight Change/Day	Energy			Example Diet Proportions		Crude Protein	Calcium	Phosphorus	Vitamin A Activity	Vitamin E Activity
		TDN %	DE (MCal/Kg)	ME (MCal/Kg)	Concentrate %	Forage %					
(lb)	(lb)						%	%	%	(IU/kg)	(IU/kg)
Early Weaned Lambs - Moderate and Rapid Growth Potential											
22	0.55	80	3.5	2.9	90	10	26.2	0.82	0.38	940	20
44	0.66	78	3.4	2.8	85	15	16.9	0.54	0.24	940	20
66	0.72	78	3.3	2.7	85	15	15.1	0.51	0.24	1,085	15
88-132	0.88	78	3.3	2.7	85	15	14.5	0.55	0.28	1,253	15
Lambs Finishing - 4 to 7 Months Old											
66	0.65	72	3.2	2.5	60	40	14.7	0.51	0.24	1,085	15
88	0.60	76	3.3	2.7	75	25	11.6	0.42	0.21	1,175	15
110	0.45	77	3.4	2.8	80	20	10.0	0.35	0.19	1,469	15

Example Rations

Rations for Feeder Lambs (60-90 Pounds) - Approximately 15% Protein As Fed				
INGREDIENT	POUNDS	PERCENT	POUNDS	PERCENT
Ground Shelled Corn	860	43.0	1500	75.0
Ground Alfalfa Hay (At Least 15% Protein)	800	40.0	Hay Fed Free Choice	
Soybean Meal	200	10.0	350	17.5
Molasses	100	5.0	100	5.0
Dicalcium Phosphate	30	1.5	40	2.0
Trace Mineralized Salt	10	0.5	10	0.5
Total	2000 Pounds	100	2000	100
Add 20 mg Antibiotics Per Animal Per Day or 20 Grams Per Ton of Feed				

Finishing Rations (90 pounds to finish) - Approximately 12% Protein as Fed				
INGREDIENT	POUNDS	PERCENT	POUNDS	PERCENT
Ground Shelled Corn	1260	63	1725	86.25
Ground Alfalfa Hay	500	25	Hay Fed Free Choice	
Soybean Meal	100	5.0	135	6.75
Molasses	100	5.0	100	5.0
Dicalcium Phosphate	30	1.5	30	1.5
Trace Mineralized Salt	10	0.5	10	0.5
Totals	2000	100	2000	100
Add 20 mg Antibiotics Per Animal Per Day or 20 Grams Per Ton of Feed				

Feeding Directions

1. Lambs should be brought up to full feed gradually.
2. The amounts given are to be divided into two equal daily feedings.
3. Reduce the amount of grain fed immediately if lambs leave some grain from one feeding to the next.