CARE AND FEEDING OF YOUR LAMB

Your lamb has just been taken from all its friends and in some cases, its mother. It will take a few days to adjust to its new surroundings and new food. Chances are, in spite of your best care, it will lose at least 5 lbs during this adjustment period. In order to minimize this weight loss as much as possible and to maintain a good healthy lamb, you need to make this adjustment period as stress-free as possible. The steps that follow are suggestions on how to do this.

1. Find out from the breeder what vaccinations and medications that this lamb has already been given and at what age. Ask about what types of feed it is eating now. Specifically, find out if it has been vaccinated twice for enterotoxemia C and D. Ask whether the lamb has been on creep feed with a coccidiostat? Find out if it has been dewormed. You will also want to know what kind of grain or concentrate it has been eating, if any. Ask the breeder if you can buy several pounds of the concentrate that he has been feeding, if it is different than what you will be feeding.

2. If it has not had 2 vaccinations for enterotoxemia, ask the breeder to give it one before you take the lamb. The 2 vaccinations should be 3-4 weeks apart. If it has only had one, you need to be sure it gets another at the proper time.

3. When you get your lamb home, put it in a small area either by itself or with other lambs the same size where it can find the food and water easily. Do not put it with adult ewes, calves, horses, etc. Make sure that clean water and good quality hay are available. Let it get acquainted with you and its surroundings for a couple of days before turning it out in a bigger area such as a pasture or attempting to halter break or train it.

4. If the lamb has been on grain, give it slightly less than it had been getting. Use the grain you got from the breeder for your first feeding or two, then slowly mix in your feed so that the change over is gradual. Never make sudden feed changes. If it has not had grain before, you can start the lamb on 1/4 lb twice a day. Many people use a coffee can to measure out their feed. However, a coffee can of whole corn does not weigh the same as a coffee can of rolled corn. Weigh your coffee can and know how much you are feeding.

5. When you decide to increase the amount of grain, do so slowly. Never increase it more the 1/4 lb. per feeding. Feed the same amount for at least 3 days before increasing the amount again. If you increase the grain too rapidly, your lamb will quit eating altogether and get diarrhea. (This is bad because it will lose weight.) If it gets way too much—for example, if it gets out of its pen and into the grain bin, it can actually die of a condition called acidosis and this is really bad).
6. Do not put new hay and grain on top of uneaten hay and grain. Clean out the uneaten portion and do not feed as much for the next feeding or two.

7. Make a point to observe your lamb twice a day. Don't just throw the feed over the fence and leave. Take a few minutes to observe its demeanor. Are its ears up? Is it active and alert? Is it eager to eat? Is it walking normally, not limping or acting stiff? If there are more than one lambs eating together, be sure that one isn't hogging all the feed. Early discovery of problems and prompt treatment may be the difference between life and death for your lamb. His health and well being are your responsibility. Take it seriously! Take time to know that he is okay.

**Rules of Thumb for Feeding Show Lambs**

Start out with a good quality 16 to 18% protein ration with at least 12 to 15% crude fiber. Feed the lambs all of this ration that they will eat until they reach 100 pounds of body weight. After they reach 100 pounds, you should feed the black face lambs 1 to 1.5 pounds of feed 2 times per day. All other breeds should get 0.75 to 1 pound 2 times per day. You should be able to maintain and still get growth at these feeding rates until the lambs go to market.

You should handle the lambs to check their finish every chance you get. This will give you the experience you will need to determine the lambs condition (whether it is too fat or too thin). Just remember, if a lamb is too fat, cut the total amount of feed fed daily and increase the protein. If a lamb is too thin, decrease the protein and increase the fat (energy) of the ration. Do not increase the volume of feed unless necessary. Weigh the lambs weekly. This will tell you what your weight gains are and if you need to adjust your feeding program. There are minimum and maximum weights for the show lambs. Each area is a little different so know the requirements for the show or shows you plan to attend. Try to feed on a fixed time schedule as close as possible. You should also give your lambs a little hay once or twice a week to promote a healthy digestive system. And also make sure your lambs have a good source of clean, fresh water at all times.

If you are going to be over six hours late on your normal feeding schedule, either feed half their normal amount or completely skip that feeding. You can skip one feeding every 7 to 10 days with only a slight loss in performance. Any feed that looks or smells abnormal should be thrown away or returned to your feed dealer.

Feed additives are necessary part of any successful feeding program. There are numerous additives being sold today. Some work and some don't. If you are feeding one or more of these additives and you feel like you are getting good results then continue to use them. If you feel you are not getting the performance you would like, then try something different. It is best to not try all your lambs at one time on a new feed additive in case it does not work. These are the additives we are using at this time and how we feed them.
Other Things You Should Know When Feed Your Club Lamb

1. Clean water should be available for your lamb at all times.

2. A loose salt should be available for your lamb at all times. A coccidiostat can be mixed into your salt to control coccidia. Deccox is a good coccidiostat. You can buy 2 lb. packages of it from Farm City Animal Supply in Caldwell, Idaho to mix with 50 lbs. of sheep salt.

3. Concentrates should not exceed 75% of your ration.

4. Never change feed suddenly. It is best if you feed the same feeds throughout the feeding period. If you must change feeds, do so as described above.

5. Pasture is a source of parasites for your lamb. Worms will decrease the lamb's rate of gain and its feed efficiency (the amount of gain per pound of feed fed). It would be best if the lamb was fed alfalfa hay, rather than pasture.

6. The lamb should be fed the same time each day.

7. Never skip a feeding. If the lamb didn't eat all of its feed, remove the old feed, and reduce the amount for the next feeding. Adding a full feeding on top of food that's left over is setting up conditions that can cause acidosis.