

Most important is Colostrum. Quality – vaccinated ewes, older ewes, healthy ewes. Quantity – as much as a healthy lamb can take. Quickly – First feed of 50mls per kg within 2 hours (as soon as possible) then after 6 hours ability to absorb antibodies quickly declines.

Care of navel – important route of infection, dip with iodine or similar as soon as possible. Clean, dry, warm environment. Hypothermia is biggest single cause of lamb mortality.

If a lamb becomes comatosed always warm before feeding. Use a bottle if suckle reflex is present. If not inject with glucose in the abdomen, 1 inch to right and below navel, aim for tail head with 1inch yellow (19g) needle, 25mls of 20% solution then tube with 50mls per kg body weight once warm

Diseases of the new born lamb

Watery Mouth – dull lambs with wet chins, hunched appearance. Infection with E.coli, can kill before scour occurs. Give spectam and tube/bottle feed. Review colostrum/hygiene.

Joint/Navel ill – bacterial infection enters via navel, castration or tail wound. Requires prolonged antibiotic course, review hygiene and husbandry.

Difficult lambings

If a ewe has not produced any sign of a lamb after an hour since the water bag has appeared she should be examined.

Restrain the ewe in a pen, behind a gate or with another person. Wash hands and wear gloves.

Assemble ropes, lubricant and lamb snare and iodine.

Lubricate hand and gently insert. At wrist depth you should feel cervix. If not opened manipulate with fingers to cause relaxation. Oxytocin may help.

If lamb malpresented identify which limb or body part. Identify number of lambs. Aim is to get head and two front legs or two back legs. Head and one front leg may suffice.

Gentle manipulation and plenty of lubricant. Once legs are in position apply ropes. Use head rope.

Use gentle traction on ropes and work with ewes own contractions.

If you are not sure, call for assistance. If the lamb is inside the uterus then you can take your time.

Husbandry

Tailing and castration. Consider whether it is necessary. They cause both short and long term pain and effects on growth.

Castration 1-7 days of age. Rubber ring most appropriate method. Rings with antiseptic available, to reduce tetanus.

Tailing – rubber ring method 1-7 days of age. Must be long enough to cover perineum and vulva in adult sheep. Consider doing separately to castration in ram lambs.

www.nadis.org.uk

www.wahdb.org.uk - beef and lamb – better returns programme