

## **Rearing Orphan Lambs**

Dear DASH

How to rear orphan lambs successfully....

First feed must be colostrum (sheep, cow or goat) 1-3 days warm milk and colostrum, 75% colostrum down to 25% colostrum by day 3.

Train to feed on adlib buckets with warm milk on day 3-5. By the 5th day start cooling milk given so lamb is totally adlib on COLD milk by the 7th day. Yes I know it goes against mothering instinct but it really is better for artificially reared animals. Always make sure the lam has access to fresh clean soft straw, not soft hay! Have a small pot of lamb creep or miser, whatever you prefer to feed, available to the lamb from 3 days old. They won't eat much but they know it's there and play with it in their mouths to start with. By day 7 lambs may start eating creep so if the pot is empty give a little more each day until there is some left so they are adlib feeding.

It takes lambs 3 weeks for their gut to change to suit new foods. Once a week, put 50ml per lamb of colostrum in the milk, this is to help their gut stay active against bad bacteria as powdered milk isn't live (colostrum can be frozen and then defrosted as required, remember not to defrost in the microwave as this kills the good bugs).

At 3 weeks old your lambs are on adlib milk, adlib creep and fresh clean soft straw. Time of year and weather permitting, it's time to start allowing access to grass for 1-2 hours a day. Make sure they have fed well in the morning (sometimes on adlib they have run out by the time morning comes). Then turn them out about 11-12pm making sure they still have access to milk, creep and straw. Once you start turning out you have to stick with it, you must not shock their systems by keeping them in all day. As long as they are healthy and have shelter in the field, a shower of rain won't be a problem.

Increase the time spent grazing by 1 hour per day after the 4th day of turning out. This should prevent bloating. Straw not hay is the key. With this system, you should have lovely round lambs.

After 3 weeks of grazing for more than 5 hours a day, remove milk completely, suddenly. Make sure they have water all the time.

If you are fattening the lambs for the butcher, keep the creep adlib and straw available and they should be ready by 12 weeks old. But if you are rearing lambs as pets or replacement ewes, remove the creep after a minimum of 3 weeks grazing 8 hours a day, then the straw 2 weeks later. Good luck! Dawn Wainwright (3739)