

Lambing

Information Sheet

Lambing Shed Hygiene



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Good hygiene in the lambing shed will reduce problems with disease and increase both ewe and lamb survival. Bacteria are ubiquitous in the environment but attention to detail can keep their numbers in check. They are present in dung, on feet and in forage not to mention on hands, boots and equipment. Cases of watery mouth, navel and joint ill, scour, mastitis and womb infections all result from bacterial infection.

At housing footbath the ewes and separate any that are lame. Don't overstock pens and maintain the bedding so that you can kneel down and stay dry. If possible avoid feeding very wet silage and dag ewes if required. Fix any leaking water bowls and clear away uneaten forage before adding fresh.

Disposable gloves are easily carried in a pocket and should be worn whenever you assist a ewe to lamb. Remove any sick ewes/lambs or ewes that abort from the pens. You can then easily treat the former and monitor how much they are eating and drinking.

Aborted lambs and placentas should be removed along with contaminated bedding to reduce spread of infection. Placentas from normal lambings should also be removed.

Warm water, soap and a towel should be near to hand in the shed particularly as many of the bacteria that cause abortion can also cause serious illness in people. **Remember that pregnant women should never be involved with the sheep or handle dirty overalls at lambing time.**

New born lambs rely on a good feed of colostrum soon after birth to help their immune systems cope with the challenge of environmental bacteria. All of the points above will help reduce the risk of them having a mouthful of bacteria before any milk.

Triplet lambs or those that are slow to stand may need to be tubed with colostrum. If you are checking udders for milk wearing clean gloves is a good idea. Stomach tubing equipment, bottles and teats can be sterilised to keep them clean e.g. in Milton's fluid.

The navel, (along with the mouth), provides an easy entry route for bacteria. Treating navels with Iodine reduces this risk and helps the navel dry out. Dipping them twice a few hours apart is ideal and is easiest to do when ewes and lambs are individually penned.

Make sure that ewes in pens always have access to feed and water from clean buckets. They are often very thirsty after lambing. These pens should be cleaned, disinfected and re-bedded between every ewe.

Aiming for the highest standards of hygiene in the lambing shed will pay dividends in terms of increased lamb survival and reduced time and money treating sick lambs and ewes.

