

# Lambing

## Information Sheet

### Treating chilled lambs



National Advice Hub  
T: 0300 323 0161  
E: [advice@fas.scot](mailto:advice@fas.scot)  
W: [www.fas.scot](http://www.fas.scot)

Newborn lambs are prone to chilling and hypothermia. They can lose body heat rapidly particularly in cold, wet and windy weather so it is important to provide shelter. They also need a good feed of colostrum during the first few hours of life in order to stay warm. Small lambs are most at risk but others can be affected if weak, premature, mismothered or after a difficult birth. Treatment is inexpensive and effective.

#### Ask your vet to supply:

- Thermometer – digital ones can be easier to read. Normal lamb temperature is 39 - 40°C
- Stomach tube
- Colostrum source (Feed at 50ml/kg.)
- New 50ml syringe 19g x 1" needles (A new one should be used for each lamb)
- Suitable disinfectant
- 400ml x 40% glucose solution or 20% glucose solution
- Antibiotics plus lamb sized needles and syringes

#### You will also need:

- Kettle
- Warming box
- A means of sterilising stomach tubes and syringes e.g. Milton sterilising fluid

**Table 1: Order of treatment for chilled lambs**

Temperature	37-39°C	Less than 37°C	Less than 37°C	Less than 37°C
Age	Any	0 – 5 hours	> 5 hours	> 5 hours
Posture	-	-	Able to hold head up	Unable to hold head up
Dry	1	1	1	1
Feed by tube	2	3	2, 4	4
Warm to 37°C	-	2	3	3
Inject glucose*	-	-	-	2
Return to ewe	3	4	5	5

The signs of hypothermia progress from a weak, empty lamb on its feet with its head down and an arched back to a lamb that is flat out, unresponsive and unable even to raise its head. It is important to identify and treat these lambs in the order shown in the table.

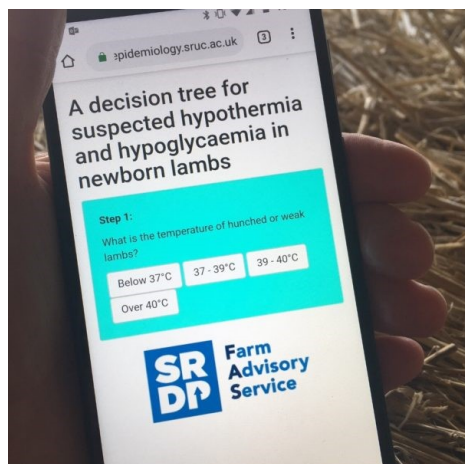
\*The glucose solution is injected into the abdomen of the lamb. It is not difficult to do but a bit daunting the first time. You could ask your vet to demonstrate or practise on a dead lamb.

1. Mix 25ml of freshly boiled water with 25ml of 40% glucose – this solution should then be at the correct temperature for injection. If using 20% glucose then fill the syringe with the correct volume and warm under a tap.
2. If you are right handed hold the lamb by its front legs in your left hand and support its back against your legs.
3. Measure ½” to the side and 1” behind the navel and disinfect this site.
4. Gently fully insert the needle aiming the point of the needle towards where the tail meets the body. Do not worry if the lamb passes urine. Inject 10ml/kg bodyweight – on average this will be around 30ml for a triplet, 40ml for a twin and 50ml for a single lamb.
5. Inject the lamb with a long acting antibiotic.

On our '[Treating Hypothermia in Lambs](#)' section of the website, we have a video to guide you through the process of administering an intra-peritoneal (IP) injection. You can also access our online tool to help you decide which is the best way to treat a chilled lamb.

The link for this page is:

<https://www.fas.scot/livestock/sheep/hypothermia-lambs/>



Warming boxes are the best way to heat up lambs after they have been dried. They can be purchased or homemade using bales or wood. You will need a 3kW domestic blower heater that can be adjusted to give 1, 2 or 3kW plus an ordinary room thermometer. The temperature in the box at lamb level should be 37°C. More detailed instructions on their construction can be obtained from the Moredun Foundation News Sheet, Volume 1, No. 1 – Detection and Treatment of Hypothermia in Newborn Lambs.

**A close eye needs to be kept on lambs once they have been returned to the ewe to make sure that they are sucking.**

