**Bottle Raising Orphaned Lambs and Kids**

Courtesy of:

**Cotati Large Animal Hospital**

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Orphaned Lambs/Kids**,** also called “bummers”, are young animals rejected by their dams or orphaned due to the death of the ewe/doe. Taking care of young lambs and kids is a huge time commitment and requires careful attention to feeding schedules. Another factor to consider, is the cost of colostrum and milk replacers.

**Colostrum:**

* Colostrum (the first milk) is the most critical point in a young ruminant’s entire life. Colostrum must be fed **ASAP after birth** (within the first few hours is best, no later than 24 hours after birth). Colostrum provides passive immunity in the form of antibodies which will protect the young animal from infectious agents until its own immune system is functioning. If colostrum is not fed before 24 hours, the lamb/kid will lack the proper immune function to fight infection and is 10x more likely to become ill and may have ill thrift throughout its entire life.
* You should have a good source of frozen colostrum available. Goat/sheep colostrum is preferable but multi-species can be used if nothing else is available. Fresh/frozen colostrum is higher quality but most feedstores sell a powdered version that is acceptable. **Purchase Colostrum replacer NOT supplement.**
* **Frozen colostrum must only be thawed once.** Heat frozen colostrum up gradually in a warm water bath.  **Do not microwave.**

**­Feeding:**

* A lamb/kid should receive **10% of its bodyweight** of colostrum divided over the course of the day (initial feeding within 1-2 hours). Feeding should be divided up into every 2-4-hour increments within the first 24-48 hours of life. If the lamb/kid is unable to nurse on its own you may need to feed with a stomach tube. When feeding with a stomach tube, do not give more than 1-2 ounces (30-60 ml) at a time.
* After colostrum, begin feeding a commercial lamb/kid milk replacer. If you have enough colostrum, gradually mix in milk replacer over the next 24-48 hours. Newborns should receive only 10% of their body weight in milk replacer each day for the first 1-2 days of life in order to avoid overfeeding. Then, **gradually** increase the daily volume fed to reach 15-20% of body weight. This daily amount should be divided into several feedings over a 24-hour period (every 4 hours). Increase the amount of milk fed and reduce the number of feedings per day as the lamb gains weight and gets older. Supplementation with hay can start at 2-4 weeks.

***Example Feeding Calculation***: **5** lb lamb at 10% (aka. **0.1**) bodyweight feeding every **4** hours (Red=only numbers that change in equation)

**5**lbs÷2.2 (kg/lb) =2.27 kg x 1000 (mL/L) x **0.1=** 227 ml/day÷ 6 feedings (24÷4 hours) ~ 38 ml per feeding

38 ml ÷ 30 (ml/ounce) = 1.3 ounces fed every 4 hours (at 10% bodyweight)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Feeding: BW % | 10% | 15% | 20% |
| Body Weight:  5lb  7lb  9lb  11lb  13lb  15lb | 1.3oz  1.7oz  2.3oz  2.7oz  3.3oz  3.7oz | 1.9oz  2.6oz  3.4oz  4.2oz  4.9oz  5.7oz | 2.6oz  3.4oz  4.6oz  5.4oz  6.6oz  7.4oz |

1 oz = 30mls

**Tips for Success:**

1. Do not overfeed. They cannot digest a large volume properly and this will cause diarrhea, bloating or even death. The newborn should have an excellent appetite at all times – if it is not hungry for the next feeding it may have been overfed.
2. Ensure that the nipple you use to feed, doesn’t leak when you turn the bottle over. You should have to squeeze the bottle in order for milk to come out of the nipple. If milk leaks out quickly, this increases the chance that the lamb/kid could aspirate (inhale) milk into their lungs. If milk is inhaled, they can develop aspiration pneumonia.
3. Make any feeding changes **SLOWLY** to allow them to adjust (when changing timing, amount, or type)
4. Under **NO CIRCUMSTANCES** should you give the lamb cow's milk. If you can't get lamb milk replacer, use goat's milk until you get lamb replacer.

**Supplies to have on hand:**

* Baby scale, thermometer, Heat lamp or hot water bottles, Nutridrench (oral energy)
* Teat nipples and empty 12-16oz bottles (cleaned plastic soda bottles work well)
* Feeding Tube + 60ml syringe with catheter tip
* Large cardboard box or dog pen for housing with fresh straw or shavings

**When to call the vet:**

* Not nursing or has a decreased appetite
* Becomes weak or depressed
* Develops diarrhea
* Rectal temperature below 100\*F or above 104\*F

**Examples of Colostrum and Milk Replacers**



