



DN NEWSLETTER

issue 44

Planning ahead and preparing early is important for a successful lambing season. For a sheep enterprise lambing is the most important time of the year. Preparations include managing and feeding the sheep correctly, getting the lambing facilities ready and gathering necessary supplies.

Lambing Facilities

Getting the lambing facility ready is as important as having the sheep ready. The lambing area should be clean. If an inside barn it will ideally be clean and dry, having been limed and disinfected. Fresh bedding should be put in shortly before the ewes are brought in. Drafts should be avoided.

There should be enough space in pens to house 10% of the flock at any one time. If lambing is very tight then more pens may be needed. Pens should ideally be 4ft x 6ft or 5ft x 5ft for individual ewes and lambs. If lambing at pasture less facilities are required but lambing should occur in a clean, well-rested pasture with access to shelter. Check lighting for easy stock checking.

Ewe Management

Regular body condition scoring and health checks through pregnancy allow problems to be identified and rectified sooner, reducing the risk of problems in the last few weeks prior to lambing. In mid-pregnancy the placenta is developing and so under or over feeding in this period can have serious detriment to the success at lambing time.

If the weather suddenly changes in this period, have you got options to avoid too much stress, or lack of ideal nutrition and ensure the ewe is maintained? Do you know what your forage or grazing availability and quality is to ensure you consider feeding to meet the ewes' requirements as she gets closer to lambing? If at lambing time you feed hay, haylage or silage get in touch with us now to get it tested so we can work out an accurate feed plan for you. More detail for pre-lambing nutrition will be given in the next newsletter but monitoring is key to success.

Separate and treat any lame ewes well before housing.

Check with the vet your protocols and treatment plans for abortions, joint ill, scours, watery mouth etc.

Vaccination

Clostridial disease vaccinations should be given about 6 weeks pre-lambing as this helps the ewes pass protection to the lambs through the colostrum. If the ewes have not been vaccinated before they will need two doses 4 weeks apart with the 2nd one approximately 6 weeks pre-lambing.

Parasite Control

Discuss the need for dosing with your vet when considering fluke or gut worm treatments. Only multi-parous ewes, thin sheep or young sheep should be considered for dosing for worms at lambing time. Dosing against adult fluke, depending on risk, can help reduce pasture contamination for the season.

Shearing or Crutching

If ewes are to be housed for lambing it can be a good idea to shear the ewes a good 4-6 weeks before lambing. Shorn ewes put less moisture into the air resulting in a drier, cleaner environment for the lambs. Shorn ewes are less likely to lay on their lambs. They take up less space in the barn, although still need to same feed space.

Shorn ewes will eat more forage which increases milk and colostrum production. If outside shorn ewes need shelter but will also look for shelter more readily in inclement weather.

An alternative is crutching where the wool is removed from around the udder and vulva making it cleaner and easier for the lamb to attach to suck.



Lambing supplies to have on hand:

- Rubber / latex gloves
- Obstetric lubrication
- Lambing ropes / snare
- Disinfectant
- Prolapse harness
- Heat lamp or warming box
- Clean needles and syringes
- Thermometer
- Navel spray / dip
- Oesophageal feeding tube
- Colostrum replacement
- Propylene glycol
- Calcium borogluconate
- 50% Dextrose
- Oral dosing syringe
- Docking and castrating equipment – serviced and clean
- Record book / white board

If rearing pet lambs ideally you would also have:

- Lamb milk replacer
- Lamb teats
- Lamb feeding bar or bucket or machine

The DN Store has a wide range of lambing supplies in stock for collection or nationwide home delivery.

Speak to your local DN Sales Specialist or call the store on 01200 420234 for more information.

Targets

Aim for less than 15% lamb losses:

- <5% scanning to lambing
- <5% lambing and week one
- <2% week one to weaning
- <2% weaning to sale/retention

Ask your vet for advice if:

- Ewe losses are > 3%
- Lamb losses are > 15%
- >2% ewes are barren at scanning

For further information, please do not hesitate to contact your local DN Sales Specialist or email our Veterinary Technical Manager, Debby Brown:

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