

Raising Bummer Lambs on a Bottle

By Carol Elkins

The other night, I received an email from someone who found my Web site on the Internet. It said simply "We have barbados sheep and the mother had 3 babies and has kicked one of the babies out and now I have a baby and do not know what it wants or needs to drink as a substitute for the mothers milk ??? what do I do ???"

Sadly, this plea for help is all too common. Hopefully, this information may prevent a similar tragedy from occurring, especially to people new to raising sheep.

(soapbox) Caring for animals is a responsibility and a commitment. Regardless of which animal you choose, whether it is a puppy, rabbit, or sheep (or a human baby for that matter), you **MUST** learn what the animal's needs are **BEFORE** you bring the animal home. If you do not take the time to do this, you are acting irresponsibly. (/soapbox) (Whew, I feel so much better!!)

Blackbelly sheep don't need a lot of chemicals or a lot of intervention, but it is a good idea to have the following few items on hand when lambing.

1. A bag of lamb milk replacer; once opened, keep it in sealed gallon jars. A couple of bay leaves lain on top before you seal will help prevent weevils. You sometimes can buy lamb milk replacer from a feed store, but **BE ALERT**: do **NOT** buy calf milk replacer. If your feed store does not stock lamb milk replacer, you can purchase it from Pipestone Vet Supply (<http://www.pipevet.com>)

2. Also get a bag of colostrum replacer (Colostrx) while you're there. Colostrum contains immunoglobulins that prevent infections;

nutrients that fuel heat production and help prevent hypothermia (chilling); and growth factors. By the time you have a bottle baby on your hands, it often is too late to milk the mother for colostrum. If you can milk her, get all you can during the first 24 hours after lambing and freeze it in an icecube tray for up to a year. Trust me, you will need it later on.

3. Two Pritchard Teat (nipples). They fit nicely on a glass or plastic pop bottle.

4. I personally like giving each newborn lamb a couple squirts of Baby Strength Oral. It contains Vitamin E and is a rapid energy source for weak or starving lambs.

5. 140 cc syringe. Get a syringe that has both cc and oz units of measure so that you don't have to do so much math. Premier (<http://www.premier1supplies.com>) sells these for \$5.40. They are much more convenient than a 60 cc syringe.

6. Stomach tube. Connect to the 140-cc syringe to feed lambs that are too weak to nurse or suckle a bottle."

7. Digital thermometer

More about Colostrum

If you have colostrum on hand:

A 6-lb lamb born in a lambing shed that is 32 °F needs 480 cc of colostrum in the first 18 hours of life. The same lamb born outside will need a total of 570 cc.

Feed the lambs 4 to 5 times in the first 18 hours of life if the lamb is unable to suckle on a ewe. When feeding lambs with a stomach tube, give no more than 20 cc per pound of body weight. This is roughly 4 ounces per feeding in a 6 pound lamb (1 mL = 1 cc; 1 oz = 30 cc).

[The following information is taken verbatim (except where modified for smaller Blackbelly lambs) from Laura Lawson's book, "Managing Your Ewe and Her Newborn Lambs." It is a great book and should also be on your list of things to get.]

If no colostrum on hand, prepare a newborn milk formula

Ingredients:

- 8 oz. baby bottle with nipple
- 1 tsp butter
- 1 tsp dark Karo syrup
- Canned evaporated milk (NOT condensed milk)

Add Baby Lamb Strength Oral or Hartz liquid pet Vitamin A&D plus oral liquid Vitamin E to one daily feeding. Probios dispersible powder should also be added to one feeding unless the lamb is being given this is a paste form.

Directions: Enlarge nipple hole slightly with a hot needle.

Take the 8 oz baby bottle, put 1 tsp butter in it.

Set bottle in hot water to melt the butter.

Add 1 tsp of dark Karo syrup.

Fill the bottle with undiluted evaporated milk to the 8 oz mark. Heat until warm.

Add the Baby Lamb Strength Oral or pet Vitamin A&D plus liquid Vitamin E and Probios to the warmed milk once a day.



Summer Lambs

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Feeding Schedule and Amounts

Milk Replacer: After the initial colostrum feeding, lambs should receive about 15% to 20% of their body weight in milk replacer daily.

Example: 5 lb lamb × 16 oz/lb = 80 oz
× 20% = 16 oz daily.

Divide the above daily amount by the number of feedings in a 24-hour period. Increase the amount as the lamb gains weight and gets older. As you do this, increase the time between feedings.

Suggested Feeding Schedule: For the first 24 hours of life, give the lamb colostrum. Feed it every 2 hours if possible through the first 24 hours of life. In the next 24 to 48 hours of the lamb's life, begin gradually mixing the colostrum or colostrum substitute with lamb milk replacer. By day four of the lamb's life, it should be receiving nothing but the lamb milk replacer according to the schedule listed below.

Follow the schedule listed below after the lamb is over 24 hours old:

- Day 2 through 3: every 3 hours
- Day 4 through 7: every 4 hours
- Day 8 through 21: every 6 hours
- Day 21 through 35: every 8 hours
- Day 25 until weaning: every 12 hours.

Don't overload the lamb's stomach by giving it too much milk at one time. **DOING SO WILL KILL THE LAMB.** Frequent feedings are better than big feedings.

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.

