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THURSDAY, 06 AUGUST 2015

A NEWBORN LAMB NUTRITION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN PROVIDES OPTIMAL CARE



WRITTEN BY TOM EARLYWINE ON 28 OCTOBER 2014.

PLAN FOR LAMBING AND KIDDING SUCCESS

Lambing and kidding season can drive a flock or herd's long-term success. The health, growth and early performance of a newborn determines the number of feeders for marketing and the quality of future replacements. With so much riding on this season, be sure to plan in advance to provide optimal care to your next crop of lambs or kids.

Set goals

Before the first newborn hits the ground, analyze past flock or herd performance and set goals. Setting tangible goals and determining a path for achieving these objectives can help you build on past performance.

Consider the following goals:

200 percent lamb or kid crop: Mature and well-conditioned ewes and does should be able to care for at least two lambs or kids. To achieve this goal, extra lambs and kids (triples and quads) and those from younger or under-conditioned ewes or does may be better cared for separately.

Less than 5 percent pre-weaning mortality: The industry target for pre-weaning mortality is less than 5 percent. However, it's estimated that nearly 20 percent of lambs die before weaning, with 80 percent of those losses occurring during the first 10 days. Similar estimates are in place for kid goats.

Create a colostrum feeding strategy

Colostrum, or the first milk of the ewe or doe, is the first protection newborns receive against environmental pathogens and bacteria; however, not all ewes and does are able to produce the quality or quantity of colostrum required for early protection.

Test quality of colostrum with a colostrometer and monitor the amount of colostrum consumed. Provide colostrum at a rate of at least 10 percent of a newborn's body weight by 18 hours of age. Serum immunoglobulin levels should be above 10 mg/ml.

Keep a colostrum replacer on hand during lambing and kidding season in case ewes and does are unable to produce the necessary colostrum. Colostrum replacers are one way to reduce variation in quality and provide proven protection to newborns. If feeding a colostrum replacer, select one that is formulated and USDA-approved (to prevent failure of passive transfer) specifically for lambs and kid goats.

Determine which newborns should be fed milk replacer

Feeding a milk replacer can help provide consistent nutrition to the entire crop, especially those that the ewe or doe is unable to care for. The option also allows dairy producers to market ewe's and doe's milk.

Determine which lambs and kids should be fed milk replacer as soon as possible, considering the following newborns which require additional care:

- Lambs and kids on dairy operations
- Orphan lambs and kids
- Weak lambs and kids unable to nurse
- Unclaimed newborns
- Third and fourth newborns in sets of triplets or quadruplets
- Weaker or smaller lamb or kid of twins
- One of the twins from a ewe or doe lambing at less than 1 year of age

Select a species-specific milk replacer

Research milk replacer options and select a milk replacer formulated specifically for sheep or goats. Lambs and goats require different nutrient levels than other livestock, so milk replacers created for other species may not provide adequate nutrition.

For example, the fat content of sheep and goat milk is much higher than cow's and the lactose content is lower. Selecting a milk replacer that provides these higher nutrient levels can better help newborns meet their full potential.

In fact, research from the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Spooner Agricultural Research Station has shown that successfully raising lambs on milk replacer can increase the net return per ewe for the flock due to increased growth rates compared to sheep milk and non-sheep milk replacers.

In research trials, kids raised on Doe's Match Premium Blend kid milk replacer gained quicker and cost about \$0.16 less per pound of gain than those raised on goat's milk. Kids also experienced similar growth rates and less scours that those raised on goat's milk.

To best match the nutrients in ewe's milk, select a lamb milk replacer with an enhanced fatty acid profile and a

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balance of 25 percent protein and 30 percent fat. The ingredient Digestarom has also been shown to positively support gut health.

For kid goats, select a milk replacer with 25 percent protein and 28 percent fat along with the Architect Formulation System.

Assist and monitor lambs and kids from birth through weaning

Create a schedule for newborn management. Consider the following steps and tips when raising young lambs:

- Provide an adequate quantity of colostrum to newborns as soon after birth as possible.
- Remove newborns from sight or hearing distance of ewe as soon as possible after birth.
- Provide a warm, dry, draft-free place to start nursing lambs and kids.
- Assist newborns in nursing for the first few feedings as needed.
- Avoid placing younger lambs and kids with older livestock. Older lambs and kids tend to push smaller lambs and kids away from feeding.
- Hang a light over the milk replacer self-feeding devices for added visibility and warmth.
- Start lambs and kids on high-quality starter feed at 2 weeks of age and provide ample high quality clean, fresh water supply at all times.
- Wean at 30 days or 25 pounds of weight when lambs and kids have begun to eat starter feed routinely. At weaning time, each lamb or kid should have consumed at least 20-25 pounds of species-specific milk replacer powder.

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