



Lilydale Clinic

484 Maroondah Highway
Lilydale VIC 3140
P (03) 9739 5244 F (03) 9735 5509

Yarra Glen Clinic

28 Bell Street Yarra Glen VIC 3775
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Hand Rearing Lambs

Hand rearing lambs is a rewarding but time consuming process as you not only need to look after their health and nutritional needs, but also teach them normal behaviours so they learn to be a sheep. This handout provides some basic information to get you started, as always please don't hesitate to contact [Yarra Ranges Animal Hospital](http://www.yarrarangesvet.com.au) on 97395244 if you have any further questions or concerns with your lamb.

Colostrum

Lambs require colostrum in the first 24 hours after birth. This provides the lamb with a concentrated source of nutrients, energy and vitamins, but also important antibodies for immunity. It also has a laxative effect. Ideally this should come directly from the mum or another ewe on farm that has recently birthed (<24hours), so if possible collect this from the ewe via milking. Sheep produce colostrum for approx 24 hours after giving birth. In some instances the mum is no longer around, so instead you can provide colostrum via the following ways:

- Frozen source of sheep colostrum (if collected from previous ewes etc), thaw at 37degrees.
- Colostrum supplement (these do not contain antibodies)
 - Commercial product ie. Wambaroo impact
 - Homemade colostrum (680mls cows milk, 1 beaten egg, 5mls cod liver oil, 10mls glucose - many similar recipes online)

Lambs that do not receive colostrum with antibodies are at far higher risk of developing disease such as diarrhoea.

Milk

We recommend feeding a commercial milk replacer from day 2 until weaning, there are various products available such as profeLAC shepherd, wambaroo etc. They will usually come with a feeding guide, however as a guide lambs should be fed ~ 10% of their body weight per day in milk. The main principle is smaller meals more frequently to reduce the occurrence of bloat. Cows milk alone is not a suitable replacement for lambs, however it can be used in an emergency situation. Use full cream milk powder and mix 200g powder with warm water to make 1 litre milk.



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Feeding guide

Days	Milk per feed (ml)	Number of feeds	Daily milk total (ml)
1	Colostrum		At least 200mls
2 - 7 days	100 - 150	5	500-750mls
1 - 2 weeks	180 - 250	4	720mls-1L
2 - 3 weeks	250 - 350	3	750 -1L
3 - 4 weeks	500	3	1.5L
4 weeks - weaning	500-600	2	1-1.2L

Temperature of milk

For the first week the milk should be fed warmed (approx 37degree), after this it is recommended to feed **cold** milk to reduce the instance of bloat.

Hygiene

This is an important factor because often these lambs are immunocompromised due to the lack of colostrum.

Feeding equipment

- It is important to wash and sterilise bottles and feeding equipment after use to prevent bacteria forming. Also ensure any unused milk is refrigerated immediately.

Housing

- Ensure the lamb is kept warm and housed in a clean and dry environment/pen.



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Weaning

From 1 week onwards you should begin introducing your lamb to hay and concentrate to aid with rumen development. Usually the ewe will teach/show the lamb what foods to eat so your job is to encourage this behaviour. You should give them access to grass and also provide hay and free access to lamb specific pellets or crumbles in their pen. Gradually the lamb should transition from its milk diet to a solid diet and be ready for weaning at approx 8-10 weeks.

Water

Always provide the lamb with ad lib clean drinking water.

Bloat

Around 3-4 weeks of age some lambs can get a condition called bloat where their abdomen distends putting pressure on surrounding vessels. This usually occurs because lambs guzzle large amounts of warm milk too quickly. It is caused by a bacteria *Sarcina spp* which multiplies in the gut. To help prevent this we recommend feeding cold milk or narrowing the teat orifice to slow drinking. In some cases bloat can be a life threatening condition so we always recommend consulting a veterinarian if you are concerned about your lamb.

Vaccinations

Lambs should be vaccinated against the 5 major types of Clostridial diseases using a 5 in 1 vaccination. They should receive their first vaccination at around 6 weeks of age and a booster vaccine 4 weeks later. Adults should receive a yearly booster for ongoing immunity.