



Caring For Young Lambs



www.lambcareaustralia.org.au

Caring for young lambs is a rewarding, but also very responsible, job. Our carers have years of experience behind them so we ask that you only follow our guidelines. Although you may be in a situation where you are offered advice by a farmer, we ask that you not take it as they are raising lambs for a very different life to that of the lambs who have reached our organisation. If you do follow our guidelines, under normal circumstances, your time with the lambs will be straightforward and fulfilling.



WHAT YOU WILL NEED

Essential Items

Milk replacer

We recommend and use Maxcare Lamb Formula. Each foster carer will be supplied with 4kgs of powder to get them started. Please talk to your local Stockfeed store if they don't stock Maxcare because they may be able to order it in for you. Please let us know if you cannot source this brand. It is very important not to change formula brands suddenly. Please don't wait until the last minute to buy formula that way if you cannot find the correct brand we have time to help you. NB: all milk must be yoghurtised to help prevent bloat. The recipe can be found at [Yoghurtised Milk](#)

Baby bottles

These can be purchased at Woolworths. We recommend a medium flow type. Fast flow can cause the lambs to inhale milk by drinking too fast. If the flow is too slow the lambs can get tired and frustrated and not drink enough.

Jug

Used for making the milk so must have measurements in mls.

Kitchen scales

These are used for measuring milk powder.

Whisk

It is very important that the milk powder is mixed in completely to the water.

Bathroom scales

Feeding rates are based on the weight of your lamb. It is therefore essential that you keep an accurate track of their weight.

Soft soap

This is used when washing a lamb's bottom if they are particularly dirty, otherwise warm water can work. We do not recommend washing the entire lamb unless they are particularly dirty.

Towels

Used when you wash lamb bottoms. Smaller hand towels are ideal.

Rectal thermometer

If your lamb becomes unwell, one of the first things you will be asked to do by our critical care team is to take your lamb's temperature as this will indicate any sign of infection and give us a better idea of what the problem may be.

Antiseptic (such as Betadine)

This may be used to clean items such as the thermometer if used. It is sometimes used in a diluted form should there be an issue with the area where the umbilical cord was attached to the lamb.

Nappies

Usually start with 6 to 11kgs and up, but before purchasing please contact us to ensure you buy the correct size for the lambs coming into your care. Girl lambs will need one nappy and boys two due to the different location of their anatomy

Electrolytes

Vitrate or Lectade can be obtained from vets or farm shops or ordered online. These are essential to have on hand. If your lamb is unwell we may ask you to replace one or two feeds of milk with electrolytes.

D'Scour

This is another essential item to have and can be bought online. Scours (diarrhoea) can be caused by, for example, a change in milk powder. If your lamb has scours we will ask you to give them some D'Scour which usually solves the problem. The other alternative, Scourban, contains an antibiotic so is vet prescribed and can help if the scours is caused by an infection. Please see our information sheet for more details about Scours.

Recommended items

Protexin (probiotic to add to their milk)

Playpen – Lambs are very curious and like to get into everything. If you don't have an area in your house where they can roam free if they need to be left unsupervised at certain times a playpen is suitable.

Some sort of bedding – this can even just be blankets for them to lay on.

FOOD GUIDELINES

Days 1 and 2:

2 – 3 hourly feeds of no more than 80ml (this will vary according to the weight - you will be advised at the time of taking in your lamb)

Days 3 – 13:

feed at 6am, 10am, 2pm, 6pm and 10pm (every four hours) and gradually increase each feed until you reach 50 ml per kg body weight based on the 4 feeds per day total then divided by 5 (the current number of feeds per day). See feeding chart for feeding amounts.

Week 3:

feed at 6am, 12pm, 6pm, 11pm – 4 feeds per day at as close to 6 hourly intervals as you can manage at 50 ml per kg to a maximum of 500ml per feed.

Add some grass hay from week 2 on.

IMPORTANT:

Do not let lambs on mowed area for 24 hours.
Keep lambs off grass 1 hour prior to being bottle fed

Day 1	2 hourly feeds of 80 ml												
Day 2	3 hourly feeds of 100ml												
Days 3 - 14	Feed times: 6am 10am 2pm 6pm 10pm												
Weight in kgs	4	4.5	5	5.5	6								
Feeds	5 x 160	5 x 180ml	5 x 200ml	5 x 220ml	5 x 240ml								
Week 3													
Weight in kgs	4	4.5	5	5.5	6	6.5	7	7.5	8	8.5	9	9.5	10 and above
Feeds	4 x 200ml	4 x 225ml	4 x 250ml	4 x 275ml	4 x 300ml	4 x 325ml	4 x 350ml	4 x 375ml	4 x 400ml	4 x 425ml	4 x 450ml	4 x 475ml	4 x 500ml

IMPORTANT:

Feeding lambs appropriate amounts for their age and weight is extremely important. Never over feed and do not feed on demand. Excess milk sits in the gut and can cause bloat (see below for details on bloat).

If you are at all unsure about anything to do with feeding, or your lamb is having issues drinking milk, please get in touch with us and we will guide you.

CARING FOR YOUR LAMBS

Hygiene

Hygiene is essential to prevent illness and bloat – always wash bottles in soft soap, such as Earth choice, then soak in boiling water for at least 10 minutes. Keep all utensils as clean as possible. It is not necessary to wash a lamb, the lanolin on their wool is important. If you need to wash a messy bottom use a gentle soap and ensure the area is dried quickly especially in the winter.

Umbilical cord

It is important to keep an eye on the umbilical cord as it is easy for germs to gain access to the body especially in new lambs. The cord should be kept clean and where possible not contained within the nappy. It is very important if you find a lamb that needs rescuing to apply a disinfectant such as Betadine to the cord area. It is also advisable not to have newborn lambs out in the sun for long periods as flies can be very attracted to a wet umbilical cord. When the cord is fully dry it can be trimmed and then diluted Betadine applied.

Immunisation

Lambs are vaccinated at 3-4 weeks of age. When possible, we will supply you with the vaccinations.

Desexing

Desexing For males, desexing occurs at approximately 3 weeks of age. Lamb Care Australia chooses banding over surgical castration as banding is much safer for lambs. To ensure this procedure is performed correctly and adequate pain relief is provided, banding must only be performed by a large animal veterinarian.

Tail Docking

Lambs in the care of Lamb Care Australia do not require tail docking. Tail docking is a farming practice only. It can be a help sometimes in reducing the incidence of flystrike however keeping your lambs clean and monitoring them closely is a far more acceptable prevention method. Please see our information sheet on flystrike for a more detailed description. Some older lambs who come into care may have bands around their tails. Eventually the tail will drop off. It's advisable in this situation to keep a close eye on the wound and apply Betadine if it looks red or raw. Please contact us if you have any concerns about a band wound.

WEANING

We recommend the lamb be at least 10kgs or 6 weeks before weaning commences but this may vary a little. Provide a water supply for them to drink as the milk is cut down.

Please do not commence weaning without talking to our Lamb Care Manager first.



IMPORTANT: Feeding lambs appropriate amounts for their age and weight is extremely important. Never over feed and do not feed on demand. Excess milk sits in the gut and can cause bloat (see below).

Schedule for weaning:

Week 1

- Remove bottle 4 but leave the other 3 at the same time – should save time
- Keep giving grass hay
- Add some chaff and lambs pellets at ratio $\frac{3}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$
- Keep grass hay and add a small amount of Lucerne if you want to (pellets and Lucerne are rich so only use a little)

Week 2

Remove bottle 2

Week 3

Remove bottle 3

Week 4

Remove bottle 1

NB: They must be eating hard food and drinking water before removing too much milk
If your lamb makes too much noise about missing milk you can give them a bottle of electrolytes to help the transition.

HEALTH

Always have a 24 hour emergency number on hand in case it is needed. It is essential to always be aware of your lamb and their health.

Signs that something might be wrong can show in various ways including:

1. not wanting to drink
2. being lethargic
3. laying down with outstretched legs in discomfort
4. distended belly
5. stretching excessively
6. grizzling
7. white gums
8. shaking
9. noisy breathing

These are all signs that should not be ignored. Please contact us if you are unsure and let us know as soon as possible if your lamb is showing any of the above signs.

Temperature

Normal temperature should be 38.5-39.5. A temperature below 38.5 in an otherwise healthy lamb can be a sign of organ failure especially if it drops below 37.5. You can rub glucose or something sweet like maple syrup into the gums if your lamb has a low temperature. Keep a very close eye on how the lamb is behaving if a colder temperature is recorded. If the temperature is too high this normally signifies infection or inflammation. To bring a temperature down, cold towels can be put under the armpits and in the groin area for no longer than 10 minutes at a time.

A temperature over 40 degrees or under 37.5 requires veterinary attention so please contact us as soon as possible.



BLOAT

Bloat is something that can affect bottle fed lambs – it is when bacteria in the gut causes a build up of gasses. This can be fatal because if the gas continues to build it squashes all the internal organs and the lamb can die in terrible pain. Early signs can be those listed above.

A bloating lamb will have an obvious distended abdomen. They may not be interested in drinking at all, but offer electrolytes only. Following a serious case of bloat milk must **NOT** be offered for 24 hours but given electrolytes only. Massaging the tummy in the direction of the abdomen can help. If in doubt or if swelling is not reducing you will need to see your vet. Bloat is a medical emergency and should never be ignored. If you suspect your lamb has bloat please notify us as soon as possible.

For further information on bloat please see our [Bloat information page](#).



HOME ENVIRONMENT

Keeping your lambs warm

Lambs need to be kept warm especially in the first weeks. A jumper should be used where there is not a lot of heating and when they go outside to play. Overheating is something to be avoided though so if a room is nice and warm, a jumper may not be needed. Lambs love to cuddle so will happily stay warm curled up on your lap or beside you on a winter's day just like they would if they were with their Mum. A temperature over 40 degrees or under 37.5 requires veterinary attention so please contact us as soon as possible.

Other animals in the home



The introduction of lambs with other pets in the home should be done slowly especially with dogs and cats who have never seen a lamb before. It can be a bit overwhelming for current animals to all of a sudden have to share both their space and your attention. It is advisable to always be present when the lamb/s are in the same area as dogs. A good way to ensure everyone is safe and happy is to use a crate for the lambs when they are resting or some people like to set up a playpen. The lambs are then still a part of the household but this gives the carer an opportunity to do other things

without worrying if everyone is safe. One of our carers explains "our house often has lambs during the winter period. One of the dogs here is fine with them, the other prefers they keep a distance, but even with the dog that loves them, I will never leave them in the same room alone. It is just not worth taking that risk". Lambs love to play with anyone who is around and headbutting is just something they do as part of that play, so it is worth keeping that in mind with other animals in the home.

TOXIC POISONING

Poisoning can occur if lambs have access to toxic materials. The main signs of toxic poisoning are excessive salivation and unsteady feet, a lamb will usually sway and eventually fall down. This is an emergency and vet care must be sought immediately. Please note: These symptoms can also be as a result of snake bite.

Toxic plants



Please refer to our [Toxic plants](#) list before you take your lambs outside. Adult sheep often know which plants can harm them so avoid, but young lambs will mouth everything. Some plants and weeds are highly toxic to lambs so it is vital you check your garden first. Indoor plants can also be toxic and should be moved away from lambs reach.

Toxic chicken seed and pellets

Chicken grain and pellets are also toxic to lambs so if you have ducks, chickens and geese please ensure the lambs never have access to their seed.



CONCLUSION

While you have our lambs in your care, please follow the instructions you have just read as closely as possible. If you are concerned at any stage do not hesitate to contact one of our carers on the number provided to you. We hope you enjoy your time with these precious and fun loving animals.

Photo credits: Angela Fitzsummons, Karina Rasmussen, Kate Perkins, Letitia Green, Meg Milde and Tamara Kenneally.

VETS

LCA Recommended (** denotes vets with farm animal specialists)

Bacchus Marsh Veterinary Center **

Bacchus Marsh: 03 5367 4000
www.bacchusmarshvet.com.au

Ballarat Pet and Farm**

28 Wiltshire Lane,
Delacombe VIC 3356
Phone: (03) 5336 0006
www.ballaratpetfarmvet.com.au

Bannockburn Veterinary Clinic**

1759 Midland Highway
Bannockburn VIC 3331
(03) 5281 1221
www.bannockburnvet.com.au/

Benalla Veterinary Clinic

16 Church Street
Benalla VIC 3672
03 5762 2788

Furlife Vet – Smythesdale

45 Brooke Street
Smythesdale VIC 3351
03 5318 5750

Furlife Vet – Bannockburn

12 Milton Street
Bannockburn VIC 3331
03 5281 2226

Gembrook Vet

80 Main Street
Gembrook VIC 3783
(03) 5968 1888

Golden Plains Equine Vet – Lethbridge

After Hours
179 Tall Tree Road
Lethbridge VIC 3332
03 5292 2151 (After hours)

Korumburra Veterinary Clinic**

7-11 Langham Drive,
Korumburra VIC 3950
(03) 5658 1004
www.kvetsvic.com.au

Maryborough Veterinary Clinic

49 Alma Street
Marysborough
03 5461 4466
www.maryvet.com

Romsey Veterinary Surgery

Dr Josh
80 Main Street
Romsey VIC 3434
03 5429 5711

Seville Veterinary Clinic

Lot 7 Bell Street
Seville Victoria 3139
03 5964 3960

Station Street Veterinary Clinic

72-74 Station Street
Koo Wee Rup VIC 3981
(03) 5997 2222
www.stationstreetvet.com.au

Strathbogie Vet Clinic

53 Anderson Street
Euroa VIC 3666
03 5795 2811

St Kilda Veterinary Clinic

St kilda: 9534 1741
www.stkildavet.com.au

The Veterinary Surgery**

Yarrambat: 9436 1699
North Warrandyte Veterinary Clinic
274 Yarra Street, Warrandyte VIC 3113
(03) 9844 0781
<http://thevetsurgery.com.au/>

Wandin Veterinary Clinic
367 Warburton Highway
Wandin North VIC 3139
03 5964 4500

Wangaratta Veterinary Clinic
Bakers Street
Wangaratta
0357214000

Yea Veterinary Hospital
13 High Street
Bannockburn Yea VIC 3717
03 5797 2333
www.localvet.com.au/Yea/

24 Hour Emergency vet clinics - Please note your local vet may have an after hours service. It is worth calling them in case of emergency