

Lambing in organic systems

The lambing period is the most important period in a shepherd's calendar. With all the time taken scanning/feeding the flock and preparing the lambing shed you want the lambing period to go without too many problems. Some deaths amongst ewes and lambs during lambing are always inevitable. The following information is an update on good husbandry practises, a memory jogger on identifying early symptoms and treating the symptoms, whilst compiling with the Organic standards. These notes are for guidance only and are in no way advice on animal husbandry. If you are in doubt, speak to your vet and get in touch with the SOPA office for guidance and clarification.

Care of Newborn Lambs

Watery mouth If lambs do not receive Colostrum quickly enough they could develop watery mouth. This is caused by young lambs swallowing bacteria (E Coli) from the environment as they search for the ewe's teat. The lambs will appear dull and stops trying to suck and starts to drool saliva from it's mouth, because the gut movements are too slow.

Lambs at risk	Treatment	Prevention
<p>Lambs receiving insufficient Colostrum</p> <p>Lambs receiving Colostrum too long after birth</p> <p>Multiple births</p> <p>Lambs from ewes in poor condition from either being old, lame, sick or with mastitis.</p> <p>Lambs from hoggs (inexperienced ewes)</p>	<p>Administer milk of magnesia or liquid paraffin to get the gut moving</p> <p>Feed (electrolyte solution with added Glucose) by stomach tube little and often</p> <p>Keep warm, so that hypothermia does not develop</p> <p>On recovery, begin feeding colostrum</p>	<p>Ensure the lamb receives adequate colostrum</p> <p>Keep the lambing area as clean as possible</p>

Joint Ill This illness is caused through bacteria most commonly streptococcus which gets into the lambs body via the naval, through infected bedding.

Symptoms	Treatment	Prevention
<p>Lambs appear stiff and look lame</p> <p>Reluctant to stand up</p> <p>Look hollow and generally unhappy</p>	<p>Consult vet, as lambs need treating quickly</p>	<p>Make sure lambing area/pens are regularly bedded with clean, dry straw</p> <p>Treat lambs navel with iodine solution immediately after birth</p> <p>If navel is still wet when moving from individual pen treat again.</p>

Orf

This virus is very infectious. In lambs the scabs appear as cauliflower florets on their lips and nostrils. In severe cases the lamb will be unable to feed. Feed troughs and thistles are well known spreaders and harbours of the virus.



Treatment

Always wear gloves when treating orf

This virus will eventually run its course

Homeopathy – treat herbal remedies

Where possible, separate affected animals from the rest of the flock.

Thoroughly disinfect buildings and equipment used by the sheep

Prevention

Do not buy in pet lambs

Check for immuno deficiency – trace element analysis from soil/forage/blood tests

Homeopathic orf nosode

Make sure thistles are topped and troughs are thoroughly disinfected.

Identify and remove chronically infected ewes

Maintain a closed flock.

Lower stocking rates and, where possible, lamb outside.

Never vaccinate against orf unless there is a known problem with the disease and you have discussed the situation with your vet and SOPA.

Thoroughly disinfect buildings and equipment used by the sheep.

If you discover a disease outbreak please seek advice from your veterinary surgeon and administer treatment as soon as possible.

Remember, the use of **prophylactic antibiotics is not permitted.**

However, if animal welfare is at risk, please liaise with SOPA and your veterinary surgeon to remedy the problem as efficiently as possible.

Your Livestock Management Plan should be a useful tool in looking at dealing with known diseases over a period of time.

The SOPA Office Number is 0131 335 6606 (enter this in your mobile phone)