

Best Management Practices for artificially-rearing lambs/kids

- 1) Make sure lambs/kids get enough colostrum: at least 10% of bodyweight in first 18-24 hours. If “real” colostrum is not available, feed a colostrum replacer (not supplement). Cow colostrum is an option, though there is some risk to feeding it.
- 2) Choose “odd” lambs/kids in litters for artificial rearing. Avoid choosing lambs/kids meant for replacement, especially rams/bucklings.
- 3) Remove lambs/kids from sight and hearing distance of ewes/does. Pen in clean, dry, well-ventilated, draft-free area with solid or slatted floors. Don’t overcrowd.
- 4) Avoid placing younger lambs/kids with older lambs/kids.
- 5) Feed a high-quality milk replacer with milk proteins, specifically formulated for lambs or kids. “Waste” milk from treated cows and store-bought cow’s milk have been fed successfully to lambs and kids. Cow and goat milk should be fortified with fat or oil for lambs.
- 6) Feed milk free-choice using a nipple bucket, teat bar, or automatic feeder (e.g., Lac-Tek).
- 7) Begin training lambs/kids to nipple 4-5 hours after last colostrum feeding. Self-feeding mimics dam nursing and helps to prevent digestive upsets. It also reduces labor.
- 8) Ensure proper mixing of milk replacer. Feed milk cold but keep from freezing. You may also need to cool milk to prevent spoilage.
- 9) Clean feeding and mixing equipment regularly. Sanitation is very important.
- 10) Get lambs/kids eating solid feed as soon as possible. The fermentable carbohydrates in grain help to develop the rumen. This is essential to early weaning.
- 11) Creep feed should be 18-20% protein, with a coccidiostat. Soybean meal or 50% soybean meal/50% cracked corn is a good starter ration. Molasses may help to stimulate consumption. Also, provide a small amount of high-quality hay. Always keep feed fresh.
- 12) Put a light over feeding/nursing area. Provide plenty of fresh, clean water.
- 13) Vaccinate for clostridial diseases. Vaccinate earlier (e.g., 4 weeks) and more frequently, if lambs/kids did not receive colostral immunity.
- 14) Wean early. 4-6 weeks is recommended. Milk replacer is expensive! Make sure lambs/kids are adequately grown and are consuming enough solid feed and making use of drinking water.
- 15) Properly store milk replacer. Shelf life is approximately six months under ideal storage conditions. Use milk by expiration or best-by date.



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