



Lamb Rearing



Rearing an animal is a big responsibility which must be taken seriously, but is very rewarding once it is completed. You can find detailed instructions below to help you rear your lamb from the first few weeks until the day of your Calf Club event.

Your lamb may have to be born between a certain date which should be given to you by your school (Usually this would be in the months of July to September). Lambs are not too hard to obtain as farmers usually have a few lambs which have become motherless. These are hand reared or put onto a foster ewe so you are helping out if you decide to rear a lamb for Calf Club Day.

***Remember to ask what breed your lamb is and what date it was born so you can record these details in your Progress Diary.**

Feeding

Hopefully your lamb has been able to have a feed from its mother within the first 24 hours of being born as the milk contains colostrum which fights infection and sets the lamb up to grow strong. If this is not the case you will need to feed it colostrum replacement which can be brought from local farm store or made at home (**see recipe below**). Be sure to read the mixing and feeding instructions carefully. Young lambs need small feeds, little and often, it is important not to overfeed at this stage (**50 – 80mls per feed to start, 6 times a day**). After the 24 hours is over you can feed regular milk powder.



You need to feed your lamb with a bottle and teat but your lamb may not be used to this so be patient for a few days. If your lamb has been well fed before you get it, it may not drink from the bottle till it is really thirsty – **up to 24 hours – no longer.**

Approximate Feeding Quantities: *(depending on size of lamb)*

1 -2 days old	80 – 150 mls 6 times per day
3 – 7 days	up to 100 – 150 mls 6 times per day
1 -3 weeks	150 – 200 mls 5 times per day
4 – 6 weeks	300 – 350 mls 4 times per day
6 + weeks	350 – 450 mls 3 times per day

Lambs must be able to nibble on grass at 10 days old – at three weeks old they should be eating lots of grass.

Colostrum Replacement Recipe:

800mls full fat milk	1 beaten egg
1 tsp. cod liver oil	1 tsp. sugar

Heat 150mls at a time and keep the rest refrigerated. Milk should be fed to your lamb at body temperature so test it on your skin before feeding it.

Your parents may need to feed your lamb when you are at school and it is VERY important that they don't miss its feeds.

When your lamb roughly reaches 10 kg it can be weaned off milk. Start by reducing the amounts of feeds per day and encourage it to nibble on hay, pellets or meal. Your lamb should have fresh grass and water available at all times to help its digestive system.

Note - Many plants including *lawn mowing clippings* are poisonous to lambs so don't let them roam free into your mum's garden.

Housing

Keep your lamb's sleeping area clean and dry with plenty of shelter to keep warm (especially at nights). If your lamb is looking very cold or you are worried about it, place it in a large box with warm bedding (hot water bottle wrapped in towel) and bring the box inside nearby to a fire or heater to warm it up. Don't over heat your lamb. A good way to judge this is by putting your fingers in your lamb's mouth and seeing if it is warm. Remember to also provide shade for your lamb when it is hotter outside.

Preparation and Caring

It is important to spend a lot of time with your lamb to create that friendship between the two of you; this also helps the training process. Remember to use your lamb's name all the time so it becomes familiar with it so you can call it. You also need to teach your lamb to lead before you tie it up, as it will not be used to being restrained and it may hurt itself.

Keep your lamb under cover when it is very wet and cold so it keeps warm and clean. A good way to keep your lamb clean is to put it in an old t-shirt.

Do not bath or wash your lamb as they will become too cold (if they are really dirty use a damp cloth to wipe).



Animal Health

Constantly checking that your lamb is healthy is very important as they can become sick very quickly and if they are not treated fast they may not recover. If you don't wash your feeding equipment probably or over feed your lamb it can get scours (yellow runny diarrhoea) which makes your lamb very dehydrated and weak. If this happens you need to get some electrolytes from the vets so it can replace what it lost.

It is advisable to vaccinate your lamb against pulpy kidney, a disease which always seems to affect the fattest and strongest lambs but talk to the farmer before you do anything. Another aspect to think about is if the farmer wants the lamb docked (tail removed), if so the farmer will tell you what to do but the simplest way is to use a very small rubber ring (elastator) which gets placed at the very start of the tail. Male lambs may also need to be rung when they are 7 – 10 days old (removal of testicles).

Judging Classes:

Rearing

In the rearing class your lamb will be assessed on care, cleanliness and condition. The judge may ask you questions such as what breed your lamb is, when it was born, weight at birth and other related care questions. The judge will give their own personal assessment on the conformation, size, shape and other characteristics that make the animal outstanding in its breed.

Calling

You should be training your lamb by using its name all the time when you are with it so it knows to come to you when its name is called. You may have to begin training it by standing about 9 meters away from it with a bottle of milk behind your back and call its name. When it comes to you, it gets a little feed and a pat. As your lamb begins to trust you more you should be able to go anywhere and your lamb should follow without having its bottle.



On the day of Calf Club the judge will ask you to call your lamb from across the other side of the ring. The lamb is then expected to follow you across to the opposite side. Act as naturally as possible on the day to not upset your lamb and use a loud clear voice to call.

*** Remember that you cannot have food or a bottle in your hand when calling lamb on day of Calf Club.**

Leading and Stopping

Daily practice can result in a perfect lead on Calf Club day! A collar should be fitted to your lamb in the first few weeks of having it and the best time to fit it is just before it feeds so it forgets it is wearing something 'strange'. Remember to loosen the collar as it gets older and make sure that you can always fit two fingers in between the collar and the lamb's skin. Leave the collar on for roughly one hour a day and remember to take it off when you are not around. Always try to lead it to its feed so it knows that there is a reward at the end of it. Once your lamb is leading without struggle you can become adventurous and take it around your yard so it becomes use to strange places.

The judge may ask you to lead your lamb through a weaving section, stop for a count of 3 - 4, lead on again and step over a log.

When leading:

1. Your right hand should be your leading hand (steering hand), leaving a loop 10 -20cm from the collar.
2. The left hand should grip the rope, palm upwards, leaving a loop of slack between the hands, reaching to the knees.
3. You should make your lamb walk beside you at a good pace without pulling it or touching it. You should walk straight and facing forward without pulling your lamb.

*** Remember to listen to what the judge tells you to do and remain calm.**

After Calf Club

Once the day is over your lamb will be very tired and will need a good feed and a sleep. Give it a nice pat and if you did well at Calf Club there may be talk that you will now enter in a Group Day. If so, you will need to continue looking after your lamb by feeding and training it.

The time may come when you will have to return your lamb to the farmers flock of sheep but you have made a great friend and helped it grow up to be a strong and healthy so it will still remember you. What you have done is a great achievement and you should be proud of yourself!

