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Animal Health Fact Sheet

TUBE A LAMB, SAVE A LIFE

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Sheep producers can have a major impact on lamb survival by using a stomach tube and a large syringe. When a lamb is born weak or under stress and just doesn't nurse well immediately, just do the following:

- Milk the ewe into a wide mouth container (or use another colostrum source if she doesn't have enough.
- Place a stomach tube or esophageal feeder into the lamb's stomach via the mouth.
- Administer 2–3 ounces of the colostrum.
- Place a heat lamp in the pen and leave them alone.
- Check 3–4 hours later and be sure the lamb is nursing by then; if not, repeat the procedure.
- Keep lamb milk replacer on hand and supplement the lambs if they are not getting enough from the ewe. Many ewes have little milk at first, but will soon produce abundantly; that doesn't help any if the lambs have died of starvation by then.

These simple steps can save you lots of time and also lots of lambs that otherwise would die. They are very fragile for those first few hours but with a little help to get off to a good start, they soon become very resilient. The tube avoids confusing them with a strange nipple. Milking out the ewe stimulates further milk production and also makes the nipple easier for the lambs to find. The tube and supplement also allows you to supplement the lamb which needs it most out of the twins or triplets.

The simple equipment you need and the lamb supplement are all available from Land O Lakes and they even provide a starter "lamb survival kit." These are probably available from other sources as well.

Getting more lambs to survive the first few days and keeping more of them on their mothers is a major accomplishment in any sheep producer's life.

To pass the stomach tube, first measure the tube on the outside of the lamb so you can see how far to insert it. Lay the tube along the lamb from the tip if its nose, along the neck and side, so the tip lies at the last rib. Mark the tube at the nose and this will show the length to insert. Hold the lamb between your legs to restrain it, but let it stand on the floor. Open mouth slightly with your fingers and begin inserting tube over tongue and back into mouth and throat. The lamb will resist a little at this but usually not too severely. As the end of the tube gets into the neck region, watch along the left side of the neck and you can probably see the tube moving on down the esophagus. Don't force the tube. If it is obstructed and wont push on easily, withdraw it slightly and try again. If the lamb begins trying to cough, the tube may be in the trachea

(windpipe) and must be withdrawn so the tip is back in the mouth and then try again. If the tube is in so the mark is now at the tip of the nose, it should be into the stomach. Attach the syringe with colostrum or milk to the tube and infuse it through the tube.

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