

CARING FOR YOUR PET LAMB

Hopefully the initial long nights of feeding have paid off and your lamb is happy, healthy and growing well... so what now?

ENVIRONMENT: Lambs, and adult animals, continue to need a safe and secure environment with shelter, quality pasture, fresh water and companionship.

VACCINATIONS: Clostridial vaccination (5-in-1 or 10-in-1) is an important and relatively cheap insurance policy to protect your lamb against potentially fatal diseases! The schedule to use depends on the vaccination status of the ewe:

- Ewe **fully** vaccinated (lamb has maternal antibodies) - give vaccination at weaning with booster in four to six weeks, then yearly booster four weeks before lambing.
- Ewe **not** vaccinated (lamb has no maternal antibodies) - give lamb vax (tetanus antitoxin plus pulpy kidney) prior to docking, followed by TWO shots of 5-in-1 or 10-in-1 four to six weeks apart (i.e. three shots total), plus yearly booster as above.

DOCKING of TAILS & TESTICLES: This is normally done by six weeks of age with rubber (elastrator) rings. Tails should be left long enough to cover the vulva in females and a similar length in males. When castrating ram lambs, the rubber ring needs to be placed around the base of the scrotum, above the testes but below the teats, ensuring that **both** testicles are present.

TEACHING YOUR LAMB TO LEAD: Become your lambs' friend which, at least initially, is best done during feeding times! Spend time patting and stroking your lamb while talking to it. Once it is used to this handling introduce it to a collar. When you start leading use softly spoken commands, be patient and reward it with praise. Walk next to your lamb's shoulder at a regular pace, and soon it will learn that this is the speed at which to travel. If the lamb seems reluctant at first, don't pull it by the lead, gently place a hand on its bottom and push it along momentarily from behind.

WEANING: Once your lamb is eating an adequate amount of grass, weaning at around eight weeks old is fine. Early weaning decreases the time required each day for feeding but if your lamb is being used for a school pet day then you may want to keep up with a bottle or two to maintain the child-lamb relationship, or alternatively, train them early on to also eat sheep nuts!

DRENCHING: There is no generic recipe to suit absolutely everyone as treatment depends on your situation and history (stock numbers/types/classes/ages etc.). As a **very general** guide, start at weaning with an oral combination drench every four to six weeks for a series of six treatments and then as required, ideally based on information from faecal egg counts.

