

Lambing Time Tips...

From Karen Lobb

Before lambing...

- Purchase fresh elastrator bands - they're cheap and will prevent problems which can result from brittle bands breaking.
- If you need more ear tags, order them well before lambing starts, and make sure your tagger is in working order.
- Crutch or shear ewes 4 to 6 weeks prior to lambing. We also give our ewes their CD&T booster at this time.
- Make sure ewes are getting adequate nutrition and exercise as lambing approaches. Ewes who are too thin or too fat are more likely to have lambing problems.
- Inventory lambing pen panels, feeders, water buckets and lambing supplies BEFORE lambing starts. Repair or replace as needed.

During lambing...

- Once ewes have lambed and are in lambing pens it's easy to worm, give annual vaccinations and trim hooves.
- Use small water buckets in lambing pens to eliminate possibility of newborn lambs drowning.
- Dip tail bands in 7% iodine before using to reduce the chances of infection.
- For accurate birth weights we use a digital scale to weigh the lambs. Purchase a digital fish scale in a sporting goods department or store (we got ours at Wal-Mart®) and you'll pay about a third of what you'd pay for a similar scale from a livestock supply or feed store. It can also be used to weigh fleeces, roving, yarn, etc.
- Keep a wide mouth insulated mug in with your lambing kit. It makes a handy container to milk into if you need to milk a ewe for colostrum.
- If your barn doesn't have hot water, take a Thermos® full down each morning to use for washing hands and rinsing off lambing tools. A crock pot at the barn will also keep water warm - just be sure it's safely plugged in and is kept clear hay or other combustible items.
- Keep unscented baby wipes on hand for cleaning hands when hot water isn't available.
- Take photos of the lambs within a few days of birth (while still in the lambing pens) to help identify them later if ear tags are lost and to help document colors, patterns and fleece. Also, consider filling out a checklist (see our forms at www.bideaweefarm.com/forms.htm) on each lamb to help with recordkeeping.
- Keep a thermometer on hand and check temperature on sick ewe or lamb before deciding on treatment or calling a Vet for advice. Inexpensive digital thermometers work great and can be purchased at any drugstore.
- Conversions: 1 ml = 1 cc / 1 oz = about 30 cc
- Normal Body Temperatures: 101-103°F for adult sheep / 102-103°F for lambs

After lambing...

- Make sure ewes are getting enough nutrition to support growing lambs.
- If you're running out of feeder space as the lambs grow, use small, flexible laundry baskets (with small holes so the lambs won't get legs caught in them). They make great low cost, emergency feeders.
- To help prevent mastitis discontinue grain and/or alfalfa and feed the ewes grass hay for 5 to 7 days prior to weaning. After weaning, consider dry lotting the ewes for a week or so if pastures are lush.
- To minimize weaning stress, leave lambs in place and move the ewes - preferably to a pasture far, far away.
- Lamb toes grow fast - at about 3 months of age start checking to see if their toes need trimming.
- Review lambing results and start making decisions about which ewes and rams to use next year. If you decide to get a new ram start looking early in the summer while the selection is good.
- Clean and repair lambing equipment (panels, tag gun, etc.) and store everything away for next year.
- Don't forget to take time to sit, watch and enjoy your lambs. They make all of your hard work worthwhile!