

## Keeping Your Lamb Healthy

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Purchasing club lambs is the major cost associated with lamb projects, therefore keeping the lamb alive and healthy is the key to a successful project. Sick or unthrifty lambs never grow and develop to reach their genetic potential. The key to a healthy lamb is to set-up a routine preventative program and stick with it. Another major factor is recognizing health problems quickly and starting the proper medical or management treatments to prevent "down time" in your lambs growth. One good practice is to set monthly dates to weigh, vaccinate, worm and evaluate your lamb project to ensure it is on the correct growth plane for the anticipated show.

The time to start your health program is immediately after you purchase the lamb, regardless of where you purchased the animal. Lambs are bought, generally, through sales or private treaty. Regardless of where they are bought, these lambs are under extreme stress due to hauling, weaning, or change of environment. Stress is the major factor associated with sickness or poor performing lambs. When buying lambs, always assume they have had no vaccinations, regardless of what the seller tells you. If you didn't see it go in then they need another. It is a good idea to set up the vaccination schedule with weighing and trimming feet so nothing gets left out.

### Getting Your Lamb

1. Immediately give some type of penicillin or antibiotic (Combiotic or LA 200). These lambs have been stressed from transportation as well as exposure to other lambs and facilities if purchased from a sale.
2. Vaccinate the lamb for *Clostridium perfringens* type C&D (overeating). This disease is the most serious to consider for lambs. I recommend an 8-way vaccine (Covexin 8). This takes care of all the Clostridial diseases and also should contain a vaccine for Tetanus. Make sure the tetanus (toxoid) is included or you may need to give another vaccination. You will need to give a booster in about two weeks and again about 70 days later.
3. Another good vaccine to give is Soremouth. This disease is contagious and causes sores to form on the lambs lips, making it hard for the lamb to eat. Use caution when giving this vaccine as it is contagious to humans.
4. Get the lamb on a worming program to prevent internal parasites (Ivermectin, Tramisol, Valbazen. Include worming along with weighing every 30 days.

## Problems to watch for in your lamb

1. Scours                      Spectromycin, electrolytes
  - caused by changing feed, increased intake before lamb is adjusted to ration
  - watch for blood in stool; this would indicate coccidia
2. Coccidia                      Corid, coccidiostat in feed (lasalosisid)
  - scours that don't go away
  - blood in stool
  - lamb is eating but loses weight
  - most prevalent in stressed lambs (after weaning)
3. Off-feed
  - give small quantity of hay
  - Vit. B12, Thiamin, Vit. A,D,E
  - Pepto Bismol or sodium bicarbonate for belly ache
  - don't change feed to quickly
  - reduce feed until lamb gets back on feed
4. Ringworm                      Captan, bleach, iodine (anti fungal medicine)
  - loss of wool in small, circular spots
5. Wool biting
  - lambs biting or pulling wool from other lambs. Shows up as black spots on medium wool lambs when shorn
  - caused by boredom, not enough roughage in diet, spilling feed on animals backs
  - separate "wool biters", give small amount of hay
6. Pneumonia                      Combiotic, LA 200
  - listen to lambs breathing; sounds raspy
  - lamb is listless, ears droopy, hunched up, labored breathing
  - caused by wet, cold conditions, stress of hauling or dusty conditions
  - if dust pneumonia then keep pens and barn wet down to prevent dust
7. Foot rot                      Kopertox and penicillin
  - wet conditions
  - untrimmed feet
  - lambs go lame
  - bad odor from hoof
8. Bloat                      Mineral oil given orally
  - left side swells up like a balloon
9. Choking
  - lamb eats too fast, especially in medium wool sheep
  - put several rocks 2" in diameter or small bricks in feeder so lamb has to eat around the obstructions
10. Urinary calculi
  - lamb can not urinate do to blockage in urinary tract
  - make sure feed has ammonium chloride included
  - provide plenty of fresh, clean water
  - provide loose salt/mineral free choice
  - lamb will strain, stamp and kick at abdomen with back feet and wags or twitches tail

11. Polioencephalomalacia ( down and paddling, Polio)      Thiamin HCL
  - due to a thiamin deficiency sometimes seen in club lambs
  - lamb goes down and feet move in a walking or paddling motion
  - usually recover quickly after thiamin is given
  
12. Rectal prolapse
  - rectum protrudes out of anal canal
  - common in short docked club lambs
  - can be caused by dusty feeds or dusty conditions causing the lamb to cough.
  
13. Pink-eye                      TBZ powder (nitrofurizone)
  - irritated, watery eye
  - inflamed tissue around the eye
  
14. Getting lambs on feed
  - feed a complete, fresh ration
  - sprinkle some high quality alfalfa hay over feed
  - never change feed brands rapidly. Take at least a week for gradual transition
  - I recommend a pelleted ration to keep lambs from sorting feed. This ensures the lamb gets all the necessary ingredients in the feed
  - start lambs on small amounts of feed then gradually increase daily
  - ask the seller what type of feed the lamb has been eating and try to get a small amount for the transition to your ration
  
15. Polyarthritis              tetracyclines
  - caused by chlamydial organism
  - causes fever, lameness, loss of condition and conjunctivitis
  - isolate infected lambs and provide easy access to feed and water

This list will give you some idea of things to watch-out for during your project. If you have a problem, always contact your extension agent or ag teacher as soon as possible to determine if your lamb needs to be seen by a veterinarian. It is always a good idea to have a name and number for the vet handy in case of an emergency. Good luck .