

Reduce risk with good hygiene habits

Risk of diseases such as joint ill, scours and watery mouth can be significantly reduced with good hygiene— saving both time and lives at this busy time of year for our farmers.

Colostrum is vital support for lambs, both nutritional and immunity support from maternal antibodies. Lambs and calves are born without an immune system so they rely heavily on the antibodies supplied by colostrum. Making sure that the colostrum is clean is as important as making sure that enough good quality colostrum is given in time. Ideally to clean feeding equipment; the first rinse should be done at 35 degrees C, then soaked in a detergent for 30 minutes at around 55 degrees C then scrubbed, then rinsed, then allowed to air dry before the next use.

Navel dipping helps to dry and disinfect the navel quickly while adding a protective barrier. Preventing potential contamination from the environment from getting in. Aim to dip the navel twice; once just after birth and again 6hrs later. It's important to make sure that the navel is completely covered to make sure that there is a complete protective barrier.

Having a clean and dry environment for ewes and lambs in the lambing pens reduces the germs in the environment and therefore the risk of disease. Key ways to improve lambing pen hygiene are:

- Making sure that bedding is dry by changing it regularly and adding clean fresh straw. A way to check that the pen is dry enough is by kneeling down in the pen, if your knees are damp then more straw is needed. Cleansing should also be removed from pens.
- Using disinfectants to help pens to dry as well as disinfecting them.
- Keeping water troughs topped up and clean of straw. As well as not using them to wash hands. Similarly ensuring that feed for the sheep isn't contaminated.
- Isolate any aborted ewes from others in separate areas to reduce the risk of spread of disease. If you are concerned about aborted ewes please contact your vet for further treatment and investigation.

Adding a few steps into management of lambing pens and feeding will help have a more productive lambing with lots of healthy lambs and ewes ready to be turned out to grass.