



## **SUCKLING LAMB HEALTH**

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It is the time of year when most of the lambs are suckling their mothers and started on a creep feed. The most common diseases at this stage of production are coccidiosis, soremouth and overeating in lambs and mastitis in the ewes. You need to spend adequate time each day walking through the lamb pens to observe the lambs' health and the ewes' udders to make sure that each lamb is getting enough to eat and treating any signs of scours or pneumonia at their earliest clinical signs. Treating 12 hours earlier in cases of disease can make a large difference in the outcome and recovery of the lamb or ewe. Making time each morning and night to observe is your best level of prevention. A wet, dirty head at this age comes from stealing milk from other ewes from the back side. You need to identify these lamb's mothers and check their udders and make a culling decision if they are poor milk producers. Sudden death in lambs at this age can be Type C or D overeating, trauma, Vitamin E or selenium deficiency or acute pneumonia. Most commonly we begin to see coccidiosis at this age which results in lambs that are not feeling their normal activity, and will have a dark or blood tinged stool. These lambs need to be treated immediately with an oral sulfa based product and some injected penicillin. Coccidiosis is usually not fatal but will spread rapidly through the lambs and decrease their daily weight gain and also make them much more susceptible to pneumonia and starvation.

At five weeks of age the lamb has lost much of the mother's immunity that it received in the colostrum and needs to be vaccinated for Clostridium types C and D and tetanus. Plan to booster the lambs again every two to three weeks for a total of three shots - this is the best method for preventing overeating. Two shots will work in some instances but the timing is critical, and because the vaccine is relatively inexpensive and the lambs in a group will vary in age by several weeks, it is good advice to use a three shot technique. Make sure to check the ewes also and treat any signs of mastitis early and aggressively. Clinical signs of mastitis are a full, reddened, swollen udder and the ewe is often reluctant to move. Often the lambs are the first indication that the ewe may be having problems with mastitis. Be sure to start changing the ewes feed rations that last week prior to weaning to reduce milk production. Remove the grain the last week and start feeding a grass hay to aid the ewe in the drying up process - this will greatly reduce the amount of ewes with mastitis and udder problems next year.