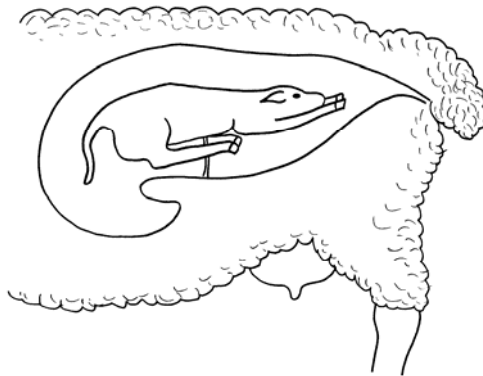


# Lambing Information For Teachers

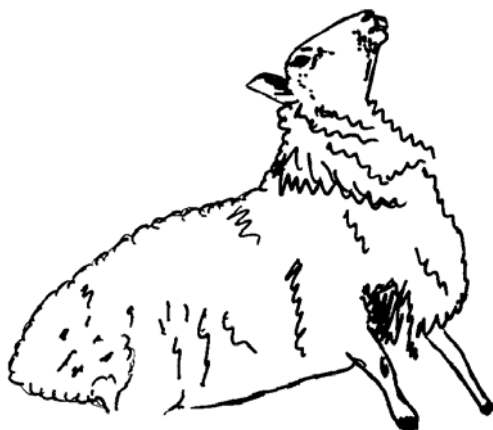
## Pregnancy:

- The ewe (female sheep) is penned with a ram (male sheep) to be mated and become pregnant in the autumn. She is pregnant for 5 months. The lambs are then born in the spring when the grass is starting to grow and the weather is improving.
- Just before the ewe gives birth the lamb should be positioned with its head resting on its front feet in diving position ready to be born (see below).



## Birth:

- When the ewe starts to have her lamb she may paw at the ground, stretch her neck and bare her teeth (see below). This is because she has labour pains. She is left alone as much as possible at this stage, as any stress may prolong the birth.



- The first thing that you will see as the ewe starts to give birth is a bag of fluid appearing at her rear end. This is the sac of liquid which protected the lamb when it was growing inside the ewe.

- Normally a lamb is born with its head resting on its front feet. You will see two front feet appear, then the knees and then the nose will appear followed very quickly by the rest of the lamb.
- Most ewes lay down to give birth but stand up straight afterwards to reach the lamb.
- You will see the afterbirth hanging from the rear end of the ewe. This is the placenta through which the unborn lamb got its nourishment. The ewe may eat the afterbirth to hide the fact that she has given birth, from foxes and other predators, which could harm the lamb.
- Ewes often have two, three or sometimes even four lambs. With multiple births there can be problems and so staff remain on hand to help if necessary.

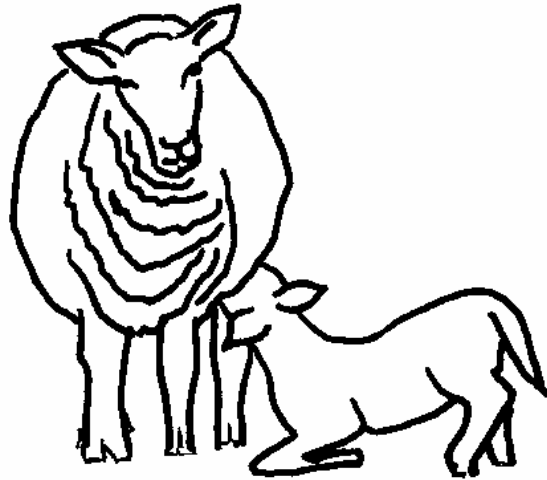
## Care of the lamb

- The ewe will lick the lamb clean and dry (see below). This is very important as it stops the lamb from getting cold. The ewe and her lamb are also beginning to get to know one another as she licks and nuzzles the lamb dry.



- The ewe will soon coax the lamb to its feet by licking, nudging and nosing it. Outdoors, it is very important that the lamb gets up quickly because of predators. Usually the lamb can stand within a few minutes.

- The lamb then takes its first feed by suckling from the ewe's udder. The first milk is called **colostrum**. This is special milk that is rich in antibodies which protect the lamb from some infections.



- The lambs and ewes need peace and quiet to get to know each other and learn to recognise each other's smell and voice. The ewes are penned individually with their lamb(s) for at least 24 hours so that this bonding can take place.
- Staff spray the lamb's umbilical cord stump with antiseptic to protect it from infection. The lambs are also given ear tags to record which ewe they belong to and whether they are male or female. They have their mother's number sprayed on their sides so that family groups can be recognised.
- The lambs are immunised against many infections and some have a ring put on their tails which causes the tail to drop off. This helps to keep their fleece from getting messy, which stops them being bothered by flies so much in the summer.
- After a few days the ewes and their lambs are moved into group pens and then if the weather is suitable the group will be released into the paddocks.
- The lambs are gradually introduced to little pellets of food which they eat more as their mothers milk decreases. They also start nibbling grass after a few weeks.
- If a ewe has too many lambs or not enough milk it will be removed from its mother and reared as a 'pet lamb' using an artificial milk substitute. A heat lamp is used to keep these lambs warm when they are tiny.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Q** Where do the lambs grow before they are born?

**A** They grow in their mother's tummies inside the womb.

**Q** How do the lambs grow before they are born?

**A** They get everything that they need to grow from their mother, through the umbilical cord. It is the end of this cord which forms the lamb's tummy button when it is born.

**Q** How is the lamb born?

**A** When the lamb is ready to be born the strong muscles of the womb push the lamb out.

**Q** What does the lamb eat when it is new-born?

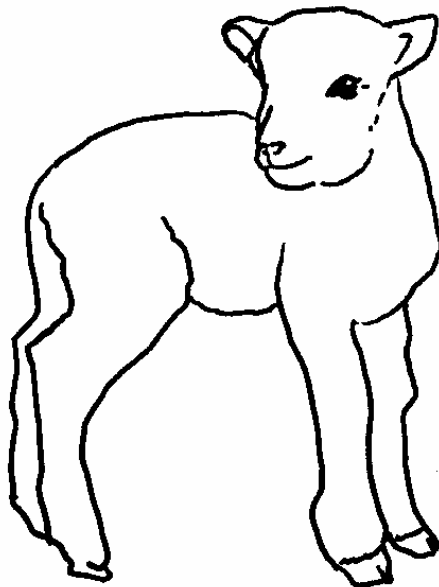
**A** The lamb drinks milk from it's mother's udder until it is old enough to eat grass or food pellets.

**Q** How long before a lamb can walk?

**A** A lamb can usually walk within a few minutes of birth, but it takes a human baby about a year to learn to walk.

**Q** How long does it take a lamb to grow up?

**A** A sheep is fully grown in about 2 years but a human takes much longer to grow up!



*This information has been prepared to help staff and their helpers to answer children's questions on school visits during lambing.*