

KEEPING NEWBORNS WARM

Hypothermia and exposure are major killers of newborn lambs/kids, especially those born during the cold winter months. Lambs/kids with low birth weights and/or from large litters are most vulnerable. Kids seem to be much less cold tolerant than lambs. Hair sheep lambs may have an advantage over woolled lambs, due to their thicker birth coats. There are numerous strategies for dealing with the risks posed by cold weather.



Heat lamps are frequently used to provide supplemental heat to newborn lambs/kids. While heat lamps can be used safely, often they are not, and they are often causes of **barn fires**.

Tips for using heat lamps safely

- Use well-made lamps with good quality bulbs
- Hang with chain not baling twine
- Hang at least 20" off the ground
- Keep cords away from animals
- Do not use in confined spaces or barrels
- Do not use for **longer than is necessary**.

Indoor housing is usually a prerequisite for lambing/kidding during cold weather. Cold is usually okay, but ewes/does need a dry draft free place to give birth and bond with their offspring. But don't keep the barn too tight; adequate ventilation is essential. If you lack proper housing, consider moving lambing/kidding to the warmer months.



Instead of a heat lamp, put a coat, cover, or jacket on the lamb/kid. This will prevent heat loss. There are different kinds of coats, including reusable cloth coats and plastic biodegradable ones. Old clothes can work, too. As with heat lamps, there's no reason to use covers on healthy, thriving lambs/kids. They need to regulate their own body temperature.

The best protection against cold weather is a good mother. A good mother will lick her babies dry, push them towards her udder, and make sure they get a bellyful of warm colostrum. **Cull bad mothers!**



Nutrition is also important. Properly fed ewes/does have superior mothering ability and colostrum production.

Follow flow charts for dealing with hypothermic lambs/kids. Recommendations are based on the age of the lamb/kid, its rectal temperature, and ability to swallow.