

Caring for Newborns, Are you Prepared?

Spring is the season of rejuvenation. The days get longer, the grass turns green, and many animals have their offspring. If you have a breeding herd, this is an exciting time. It can also be a hectic time. A little preparation on your part can go a long way in helping assure you get your animal's newborns off to a strong and healthy start.

Be Prepared

"Prepare for the worst. Hope for the best." That's a trite old saying, but it's also good advice. Many dams will have their offspring without complications or the need of assistance. It's best not to interfere too much. Being "in her face" leads to stress which can cause problems. Females approaching parturition will often separate from herd mates and seek an out-of-the-way place. Remember to avoid upsetting females near parturition. However, you need to keep watch so that help can be given if necessary. It is particularly important to watch females in their first pregnancy. If problems arise, you should contact your veterinarian immediately.

After the newborn hits the ground, the dam's mothering instinct kicks in. She will clean her offspring and be protective of it. Remember to watch from a distance to make sure the newborn rises to nurse. This first milk from the dam is called colostrum. In addition to being extra nutritious, it contains antibodies that will provide the newborn with passive immunity until its own immune system matures. With regard to weather, newborns with a good mother can withstand some pretty cold temperatures, but not if it's wet. If weather conditions are poor, the newborn and its dam should be moved to adequate shelter. Again, it's generally best not to intervene, but if the weather requires it or if the dam abandons or is aggressive toward her newborn, it's time to step in. Also, if the newborn has not risen to nurse in six hours or so, it will need some help.

If a newborn does not nurse its dam, for whatever reason, it needs to be fed colostrum as soon as possible following birth. Remember that Manna Pro's Colostrum Supplement is a great product to have on hand. This nutritious, dry powder is available in convenient one pound packages and includes complete mixing and feeding directions. Additionally, be sure you also have a supply of bottles and nipples. After a few feedings of colostrum, it's time to transition the newborn to an appropriate milk replacer. Manna Pro has a full line of quality milk replacers to fit your needs.

Young ones need to be watched closely for signs of illness. Symptoms such as labored breathing or diarrhea require intervention. Consult your veterinarian for appropriate therapeutic measures. Doing this sooner, rather than later, usually produces a better result. In the case of diarrhea, both water and electrolytes need to be replenished. Manna Pro's Bounce Back is the answer. This energy/electrolyte formula comes in easy-to-use four ounce packets. When mixed with water, it helps get animals back on track.

Surprisingly soon, young animals will begin to pick at dry feed, often mimicking the behavior of older animals. Calf-Manna is an excellent product to get your animals started on dry feed. It provides important nutrients needed in particular by the young, growing animal. Introducing animals to Calf-Manna with its inviting anise aroma will also help ease with the transition at weaning time.

By Dr. Rob McCoy