

Did you know that over 80% of diarrhoea cases in bottle fed lambs and kids are due to inappropriate feeding?

Young animals can go downhill very quickly, so if your little one seems “off” or has lost his appetite, then he needs to see a vet. However, if he is bright, alert and happy, with a good appetite but loose stools, here are some simple things you can check for first, to rule out dietary scours.

Quantity and frequency

Dietary scours is often caused by simply overfeeding. Lambs and kids can be born anywhere from 1-6kg. They should be drinking 10-15% of their bodyweight, divided into small feeds throughout the day. We recommend weighing your baby at least weekly, to adjust as he grows. To calculate, use the formula $(0.15 \times \text{Weight in Kg}) / \# \text{ of feeds throughout the day} \times 1000$. This will give you the volume in mL, per feed.

Note, be wary of feeding a small number of large feeds as this can predispose to *Abomasal Bloat*. See our *Abomasal Bloat* handout for more information.

Temperature

Did you know that lambs, kids and calves have a valve down at the opening to the stomach that directs the food? When they drink warm liquid the valve is triggered to divert the milk into the baby chamber of the stomach (the abomasum), but when they chew the valve diverts the food into the grown up chamber (the rumen). When they drink milk that is too cold, it can get confused and milk can accidentally flow into the rumen. We call this “Milk Rumenitis” and can be a cause of ongoing bloat, sore tummies and diarrhoea. The milk should be 30 degrees but can drop down to 20 degrees at a couple of weeks old so long as they are strong, healthy and drinking well.



Addressing Dietary Scours in Lambs and Kids

Weight	Total volume in a day	Frequency	Volume per feed
3kg	450ml	8 x day	56ml

Speed of flow

Another way to confuse the valve at the opening of the stomach, and have milk accidentally spill over into the rumen is by feeding too quickly. Again, this can cause “Milk Rumenitis” and can be a cause of ongoing bloat, sore tummies and diarrhoea. This can also lead to pneumonia if they accidentally inhale the milk. Check your teat. When you hold your bottle upside down, the milk should drip-drip-drip. If it flows out in a steady stream, it is too fast, and the teat needs a smaller hole.

Fresh batches

Colostrum and milk are high in protein, but when proteins are heated, they break apart. Milk feeds should ideally be mixed up fresh each time with warm water, as cooling and heating can alter the nutritional components of the milk. A little more labour intensive unfortunately, but an easy way to make sure the nutrition is on-point, and your milk isn’t harbouring any nasty bacterial infections.

Mixing correctly

Another easy way to throw off the nutritional composition of the milk and cause tummy upsets is by mixing the quantity of water to powder, incorrectly. Make sure you follow the instructions on the packet, closely.

Hygiene

Just like a human baby, the bottle and teats should be disinfected with hot water in between feeds, to prevent nasty bacterial infections from growing.

Good luck!

Remember, if your little one is dull, lethargic, weak or losing his appetite, he needs to see a vet. If the cause is a simple dietary scour, you should see improvement within 24-36hrs. If there is no improvement, call the clinic for an appointment as something nastier may be brewing.