

# Lambing

## Information Sheet

### Disinfectants at lambing



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Disinfectants are substances that are applied to surfaces in order to destroy any bacteria and viruses living on them. They are indispensable at lambing time to protect against disease in ewes, lambs and people. They are unlikely to kill all bacteria and viruses present and will work better when the area to be disinfected has first been cleaned of faeces, mud, dirty bedding, milk, blood, urine etc. Disinfectants are potentially harmful to both animals and people so should always be used according to the manufacturer's instructions. It can be useful to have a selection of disinfectants available because they vary in their suitability for different tasks. A list of DEFRA approved disinfectants can be found at [www.disinfectants.defra.gov.uk](http://www.disinfectants.defra.gov.uk).

**Pens:** To start off on the right foot buildings should have been cleaned and disinfected before lambing starts. Many disinfectants are suitable for this e.g. Blitz, Sorgene 5, FAM 30, Virkon S. Individual pens should be cleaned out and disinfected between ewes and allowed to dry before new bedding is added. There are various dry products on the market that are designed to be applied to bedded areas to help control moisture and bacterial numbers. Hydrated lime can be useful to keep small areas dry but can be irritant to teats and skin. Other products containing silicates and clay, e.g. Mistral, also mainly have a drying effect but are non irritant. Paraformaldehyde granules can be scattered daily onto bedding and have disinfectant properties to keep bacterial numbers down. The last category of dry products (e.g. Stalosan f) contain multiple ingredients including phosphates/sulphates, copper/iron salts and silicates. These work together to kill and suppress bacterial growth as well as absorbing moisture and neutralizing ammonia. The use of disinfectants is not intended as a substitute for general management i.e. sensible stock density, using sufficient dry bedding, removal of cleansings and contaminated straw, maintenance of gutters and troughs etc.

**Navels:** Dipping is more effective than spraying but remember to keep the equipment clean. Strong Veterinary Iodine contains 10% Iodine in an alcohol base which helps dry the navels quickly. Apply as soon as possible after birth and again 2 to 4 hours later to replace any licked off by the ewe.

**Equipment:** The immune system of young lambs is not as efficient as that of adult sheep. Equipment such as bottles, teats and stomach tubes need to be kept scrupulously clean. Wash and then soak in Milton Sterilising Fluid to remove bacteria.

**Lambings and Prolapses:** Not all disinfectants are suitable for use on live animals as they can be irritant. Gentler products such as Savlon or chlorhexidine (e.g. Hibiscrub) can be used in solution when disinfection of tissues is required.

**Boots:** Infection could be carried on wellies from the sick pen to the lambing shed or pet lambs and vice versa. Dipping boots in a disinfectant foot bath will reduce the risk. See product labels for dilution instructions and when to replace the solution.

**Hands:** Ewes and lambs carry a variety of infections that can make people ill. Wear gloves to lamb ewes and always thoroughly wash your hands afterwards and before eating or smoking. In addition to using hot water and soap it is now easy to buy hand sanitisers while products such as Savlon and Hibiscrub are also suitable. Remember that pregnant women should never be involved with sheep or have contact with equipment and dirty clothing at lambing time.

Visit [www.fas.scot](http://www.fas.scot) for further information or contact the helpline on 0300 323 0161, or by email at [advice@fas.scot](mailto:advice@fas.scot)