

Turnout in Wet Weather

The wet weather is making turnout of lambs and calves difficult this year and keeping them inside longer than usual or turning them out onto muddy fields increases the risk of disease, such as navel ill, joint ill and scour. Very young lambs turned out in wet conditions are also at increased risk of hypothermia.

If you are delaying turnout, plenty of bedding to provide a dry lying area is essential. To save on straw, providing a 'calf refuge' might help. This is a dedicated lying area that the calves can go in and out of at will, but the cow cannot go in. This can be a specialised gate, or an electric fence/tape across the pen. This area can be bedded well, and it also saves on straw because you are only bedding a smaller area. Make sure to make it large enough so the calves can spread out.

Pay particular attention to navel dressing. Ideally, the navel should be treated with strong veterinary iodine, usually 7-10% concentration within the first 15 minutes, and repeated 2 – 4 hours later if safe to do so. There are also barrier type products available that claim to dry the navel quicker than iodine, which would be worth asking your vet about.

Turn lambs and calves out on to the driest field with as much grass cover as possible. It will be important to move them frequently.

Turnout onto fields with natural shelter and windbreaks. Artificial shelter can also be provided. One suggestion is to use potato boxes turned on their sides as shelter for lambs and calves. These might be readily available in your area.

Consider using biodegradable jackets on lambs and calves.

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