

How To ... Build a Lambing Jug

Lambing jugs can ease the process of lambing and simplify the experience for ewes and their owners.

By Arie McFarlan

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Materials List 1" galvanized screws 14 1" x 4" x 12' boards (dimensional lumber) 24 1/2" screw eyes 3 3/8" rebar rods with the top 2 inches bent at a right angle to form an "L" Electric drill to make pilot holes for screws Saw (power, jig or chop) Screw gun or screwdriver

Lambing season is just around the corner for most shepherds and preparations are being made for the new arrivals.

Lambing jugs, although not absolutely necessary, can ease the process of lambing and simplify the experience for ewes and their owners.

Lambing jugs are small, usually portable pens that are erected just prior to lambing. Jugs provide a safe and private place for ewes to birth, as well as a comfortable and protected area where the lambs and ewes can bond to each other.

How to Use Them

When a ewe is getting close to birthing, she's placed in the jug with fresh bedding and water. She can be carefully monitored while in the jug and any needed assistance can be easily provided.

Once the lambs are born, the mother and babies are left in the jug for about three days to ensure the bonding process. After three days, the ewe and her offspring can be returned to the rest of the flock.

Lambing jugs can be set up inside an already existing barn, along a fence line or outside barn wall, or free-standing in a protected area (though you'll need three additional panels for the free-standing type). Each panel or section will be 48 inches wide and 34 inches tall.

Building a set of three jugs is fairly easy with the following plans.

Building Instructions

Step 2

Cut 10 of the boards to 4-foot lengths for the horizontal slats of the partitions. From the remaining boards, cut 12 sections at 34 inches each for the vertical end stays. Each panel will be assembled exactly the same.

Step 1. Lay two vertical stays on a flat surface, placing them approximately 4 feet apart. Lay two of the 4-foot sections on top of the vertical stays, lining up the end of the 4-foot sections with the outside edge of the vertical stays at both the top and bottom edges, forming a box shape. Use clamps if necessary to line up the edges. Secure the corners with the screws, forming a frame or box.

Step 4

Step 2. Spacing for the three remaining 4-foot sections should be as follows:

The bottom horizontal board should be the one you place along the ground. Place the next horizontal board at 212 inches above the bottom board (forming a 212-inch opening). Leave a 312-inch gap between the second and third boards. Leave a 4-inch gap between the third and fourth boards. A space of approximately 512 inches will remain between the fourth and top boards. This should give you a 34-inch high panel. Connect each horizontal board securely with the screws, using at least two per end. Additionally, a diagonal support board can be added for heavy or aggressive sheep.

Step 3. Next, install the screw eyes to the end of each panel at the top and bottom. Placement of the screw eyes must be varied with each panel so that they fall slightly above or below the screw eyes on the panel you'll be attaching them to. A suggestion would be to place the screw eyes at 2 inches from the top and bottom on the left sides of all the panels, and at 212 inches from the top and bottom on the right sides of the panels. Complete the remaining five panels in the same manner.

Step 5

Step 4. When ready to assemble the jugs, secure your first panel to the fence or wall that you have chosen. You can wire through the screw eyes on the end directly to a board or fence panel. Next, place a second panel end to end with the first panel, and one panel perpendicular to the two previous panels, forming a T. Use the rebar rods to drop down through all the screw eyes, connecting the three panels together.

Step 5. Continue until your three jugs are assembled. Secure each open end to the barn or fence as necessary.

When finished with the jugs, they can be quickly disassembled and stored flat or vertically without taking up much storage space.

About the Author: Arie McFarlen is owner of Maveric Heritage Ranch Co., where she raises many heritage livestock breeds, including Jacob sheep.

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