

Caring for Orphan Piglets

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Feeding orphan piglets is everyone's nightmare. Tales of all night sittings and thermos flasks (presumably with black coffee to keep the feeder awake). With a single bottle it must feel like painting the Forth Road bridge, by the time you get to one end it is time to start again.

Help is at hand!!

For those not so good at DIY, multiple bottle lamb racks can be bought from most good agricultural merchants. These generally take four at a time. Alternatively you can get multiple teat buckets but small piglets struggle with these as they are designed for bigger lambs or calves.

For the DIY enthusiasts, a few bits of wood and some elastic bands can make a bottle rack without much trouble.

Once you have organised the rack and bottles, what to feed is the next headache. The following is a suitable substitute if fed at body heat:

- 1 pint cow's milk
- 1 pint water
- 1 teaspoon cod liver oil
- 1 teaspoon glucose _ .
- 1 teaspoon sodium bicarbonate . .
- 1 teaspoon sodium citrate

It should be mixed at the rate of 1.5lbs per gallon of water at approx. 104F (note all this is in 'old money'). The amount fed should be adjusted so that the piglets eat what is given over a three to four minute period.

At first, piglets will need feeding at four hourly intervals and at least once during the night. After 14 days four times a day will be sufficient reducing to three times per day after five weeks of age. You should encourage the piglets onto solid food as soon as possible (usually at three weeks).

If you don't fancy making your own mix, then Calf Mik replacer is the best pre-prepared.

As with all this type of feeding, scour is the biggest problem so don't over do it.