

Sheep Welfare Scheme

A new Sheep Welfare Scheme was announced by The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Michael Creed T.D. on 16 December 2016. This scheme provides funding of up to €25 million for Irish sheep farmers in 2017. Farmers will receive a payment of €10 per breeding ewe, based on a reference number which is the average number of ewes held on their farm in the years 2014 and 2015 (i.e. Census records for these years). The farmer should maintain the reference number of ewes to maximise his payment but can reduce numbers and get paid on the reduced figure.

Farmers must also choose two actions from a menu of options based on whether the farmer has a lowland flock or hill flock. These actions must be completed over a 12 month period. The actions are listed on the Application Form and it is important to note that whatever actions are selected cannot be changed during the course of the 4 year scheme – which finishes in 2020.

Application forms have been posted in early January to all farmers who have submitted a Sheep Census in recent years. Any farmer that has not received one should contact the Department directly in order that they can be issued with a form in time for the closing date of 31 January 2017. New entrants will also need to seek an Application Form from the DAFM. Farmers with an existing Flock Number and have not held or traded in sheep for a two year period up to 31st October may also apply but will also need to contact DAFM for an Application Form.

The actions for the scheme include lameness control (lowland flocks), mineral supplementation in ewes (both lowland and hill flocks), meal feeding lambs post weaning (hill sheep flocks), parasite control (lowland and hill flocks), flystrike (lowland flocks), scanning (lowland and hill flocks) and mineral supplementation lambs (hill sheep flocks). Farmers will either be in the hill or lowland sector depending on the majority type of ewes submitted in the Sheep Census. All farmers must choose one action from Category A plus one action from Category B as shown on the Application Form. Full details can be seen in the Terms & Conditions of the scheme which accompanied the posted Application Form. Farmers will be issued with a record book following successful application where they will be able record what they did for the actions they selected.

If farmers wish to withdraw from the scheme in future years they may do so without penalty once they inform DAFM when the annual re-application takes place. However they cannot re-join the scheme once they have opted out.

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