

BETTER Farm update August 2017

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All lowland flocks have now completed weaning and after the initial drop in lamb performance from weaning lambs are starting to be drafted again for slaughter at around 44 kg live weight depending on lamb sex. Drafting is slow on some of the farms but with lambs weaned and being given priority access to best grass this should pick up in the coming weeks. With the drafting of lambs also comes the choosing of the ewe lambs to be held for breeding from this year's lamb crop with breed, live weight and the birth litter size the lamb originated from will all being considered when selecting replacements. With August also comes ram sales and during July all the farms looked through their ewes and rams to see how many ewes were going to the ram and how many rams would be needed. Any of the flocks intending on buying rams will be looking for performance recorded rams with high maternal and terminal stars.

The early flock in Co. Wexford will join ewes this month following synchronisation using sponges. A team of Suffolk and Texel rams will be used to join these ewes, with all ewes receiving one cycle with the ram. If the ewes are not in lamb after the first cycle then they will be moved to the mid-season flock in an aim to compact the early lambing. Ewes were selected for the early flock based on age and condition with older ewes in good condition favoured for this group.

The hill flocks will wean this month and be deciding what to do with lambs. Once replacements are selected some of the flocks will begin selling lambs as stores. A key consideration in deciding what to do with these lambs will be the amount of grass available, and how much will be needed for the ewes in run up to mating time. For some of the flocks this may mean selling nearly all the lambs as stores in August/September to ensure ewes are in good condition come mating time.