

BETTER Farm update August 2018

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The drought conditions in June/July took a severe toll on grass growth on most of the farms as presented in Figure 1. There was a huge amount of variation in the levels of grass growth depending on farm type and location. Flocks in the east of the country were particularly badly hit and this has made it a very challenging time to manage both ewes and lambs with flock forced to start feeding concentrates to the majority of the lambs in order to maintain growth. Ewes were tightened up at weaning time and for some of the flocks (in the east mainly) this meant introducing silage to these ewes in order save grass for lambs. Drafting rates are reasonably good on the farms given the low grass growth rates but the costs associated with these lambs are much higher this year.

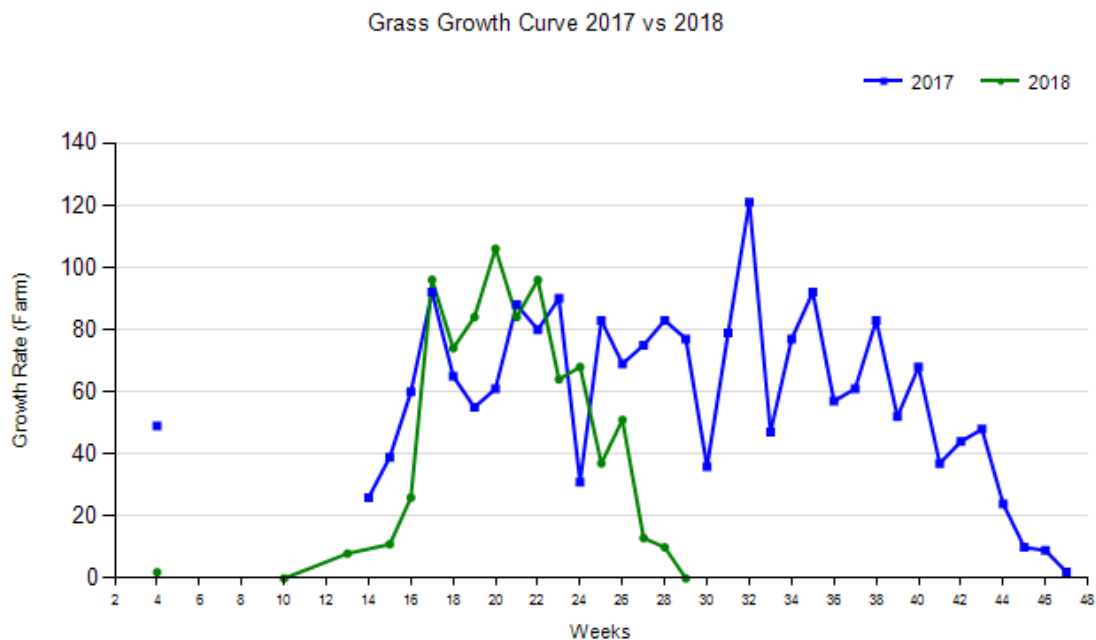


Fig 1. Grass growth curve for 2017 and 2018 to date on Peadar Kearney's farm in Co. Louth.

As the hill flocks begin weaning this month attention turns to what to do with these lambs. A lot of this decision will hinge on the amount of grass available, and how much will be needed for the ewes in run up to mating time. With this in mind the management of the lamb crop from weaning will differ on the farms with some needing to sell the majority as stores and others looking at options for finishing lambs outdoors and indoors later in the year.

