

BETTER Farm update September 2017

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While the drafting of lambs on the lowland flocks continues the rates drafted is variable. Very wet conditions in some parts of the country combined with an increase in price in mid-August led to some of the flocks introducing small quantities of meals to lambs. The aim for all the flocks is to continue to allow lambs access to the best quality grass even where meal is being fed. Faecal egg counts are being monitored fortnightly in lambs across the flocks also with nearly all flocks having to dose lambs in the past four weeks based on egg counts (Table 1).

Table 1. Average, minimum and maximum Strongyle egg count results recorded across the lowland BETTER sheep farms during the first three weeks in August.

	Average	Min	Max
Strongyles (eggs per gram)	397	15	1140

Demand for good quality grass is now also starting to come from ewes in preparation for mating, particularly ewes in below target BCS. All the lowland flocks are aiming to have 20 days of grass ahead of them at this point and the final applications of fertilizer are also going out in order to try and build grass covers for the autumn.

Breeding has gone well for the early lambing flock in Co. Wexford with 98% of ewes taking the ram following sponging. The rams have now been removed from the ewes following and anything that fails to hold in lamb to this single cycle will join the mid-season flock in October.

The hill flocks weaned lambs during August with some still to be weighed at the time of writing there is not a full analysis done yet on the weights. However, anecdotally the farmers are reporting that lamb performance was back on previous years which given the relatively good conditions around lambing time and into the summer was surprising. Faecal egg count results have led to some of the hill flocks needing to dose during August, particularly lambs kept on lower or enclosed ground.