

## **BETTER Farm update September 2018**

Frank Campion, Animal & Grassland Research & Innovation Centre

Weaning on the hill flocks is almost finished at the time of writing and while a full analysis of the weights has been completed yet the general trend is that lambs are weighing well this year after a good for most hills. The question to forefront now is what to do with the crop of lambs, for most of the flocks in the programme they are looking to finish as many lambs on the farm as possible this year. Supply of grass, expected grass demand from the ewe flock and housing facilities will all dictate the number of lambs that can be finished. Heavier ram lambs have been drafted off at weaning and are being fed concentrates to try and finish these quickly with lighter lambs receiving lower levels of concentrates or even none at all where there is sufficient grass. Where flocks are holding lambs on inland/green ground from weaning these lambs will be checked for worm burdens soon as they may be naïve to the parasite burden if they have spent most of their lives on the hill.

Grass supplies on the lowland flocks remains variable with the flocks in the south and east still struggling for sufficient rainfall levels after the drought during June/July. Supplementation is continuing on these farms where grass supplies are low and anecdotally some these flocks are reporting sufficient levels of grass growth to maintain stock on the farm but not enough to get paddocks dropped out for silage. Demand for good quality grass is now also starting to come from ewes in preparation for mating, particularly ewes in below target BCS. Thin ewes are being supplemented on some of the farms to reduce pressure on grass supplies and also ensure ewes are not too thin at mating.