

BETTER Farm Update February 2023

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The lowland flocks in the programme have completed pregnancy scanning of the mature ewes in late December/January with the results from 8 of the flocks that have scanned at the time of writing presented in Table 1. The scan rates and scanned litter sizes are similar to last year on average but some individual flocks are up slightly or down slightly on last year with the range in scanned litter size change ranging from -0.13 to +0.14 of a difference on 2022. Observing litter size change over one year can be dangerous and its best to look at it over a number of years to see the trend and how it's changing. Pregnancy rates were very good across the flocks as also presented in Table 1. Empty ewes will be sold as soon as possible which will help reduce demand for fodder supplies and grass later on in the year while also freeing up valuable pen and feeding space in sheds for in-lamb ewes. Those flocks lambing yearling ewes will be scanning these slightly later than the mature ewes as they went to the ram later.

The hill flocks will be pregnancy scanning this month. This is a task the hill flocks in the programme find hugely valuable as it allows them to pull off twin bearing ewes and manage them differently in the run up to lambing. Scanning time will also provide a good opportunity to assess how these ewes are doing on the hill over the winter and assess ewe BCS with any very thin ewes being pulled off for preferential treatment after scanning.

Table 1. Mature ewe scanning results from 8 of the lowland BETTER farms 2022/23

Farm	Boyle	Forde	Gavin	Keane	Moore	O'Connor	O'Leary	Powell
Location	Donegal	Galway	Carlow	Wexford	Roscommon	Wicklow	Kerry	Tipperary
Scanned litter size	1.90	1.81	1.83	1.64	1.95	1.77	2.14	1.75
Scanned pregnancy rate (%)	93.5	91.2	96.7	97.6	98.9	94.7	97.3	94.9
Scanning rate	1.77	1.76	1.77	1.60	1.93	1.68	2.08	1.66