

## **BETTER Farm Update July 2023**

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The break in weather in the middle of June was a welcome relief to some of the BETTER sheep farmers who were starting to see soil moisture deficits cause a reduction in grass growth rates. Some of the flocks took the decision to wean the lambs off the ewes a couple of weeks earlier than planned in order to reduce overall grass demand on the farm ensure the best grass was kept for the lambs. This meant flocks weaning at ~12 weeks as opposed to ~14 weeks.

Grass growth rates and demand are being monitored carefully. The plan after weaning is for the lambs to graze swards to 5.5-6cm with ewes following behind to clean out paddocks to 3.5-4cm. Lamb performance to 7 weeks was behind for some of the flocks, which will mean weaning weights will also be behind target. These flocks are setting up a 'finishing group' at weaning time. This group will be made up of lambs >38kg that are going for sale and these lambs will be offered ~500g/day of concentrates until finished. The lighter lambs will remain on grass only and as lambs hit the 38-40kg weight, they will be drafted into the finishing group. For the flocks where performance earlier in the spring suffered this will help increase drafting rates helping ensure there is not too many lambs still on the farm later in the year. Lambs will be offered feed in troughs and by keeping level to 500g/day will only require feeding once daily.