

BETTER Farm Update June 2019

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At the time of writing nearly all of the 7 week weights from the mature ewes on the lowland flocks have been collected. Table 1 shows the mean birth weight, 7 week weight and growth rate to seven weeks for seven of the lowland flocks weighed during the first two weeks of May. Overall the growth rates are good but a couple of the flocks have fallen below target due to heath issues and struggling to deal with heavy grass covers during the first rotation. This week also saw the first FECPAK count return a trich count >500 in lambs. All the farms will take dung sample from lambs in the coming week.

Table 1. Lamb performance on the lowland flocks from birth to 7 weeks

	Birth Weight (kg)		Growth Rate (g/day)		7 Week Weight (kg)	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
Birth Type						
1	6.4	5.5 - 7.2	350	309 - 398	23.6	17.6 - 22.4
2	5.5	4.5 - 6.1	292	253 - 332	19.8	17.6 - 22.4
3+	4.6	3.6 - 5.1	290	247 - 344	18.9	17.0 - 22.0

*Born as triplets and reared as twins

Data from PastureBase Ireland shows that the sheep BETTER farms have on average produced over ½ a tonne more grass per hectare to mid-May compared to this time last year. Keeping grass quality in order is the main focus now as lambs begin to consume more grass. At the time of writing nearly all the flocks have made some silage with up to 50% of winter requirement made on some farms. Some of the lower stocked farms have had to keep a very close eye on their grazing days ahead in the last two months as grass growth far outstripped demand. These flocks have made more silage than the higher stocked farms and are only going with small quantities of fertilizer to maintain grass quality.

The start of June will mean the 7 week weights on the hill flocks and a first chance to see how these lambs are performing. While overall conditions at lambing were favourable prolapses on the hill flocks were reported to be much higher than previous years.



Single rearing ewes and their lambs grazing on Tomás O'Tooles farm near Clifden Co. Galway.