

BETTER Farm Update May 2023

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Lambing is concluded on the lowland flocks and post-lambing grazing rotations are in full swing with ewes and lambs grouped up into larger groups in order to reduce the number of grazing groups on the farms. Grass growth rates were good for April but grazing conditions, particularly on the heavier farms, was challenging particularly early in the month. The second round of fertilizer was applied in April, which for most was 15-20 units of N per acre in the form of protected Urea. Paddocks have also been identified for silage and where possible these are now closed up and fertilised for silage. Getting good quality silage made this month and indeed throughout the summer will be a key part of managing concentrate costs next winter.

This is also a good time to review lambing performance both of the stock but also the farm in terms of set up going forward i.e. do I need more individual pens, were there enough sheltered paddocks closed off for turn out etc. Reviewing this now while it is fresh in the mind and making a note of it will benefit the farm going forward next year. One key area will be identifying for culling poor performing ewes either at lambing or that bring in poor lambs at the 7 week weights this month. Data from previous years on the BETTER farms has shown that even the top performing flocks will have a proportion of ewes that for one reason or another fail to perform. Culling the worst performing ewes and not keeping replacements from them helps improve the overall performance of the flock over time.

Lambs were treated for Nematodirus in April in line with the DAFM forecast using a white drench (Benzimidazole; 1-BZ). Some of the flocks may need to go in and dose a second time for Nematodirus where some of the lambs are still quite young at the time of the first dose. Faecal sampling of lambs will begin this month (May) to allow for FECPAK analysis to establish when further anthelmintic treatments are required.