

BETTER Farm Update April 2020

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The flock in Co. Roscommon lambled a small proportion of the ewes in early January and these lambs were weighed at the start of March with the average daily gain to 8 weeks of 325 g/day and a live weight of 24.0kg. These lambs will be monitored carefully from late March/early April to begin drafting for sale at approximately 42kg live weight. Given the costs associated with this system it will be important to draft lambs as soon as they are fit to be drafted.

Early March provided a small bit of relief in weather conditions and allowed some of the flocks to get out with fertilizer (protected Urea @ ½ bag/acre). Ground conditions and the changeable weather meant some of the flocks have still been unable to spread fertilizer as of mid-March. Grass supplies on the farms at the start of lambing are generally good but wet weather is making it difficult to utilise the grass that is available.

In order to manage wet ground conditions the temptation for the flocks will be to spread ewes and lambs across the farm to reduce poaching and increase grass utilisation. However, long term this will be counterproductive as a large proportion of the farm will be grazed at the same time reducing the benefits of what grass growth is taking place. At the moment the plan on the farms is to increase the grazing area ewes are going too where necessary i.e. not subdivide paddocks and where possible start grazing lighter covers first. This will hopefully increase grass utilisation and reduce potential damage to land.

All of the lowland flocks started lambing in late February or March and no major issues have arisen yet but weather conditions are making it difficult to ewes and lambs out at times.