

BETTER Farm Update March 2020

Frank Campion, Animal & Grassland Research & Innovation Centre, Athenry, Co. Galway.

Hill Flocks

Nearly all of the hill flocks have pregnancy scanned at the time of writing and the results are summarised in Table 1. Scan results are variable for the flocks with high litter sizes in some of the flocks where ewes were in very good BCS at mating time as a result of spending more time than normal on the green ground last summer. Pregnancy rates are lower than desired (>94%) on some of the flocks. The low pregnancy rate is being examined on these flocks. In the case of the Kerry flock is a sub-fertile ram is suspected as being the main issue.

Table 1. Ewe scanning results from Hill BETTER farms

Farm	Dunne	Fitzgerald	Gonley	McLaughlin	O'Toole
Location	Wicklow	Kerry	Sligo	Donegal	Galway
Ewe Numbers	286	156	179	247	64
Scanned litter size	1.25	1.60	1.68	1.48	1.53
Scanned Pregnancy rate	90.6	86.5	91.6	90.3	100.0
Scanning rate	1.13	1.38	1.54	1.33	1.53

Lowland Flocks

Weather conditions have meant that at the time of writing the lowland farms are struggling to get the correct weather and ground conditions to spread nitrogen (protected Urea). Grass covers are good for most of the lowland flocks with an average cover of 505 kg DM/Ha recorded in early February, which for the flocks lambing in March is on target. Another cover will be taken prior to the start of lambing to assess what grass is available as ewes and lambs are turned out at lambing time.



Picture 1. Following scanning single ewes and in some cases twin bearing ewes are gone back to the hills on the BETTER hill farms.