

BETTER Farm update September 2019

Frank Campion, Animal & Grassland Research & Innovation Centre

The hill flocks weaned their lambs during August with some still to be weighed at the time of writing but a summary of the weights from three of the flocks is provided in Table 1. The weights vary between the flock with some flocks performing better than others and the reasons behind this will be examined in the coming weeks with the hope of making necessary changes for next year. While all the flocks aim to wean lambs at approximately 14 weeks of age this year some of the flocks were keen to wean as early as possible with reports of plentiful grass supplies on enclosed ground.

Table 1. Initial analysis of weaning weights on three of BETTER farm hill sheep flocks

Litter Size	Birth Weight (kg)	ADG (Birth to 14 Weeks; g/day)	14 Week Weight (Weaning; kg)
1	5.0	211	25.7
2	4.3	182	22.1

For the lowland flocks lamb drafting is variable but has slowed in recent weeks after starting strongly. Some of the flocks are starting to introduce targeted concentrate supplementation now to heavier male lambs in order to speed up drafting rates. All the lowland flocks are aiming to have 20 days of grass ahead of them at this point and the final applications of fertilizer are also going out in order to try and build grass covers for the autumn. While grass supplies are generally good across the farms it is important that fertilizer is applied to maintain quality and ensure grass growth does not come to a sudden halt after the deadline for fertilizer application passes.

BETTER Farm Hill Sheep Walks

September 10th – Farm of John Joe Fitzgerald, Ballydavid, Dingle, Co. Kerry.

Starting at 6pm, all welcome.

Topics to be covered include:

Outline of farm system and farm plan

Grazing management

Options for finishing and selling store lambs

Handling units

September 12th – Farm of Francis Gonley, Tormore, Glencar, Co. Sligo.

Starting at 6pm, all welcome.

Topics to be covered include:

Outline of farm system and farm plan

Grazing management

Options for finishing and selling store lambs

Flock Health