

## **BETTER Farm update December 2018**

Frank Champion, Animal & Grassland Research & Innovation Centre

At the time of writing rams are being pulled out of most of the lowland flocks with the target being for a 6-7 week lambing spread. Mating will continue on the BETTER hill sheep farms until mid-December. Ewe live weight and BCS varied across the Hill sheep BETTER farms but was generally around the target of BCS 3.0 for hill ewes. Lambs on these flocks have either been sold as stores or housed for finishing with most flocks doing a mixture of both to match the type of lambs they had at weaning and the resources on the farm.

Paddock closing rates on the lowland BETTER farms as of the end of November is variable with nearly all flocks over 50% closed. Some of this variation comes from lambing date and farm type. The key concern for some of the farms this year was to stay out of paddocks closed first as higher than normal growth rates for the time of year on some of the farms. However, this grass will be far more valuable next March than it is now. All the flocks are currently getting their silage tested and these results will be used to help inform feeding plans in the lead up to lambing.