

BETTER Farm update August 2022

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All of the lowland flocks have weaned their lambs since late June/early July and at this stage the summer grazing rotation is in full swing with lambs grazing out paddocks to approx. 6 cm and ewes following behind them. The performance to weaning across the flocks this year was for the most part behind last years. Reasons for this vary somewhat between flocks but challenges managing grass quality at times between the 7 week weights and weaning is one key reason behind this on some of the farms. The weaning and weights and ADG for the group are presented in Table 1. A key performance metric the flocks are looking at apart from average performance is the proportion of lambs that are either less than 25kg, 25-30kg, 30-35kg and 35kg+. While all flocks will have lambs that are less than 25kg or 25-30kg it's the proportion of these that's important and will have influence management decisions for finishing lambs with the higher performing flocks have >50% of lambs over 30kg at weaning. Where flocks are behind target with their lamb weights some have established 'finishing groups' where lambs >35kg live weight are being managed as a separate group and receiving 300-500g of concentrates/head/day. This will speed up the drafting rate while also controlling costs by only targeting concentrates at lambs for a short period prior to finishing while the lighter lambs are allowed to grow further on grass.

Table 1. Lamb performance from the Teagasc BETTER lowland sheep flocks from birth to 14 weeks (weaning).

Birth Type	Growth Rate (g/day)		14 Week Weight (kg)	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
1	295	230-353	35.1	28.3-41.4
2	255	202-285	30.1	24.8-33.3
3+	260	245-279	30.4	28.4-32.5