

## BETTER Farm update January 2021

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Nearly all the ewes from the mid-season flocks will be housed during December/early January. Ewes that have been housed will remain on an all silage diet until 6- 8 weeks pre-lambing before concentrates are introduced. The timing of introducing concentrates will depend on lambing date, scanned litter size and the quality of the available silage. Pregnancy scanning will take place on the lowland flocks during late December/January and following scanning ewes will be divided by litter size and raddle colours (lambing date) so that winter feeding plans can be put into action for the various groups. The hill flocks are finished mating at this stage and ewes are gone back to the hill until scanning in February.

Results from silage analysis from the farms is being completed at time of writing and the results to date are summarised in Table 1. While still only initial analysis, as more results are due in, dry matter percentage to be ahead of last year by about 3% possibly as a result of sime silage being made in very dry conditions in the early summer last year. However, aside from this the figures are relatively similar to 2019 with most flocks having some silage that is 70 DMD plus available for late pregnancy feeding. The forage analysis will be a key part of developing the feeding plan for the flocks in run up to lambing. Different batches of silage bales were marked during the summer so the best quality silage could be identified for feeding in the final 6-8 weeks pre-lambing.

**Table 1.** Results to date from silage quality tests on baled silage on the BETTER sheep farms

	2020 Mean	Min	Max	2019 Mean	Diff
DM (%)	38.5	21.4	61.9	35.8	2.7
PH	4.6	3.9	4.9	4.5	0.1
NH3	4.3	1.2	8.6	5.1	-0.7
Protein (% DM)	13.0	10.4	15.6	12.4	0.6
ME (Mj/kg DM)	10.1	9.3	11	10.0	0.1
DMD (% DM)	70.3	65	75.8	70.1	0.2