

BETTER Farm update January 2016

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Nearly all the ewes from the mid-season flocks were housed during December unless there was access to forage crops or stubble ground. Where ewes have been put out to stubble ground they are being offered silage bales ad-lib in ring feeders. Ewes that have been housed will remain on an all silage diet until early to mid-January before concentrates are introduced. The timing of introducing concentrates will depend on lambing date, scanned litter size and the quality of the available silage. The first of the mid-season lambing ewes on Nicholson's farm in Kilkenny were scanned in mid-December and the scan results were positive. The remaining ewes on this farm and the rest of the mid-season flocks will be scanned in late December/early January and there will be an update on this for the next newsletter. Where ewe lambs were joined later these will be scanned at later date also.

Lambing on the early lambing flock in Co. Wexford is due to commence shortly after Christmas. The ewes were housed during the second week of December and divided at housing by scanned litter size. Prior to housing these ewes were in-situ grazing a forage crop with silage and concentrate supplementation. Once housed concentrate feeding levels were adjusted according to scanned litter size.

Rams were removed from all hill flocks in December and the ewes returned to the hill where possible. Some ewes were held back from the hill in some of the flocks due to poor body condition score or health issues. Ewes will be gathered again from late January onwards in time for pregnancy scanning in all the hill flocks.

In January all of the farmers in the programme with their advisors will complete their E-profit monitor for 2016. By completing the profit monitors it provides a means to critically assess the performance of the farm business and in the case of new flock allow us to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the systems and where improvement is needed. For the existing farms it provides an opportunity to scrutinize the impact the changes made to the farming system have had on profitability of the farm.