

BETTER Farm Update July 2021

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Grass growth rates increased significantly on the lowland BETTER sheep farms towards the end of May and into June which has allowed all flocks to cut silage also also led to further paddocks being dropped out of the grazing rotation for silage in order to maintain control over grass quality and supplies in front of the flock. Grass growth rates for the group as of mid-June was 68kg DM/Ha with demand averaging 40 kg DM/Ha meaning a careful eye will have to be kept on grass across the farms to ensure grass quality is maintained in the run up weaning and beyond. Weaning will be taking place in late June/early July at which point lambs will be given preferential access to grass grazing to 5.5-6cm with the ewes, once dried off, following behind them to clean out paddocks to 4cm.

Table 1. Lamb performance from four of the Teagasc BETTER hill sheep flocks from birth to 7 weeks.

Birth Type	Birth Weight (kg)		7 Week Weight (kg)		Growth Rate (g/day)	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
1	4.4	4.0-5.0	17.6	16.1-18.7	269	233 - 300
2	3.8	3.4-4.2	14.8	12.6 - 17.6	222	180 – 278

As presented in Table 1. the hill flocks in the programme carried out 7 week weights in June with the mean performance of the lambs from the flocks weighed at time of writing presented in Table 1. Overall lamb performance is behind where it was at this time in 2020 with growth rates for 2021 single lambs averaging 269g/day compared to over 280g/day for 2020. Single rearing ewes and lambs and in some cases strong twin rearing ewes and lambs will be put back to the hill from 5 to 7 weeks of age despite the temptation to keep ewes and lambs in with string grass growth rates being reported for the 'green' ground.