

BETTER Farm Update July 2022

Frank Campion, Animal & Grassland Research & Innovation Centre, Athenry, Co. Galway.

Weaning of lambs on the lowland flocks is under way with most of the flocks hoping to have weaned by early July with lambs at approximately 14 weeks of age. Once weaned, lambs will graze to a residual of 5.5-6cm on grazing paddocks with the dry ewes used to remove the remainder down to a residual of 4cm. Silage has been made by all the flocks at this stage despite weather conditions making it somewhat challenging for some of the flocks in early June, particularly in the west and north-west. Silage stocks were reassessed after the first cuts to determine how much more silage is needed from second cuts and any surplus paddocks that are taken out. At the time of writing dosing for *Trichostrongylus* has begun on some of the farms on the result of FECPAK results. Throughout the summer FECPAK results will be used to determine when lambs require worm dosing.

At weaning the flocks will carefully assess the ewes and any cull ewes marked during the year will be sold to reduce grazing demand. The flocks will also assess the performance of the flock to weaning and identify ewes that performed below par and where there are no obvious mitigating reasons these ewes will also be considered for culling to remove "passengers" from the system. Even for the best performing flocks there is the opportunity to improve the performance potential of their flock by culling ewes responsible for the poorest performing lambs. For the hill flocks now is also a good time to start marking poor performing ewes as lambs begin to rely more on grass than ewes milk the poorer performing lambs at this point is often an indicator of poor milk supply from the ewe.