

BETTER Farm Update

By Ciaran Lynch

Grass

Grass growth on the farms has been extremely variable during April with growth rates from 10 to 45 kg/DM/ha being recorded on the farms in the same week in late April. Overall grass growth on the farms was on par with last year – see Figure 1. Farm Covers ranged from 200 to 760 Kg/DM/Ha with up to 40 kg/DM/ha on the farms by the end of April. Grass demand will continue to increase on the farms. Currently the farms have between 30 to 70 units on N applied depending on stocking rate (P & K also spread) with a number targeting a 3rd application in early May to boost grass supplies.

Grazing

The grazing groups have been formed on the farms with a number of farms after completing their 2nd rotation, for the main batches these will vary from 50 to 250 ewes depending on flock size. Temporary divisions have been re-erected in larger paddocks to reduce the residency period and maximise performance, the target for the farms is to graze out paddocks in 3 to 4 days.

Early lamb

Lamb performance in the two early lamb systems in the programme was lower up to the beginning of March, however once weaned performance picked up at grass during the latter half of March into April. Drafting is slower than previous seasons for the two early lamb systems with less than 20% drafted by mid-April. Lambs kill-out was 48% for the first two drafts.

Health

All flocks treated for Nematodirus in late April, Early lambs also received an altheminthic treatment for Strongyles. The farmers will begin to monitor worm burden from mid-May onward every two weeks. A number of the flocks will also administer a clostridal and/or pasturella vaccine to lambs during May, as they have encountered issues in previous seasons as maternal passive immunity declines.

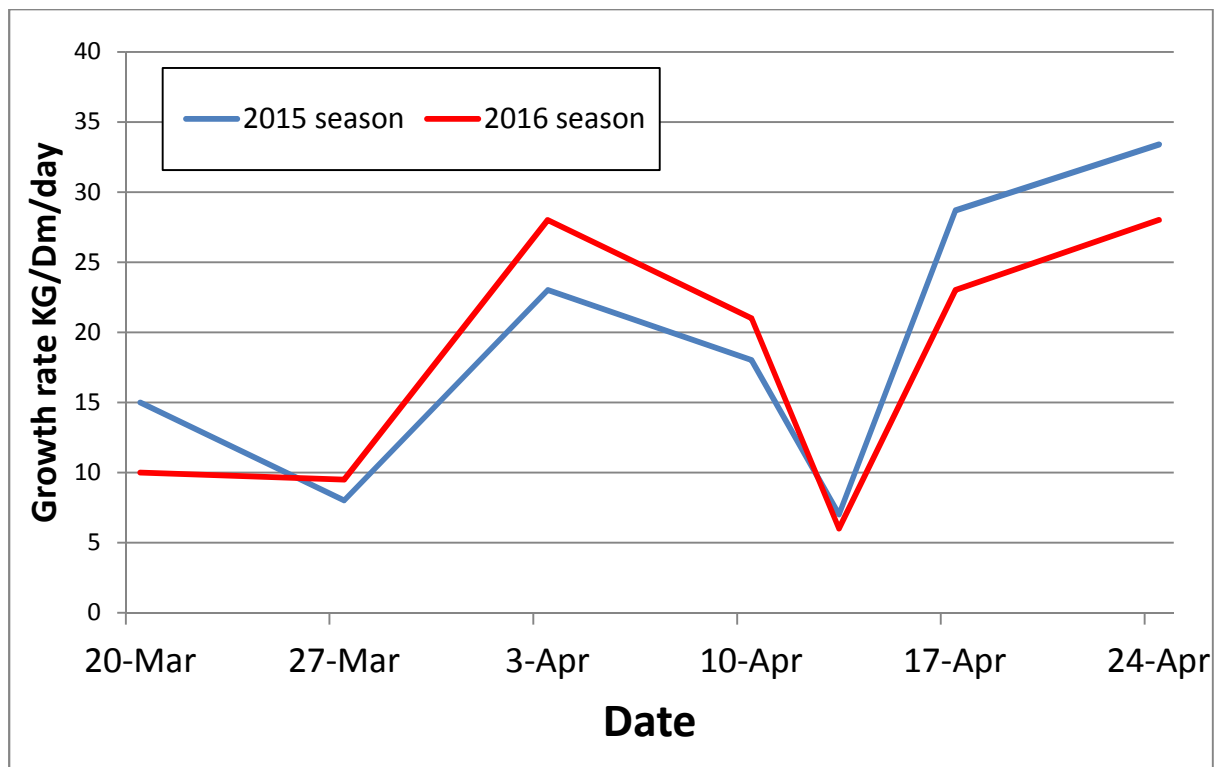


Figure 1. Grass growth rates on the BETTER Farms during 2015 & 2016