

BETTER Farm Update February 2017

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Early Lambing Flock

Lambing on the early lambing flock in Co. Wexford commenced on the 23rd of December. As all ewes were synchronised in two separate batches prior to ram introduction lambing was compact. Lambs were weighed at birth and will be weighed again at weaning when they are approximately 8 weeks of age. The relatively mild weather during late December and early January made it easy to get ewes and lambs out to grass quickly. Paddocks for the early lambing flock had been closed up in rotation from October onwards. At present the ewes are receiving 0.5 kg of meal at and creep feed was introduced to the lambs two weeks after turnout.

Mid-season Flocks Scan Results

The mid-season flocks have been busy scanning during January and a summary of the results are presented in Table 1. Overall the scanned litter size is back by approximately 0.1 across the flocks this year despite improvements in some individual flocks. Ewes have now been penned by litter size and where possible divided by raddle marks within litter size. Ewe nutrition is the key management concern for the farmers presently as meal feeding programs commence. Yearling ewes and the hill flocks will scan over the coming weeks and there will be an update in the next newsletter.

Table 1. Mature ewe scanning results from lowland BETTER farms

| Farm | O'Leary | McLaughlin | Kearney | Curley | O'Connell | Doyle | Prendergast | Dunne |
|------------------------|---------|------------|---------|-----------|-----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Location | Kerry | Donegal | Louth | Roscommon | Leitrim | Wexford | Mayo | Wicklow |
| Scanned litter size | 2.15 | 1.95 | 2.08 | 2.07 | 2.06 | 1.89 | 1.87 | 1.89 |
| Scanned pregnancy rate | 97.1 | 97.1 | 96.4 | 98.6 | 95.0 | 98.8 | 97.4 | 98.7 |
| Scanning rate | 2.09 | 1.89 | 2.01 | 2.05 | 1.96 | 1.87 | 1.82 | 1.86 |

First Round of Fertilizer

All the farms are planning on applying the first round of fertilizer during February once soil temperatures and ground conditions allow. The aim is to apply nitrogen at this stage to allow the fertilizer to be in place when grass growth rates begin to rise. Opening covers will also be taken across the farms in February in order to assess what grass is in place prior to lambing commencing.