

Sheep Research Demonstration Farm, Athenry

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Lambs were weaned on June 20th at approximately 14 weeks of age (100 days). Preliminary analysis suggests an average weaning rate of 1.50 lambs/ewe for the medium prolific groups and 1.68 lambs/ewe for the high prolific groups. Lamb performance from birth to weaning and weaning weights is presented in Table 1. We were unable to fully compensate for the reduced performance earlier in the spring and as a result overall birth to weaning growth rates are down between 5 and 10g/day. Current lamb growth rates have been in the region of 190 – 230g/day. Grass growth rates have averaged 68kg/DM/ha for June. The main silage cut was completed the last week of May in ideal conditions. After a 24 wilt we averaged 7.5 bales/ac with grass at 30% DM. We also removed more strong paddocks and are now close to or have already exceeded the winter feed requirements for each of the groups based on a 100 day winter with a silage allowance of 1.3kg DM/ewe/day. While the very high grass growth rates were very welcome it did make it harder to maintain leafy swards particularly around early June when the grass plant was naturally attempting to produce seed heads. As a result we also completed one round of topping on paddocks that were not cut for bales to remove stemmy material and ensure quality regrowth for weaned lambs.

Table 1. Lamb performance (birth to weaning @14 weeks)

Age	10 ewes/ha	12 ewes/ha	14 ewes/ha	Medium Prolificacy	High Prolificacy
0-14 weeks (g/day)	257 (268)	257 (263)	240 (243)	250 (261)	251 (255)
Wt (kg) @ 14 weeks	29.6 (32.0)	29.5 (31.5)	27.0 (29.6)	28.5 (31.5)	28.9 (30.5)

Values in brackets = 2013 to 2015 average