

Sheep Research Demonstration Farm, Athenry

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Drafting of lambs continues. On a stocking rate basis, 37% of lambs have been drafted from low stocking rate (10 ewes/ha) groups with 25% from the medium (12 ewes/ha) and 19% from high stocking rate (14 ewes/ha) groups up to mid-August. Prolificacy levels are not having a big effect with even numbers of lambs drafted from each group so far (~27%). Average liveweight for lambs drafted to date (August 19th) was 44.4 kg with average carcase weight 19.6 kg. This represents an average kill out percentage of 44%. Kill out over the last month has been quite variable with a kill out percentages as low as 42% recorded. Lamb growth rates for the past month have been in the region of 188 to 167g/day. Attention is starting to turn to preparing the flocks for mating. A final check of ewes will be completed in mid August and replacements added to the groups once any remaining culls are removed. Rams and ewes are being footbathed at regular intervals and any problem cases being dealt with. Grass growth rates have remained very strong averaging 70-80 kg DM/ha/day. This allowed us to take out a block for reseeding in early August. We will have to remove a few more strong paddocks for bales as soon as the weather allows and we will then start building covers for the autumn. A final application of between 17 to 25 kg N/ha (depending on stocking rate) will be applied in mid September. Maintenance dressings of K are also being applied based on soil test results.