



Sheep Open Day

July 16<sup>th</sup> 2015

Farm of Tomas O'Leary, Listry,

Co. Kerry



**STAP Approved National Event**

### **Introduction**

The Focus of today's Openday will be on key technologies that can improve the productivity and profitability of the sheep enterprise. The focus on Tomas farm over the past number of years has been to develop a highly Output sheep and beef system. Tomas main objective is to implement farming system that is capable of generating an overall gross margin of €1000 per hectare for the farm. To achieve this he has focused on improving grassland management, soil fertility, farm layout. In addition animal performance is monitored closely on the farm and this information is then used to make appropriate management decisions. For today's event there are 5 stands in total. Each will provide an opportunity to engage with Tomas and the various speakers on a variety of topics. This is a national qualifying event for the Sheep Technology Adoption Programme (STAP) and we would encourage participants to ensure they register at the start of the event. Registration is on site.

### **Farm Walk Layout:**

#### **Registration**

**Stand 1: Introduction:** Tomas O'Leary (host farmer) Kevin O'Sullivan & Ciaran Lynch

**Stand 2: Breeding:** Michael Diskin

**Stand 3: Beef system:** James Keane

**Stand 4: Lamb performance and grassland management:** Frank Hynes

**Stand 5: Soil Fertility & Reseeding:** Michael Gottstein



## **Farm Details**

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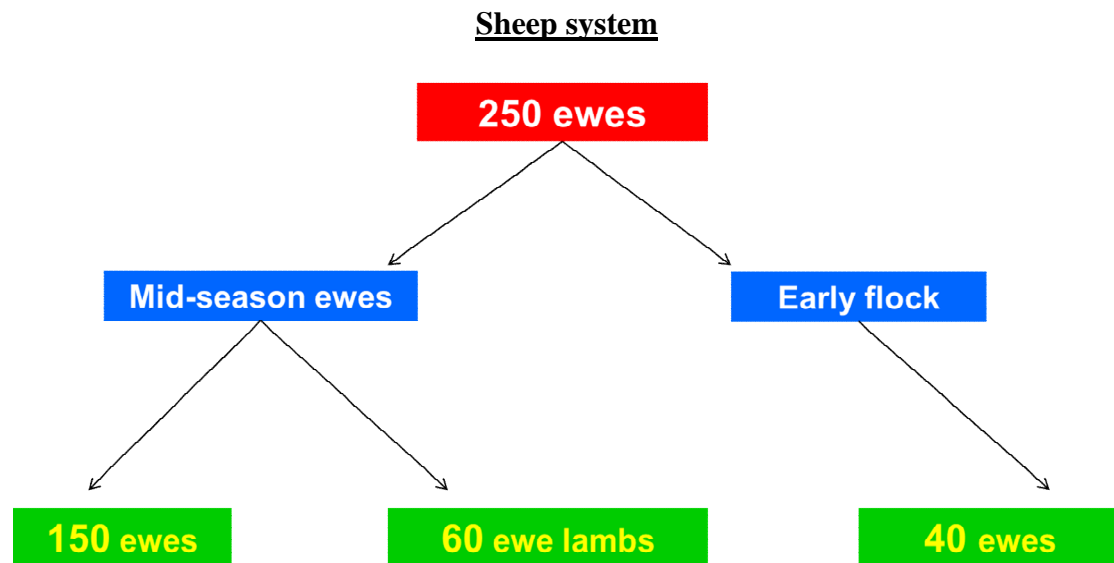
- 44.9 adjusted ha
- 2 main Blocks (see maps)
- Readrinagh, Headford (home farm)
  - 14.8 ha adj. mainly used for silage, heavy soil
- Rosnacarton, Beaufort
  - 30.1 ha adj. main grazing farm
- Mixed grazed beef and sheep farm
  - 220 breeding ewes (incl replacements)
  - 80 beef cattle (70 heifers + 10 bullocks)
- Farm achieving an average of €427 gross margin (cattle & sheep) per hectare during the past 5 years
- Sheep system yielding a gross margin of €820 per hectare in 2015

### **Farm Plan**

#### **Target to achieve a farm gross margin of €1000 per hectare**

- Increase farm stocking rate
- Increase ewe numbers (+ 30 ewes)
- Change of beef system (finishing heifers)
- Improve grassland management
  - Address soil fertility issues (Lime and chemical P & K)
  - Increase number of grazing divisions (five per grazing group)
  - Implement reseeding programme (10% per year)
  - Use grass budgeting to match supply and demand (weekly grass measurement)
- Improve animal performance – from grass

By making changes to the areas outlined it is envisaged that the farm will reach this target in 2015.



**Ewe breed:** Belclare X Suffolk Cross

**Ram Breeds:** Belclare, Suffolk & Charollais – Texel also used in early lamb flock

### **System management**

#### **Early flock:**

- Sponged + PMSG in early august
  - Single sire mated – group mating on repeat cycle
  - Suffolk & Texel rams used
  - Early lamb flock 4<sup>th</sup> January (1 repeat allowed)
  - Kept indoors for 4 weeks
    - Ewes supplemented with 1.5 kg conc.
    - Lambs access to creep
  - Turnout 8<sup>th</sup> Feb ewes receiving 0.75 kg conc.
  - No ewe supplementation thereafter
  - Lambs supplemented with creep up to 0.75 kg conc. per day
- All lambs produced sold

#### **Mid- Season flock**

- Lambed 23<sup>rd</sup> February
- Replacements produced from this group
- Belclare, Suffolk and Charolais rams used

- No supplementation offered during main part of grazing season
- Managed in 2 groups
- Light lambs supplemented in back end of season

### Yearlings

- Lambed 15<sup>th</sup> March
- Charollais rams used
- Managed as separate group
- Lambs supplemented with 0.15kg/day conc.

### Artificially reared lambs

- Lamb feeder used 'EWE 2'
- Target 12.5 – 13.5 kg milk powder per lamb
- Lambs split on basis of age
- Weaned once consuming 250g/day conc. for 3 consecutive days (approx. 5 to 7 weeks)
- Supplementation continued until mid-June then removed

### Winter management:

- Round baled silage produced
- Hay purchased for ewes – hope to produce feed for sheep on farm from now on.
- Slatted and straw bedded accommodation.

**Table 1.** Flock Productivity in 2015 season

	Early lamb	Mid-season	Yearling ewes
No of ewes joined	40	133	53
Scanned litter size	2.06	2.11	1.61
Scanned pregnancy rate	90.0	96.2	92.5
Scanning rate	1.85	2.03	1.49
<b>Lambs reared per ewe joined</b>	<b>1.78</b>	<b>1.84</b>	<b>1.22</b>

**Table 2.** Lamb Performance in 2015 season

Lamb weaning weight (kg)			
Birth type	Early lamb	Mid-season	Yearlings
Single	40.0	37.8	37.6
Twin	38.6	32.6	30.1
Triplet	36.2	30.1	30.6

## Beef system

Previously operated suckler to beef system

- December calved 100% Ai
- Steers finished at 22 mth (housed)
- Heifers finished at 20 mth (at grass)

Changed system in 2014

- Aim to finish 80+ heifers per year
- Purchased September/autumn
- Finished at 20 months at grass

### System Change

- Focused on a more profitable system
- Better grass utilisation
- Fewer grazing groups
- Shorter housing period
- Capable of sustaining higher stocking rate

Costing Heifers Purchased Autumn 2014			
Costs	€/hd	Estimated Sales	€/hd
Purchase 341kgs	760		
<u>Winter 2014</u>			
Silage	145		
Concentrates	63		
<u>Summer 2015</u>			
Grass	115		
VET	16		
Conc at grass	35		
Misc	20	600kgs @ 54% KO =	
Total	394	325kg @ 4.55c/kg	1479
Include Purchase	1154	Gross Margin/hd	325

Gross Margin 2015 = 80 cattle x €325 = €26000

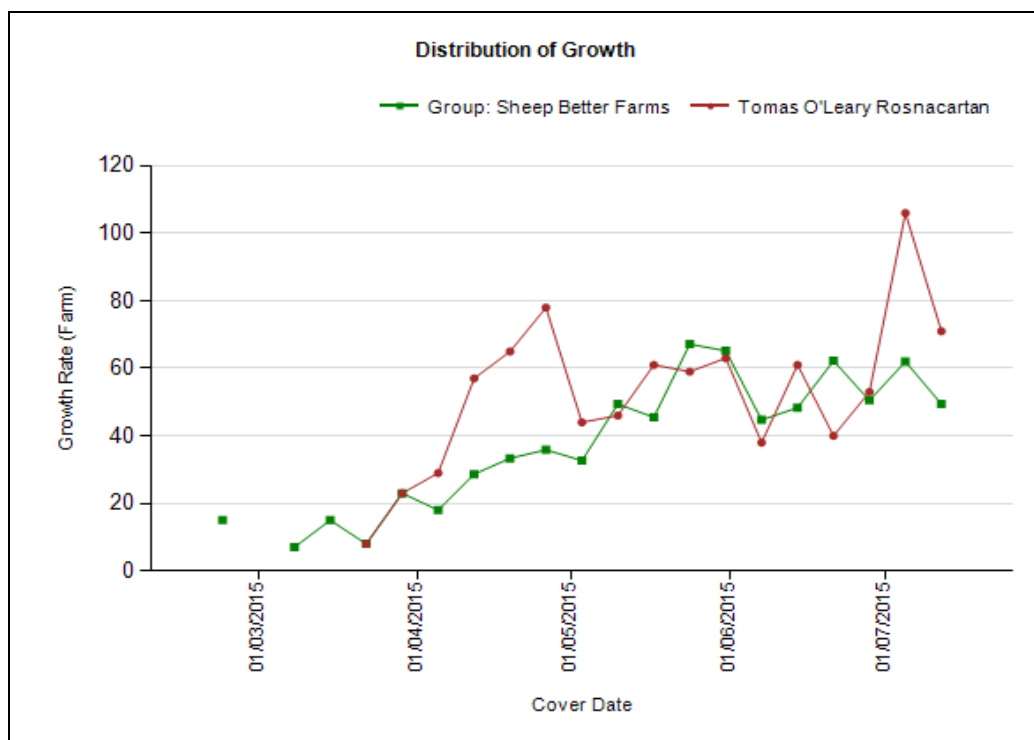
Allocating 27 ha to cattle = €963/ha

## **Grassland management**

- Rotational grazing system with a mix of cattle and sheep in each group
- Fertilizer plan drawn up based on soil results and stocking rate requirements
- Pasturebase programme used to budget grass supplies
- Increased the number of permanent divisions
- Temporary fencing used during grazing season

## **Reseeding protocol**

- Spray off with roundup
- Graze 10 days later
- Apply lime 2t/ac
- Heavy disc followed by one-pass
- Grass seed mix- 14 kg/ac Top 5 Extend
  - 3kg Abergain (T)
  - 3kg Aberchoice
  - 3 kg Dunluce (T)
  - 3 kg Drumbo
  - 0.5 kg Coated medium white clover
- Apply 200kg 10:10:20 per acre at sowing
- Apply 100 kg 20:4:0 post emergence (5 to 6 weeks)
- Post emergence spray with Legumex and Triad 6 to 8 weeks
- Split into 3 divisions for grazing



**Figure 1.** Grass Growth rate this season

— Farm has yielded over 5000kg/Dm/ha this year to date



**Figure 2.** Field divisions on Rosnacartan farm