

Sheep Research Demonstration Farm, Athenry

Philip Creighton, Animal and Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Teagasc Athenry, Co Galway.

Lambing commenced on February 28th. At time of writing (March 20th), Progress has been good with just 34 ewes left to lamb (9%). Lamb mortality is running at approximately 7% on average. Lamb birth weights have improved on last year ranging from 6.1kg for singles, 4.8kg for twins and 4.2kg for triplets. Freshly lambed ewes and lambs were spending 24-36 hrs inside in individual penning and were then turned out to grass during the first week but due to changeable weather conditions this period lengthened during the second and third weeks when ewes and lambs had to be retained indoors for an extra day or two in group pens. Urea was applied to 60% of the grazing area at a rate of 28 kg/ha on February 20th but due to the prolonged cold spell we have not had a huge response as of yet. We have applied 1 bag of CAN per acre on the remaining area and any paddocks already grazed this week. Grass growth has been poor with growth rates of 5-15 kg DM/ha/day being recorded. Pre grazing covers are adequate for now at approximately 5-6cm (~1000kg DM/ha). These swards are being grazed down to 3.5cm. We will monitor grass growth and response to nitrogen over the next week before making decisions on the need to supplement.