

Sheep Research Demonstration Farm, Athenry

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Lambs were weaned on the 22nd of June at an average age of 14 weeks. Lamb growth rates from birth to weaning averaged between 240-263g/day with a weaning weight range between 27 -30 kg. While these figures are slightly behind target, it is worth bearing in mind that all ewes in the flocks this year were hoggets lambing down for the first time. Weather conditions and grass growth has also been quiet challenging.

Grass growth rates in June improved after the prolonged cool weather conditions of May with growth rates of 70-100 kg DM/ha/day recorded for much of the month. This rapid increase in growth rates presented its own challenges with surpluses removed as bales and some topping employed to maintain grass quality. The surplus bales removed from the systems have now resulted in 100% of the winter feed requirements being met for the high stocking rate groups with surplus silage now saved in both the medium and low stocking rate groups. Grass growth rate is currently 40-50kg DM/ha/day sufficient to meet flock demands. Weaned lambs are grazing the best available swards (aftergrass and paddocks that were topped) with pre grazing covers of ~1000kg DM/ha or ~7cm. The ewes are being used to clean out paddocks after the lambs. Lambs were not dosed at weaning as faecal egg counts indicated a low worm challenge. The situation will be monitored and action taken once worm levels rise.

