

## **Sheep Research Demonstration Farm, Athenry**

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

Grass growth like the rest of the country has been effected by the prolonged cool weather conditions of May with growth rates of 30~40 kg DM/ha/day recorded for much of the month. With growth rate consistently below demand, the paddocks that had been closed for silage were removed to bring all available land back into the farmlets. This silage was harvested as round bale silage following a 36 hr wilt on May 2<sup>nd</sup> at 30% dry matter. Winter feed reserves for the 3 stocking rates now stand at close to 100% for the low stocking rate groups, 65% for the medium and 50% for the high. The lift in temperatures of late has improved the situation to lift growth rates to ~60kg DM/ha/day which is close to demand. Nitrogen application for year to date stands at 75kg N/ha for each of the farmlets.

Lamb performance is continually being monitored with live weights measured at weeks 5 and 9. On average lamb growth rate from birth to five weeks was 260g/day but this improved during the 5-9 week period to average 290g/day. The quality of the swards around the timing of the 5 week weight was poor (very strong) as described in last months update but as we can see performance improved greatly once sheep were moved to leafier lower mass swards as they became available. Up to date results and tours of the farm will be taking place as part of Sheep 2012 to be held here in Athenry on June 30<sup>th</sup>.