

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

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Mating commenced on October 5<sup>th</sup>. By the end of the first cycle, approximately 70-75% of ewes had been served. One mature ram is running with each group of sixty ewes, with rams being rotated around the groups every 3-4 days to minimise fertility issues and to remove the effect of ram on any individual group. Raddle colour is also being changed weekly to aid management. Up to October 16<sup>th</sup> approximately 92% of the lambs in the low stocking rate groups, 93% of lambs in the medium stocking rate groups and 76.5% of lambs in the high stocking rate groups had been drafted. When compared on prolificacy, the breakdown of lambs remaining on the farm is 9% from the medium prolificacy groups and 17% from the high prolificacy groups. Average lamb growth rates from weaning to October 1st have been between 180-190g/day on a grass only diet. Grass growth rates throughout the autumn have been lower than normal dropping as low as 15 kg DM/day in mid October and as a result it has been hard to build a reserve of grass for the ewes. With this mind the decision was taken to house any remaining lambs from the systems on October 16<sup>th</sup>. Average weight of these remaining lambs is ~39kg. They have been introduced to a silage and meal diet building from 0.2 to 0.6kg at present and the plan is to build close to ad lib meals. This will allow grass reserves to be maintained for as long as possible for the ewes which must now take priority. Closing of paddocks for next spring will commence in early November to ensure an adequate build up of grass for next spring.

