

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

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

Mating commenced on October 4<sup>th</sup>. By the end of the first cycle, approximately 80-85% of ewes had been served. Ewe body condition going to the ram ranged from 3.3 (high Stocking rate) to 3.5 (low stocking rate). 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. Three ram lambs are also rotating around the groups to ease the workload during the busy first cycle. Raddle colour is being changed weekly to aid management. Up to October 21<sup>st</sup> approximately 81% of the lambs in the low stocking rate groups, 73% of lambs in the medium stocking rate groups and 58% of lambs in the high stocking rate groups had been drafted. Average lamb growth rates at present are in the region of 140-160g/day on a grass only diet with a liveweight range of 41-43kg so drafting percentages should rise over the coming weeks. Grass growth rates have continued strong into October ranging from 40-60kg DM/ha/day allowing covers to build. Currently we have 25-50 days grass ahead of groups so lambs are not being supplemented. Any change in management will be dictated by grass budget. Closing of paddocks for next spring will commence in early November to ensure an adequate build up of grass for next spring.