

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

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

As we move into October the focus has moved to the beginning of another sheep year. Ewes and rams are currently being prepared for mating with ram turnout date set for the 5<sup>th</sup> of October, targeting a lambing start date of March 1<sup>st</sup>. Ewes have been given access to higher quantities of grass in the run up to mating for flushing. Regular footbathing of both rams and ewes has also taken place to ensure no problems occur during mating. Lamb performance has been variable which can probably be linked to the weather conditions. In general performance has been in the region of 170-180g/day. Drafting of lambs continues. Up to September 20<sup>th</sup> approximately 70% of the lambs in the low stocking rate groups and 50% of lambs in the medium and high stocking rate groups had been drafted. About 10% more lambs have been drafted from medium prolific groups compared to high prolific groups. Minimum liveweight for drafting has increased to 44kg with carcass weights averaging ~19.5kg. Grass growth rates in September ranged from 40-55kg DM/ha/day. All paddocks received their final application of nitrogen in mid September at a rate of 1 bag/CAN/ac. Grass supply is building with about 40days grass ahead in the low stocking rate groups reducing to 25-30 days for the medium and high groups.