

## Sheep Research Demonstration Farm, Athenry

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

Despite challenging weather conditions grass growth has been steady here averaging 75kg DM/ha/day for the month of May. As mentioned in last month's report 20% of each farmlet was closed for silage in mid/late April and we have skipped over a further 20% during May. It is hoped (weather permitting) that we will cut silage next week (last week of May). The strongest paddocks will have a cover of approx. 5000kg DM/ha and the lightest 2500kg DM/ha. This should provide high quality silage for next winter while also bringing leafy aftergrass back into the system for weaned lambs in a few weeks' time. All paddocks are being subdivided into two sections for grazing. Sheep are spending 3-4 days in each section. Current post grazing heights are ranging between 3.5 to 4.5cm. Lamb performance for the periods 0-5 weeks and 0-10 weeks is presented in table 1 below. Performance in the 0-5 week period was disappointing however weather conditions are likely to have played their part. Current lamb performance is in the region of 285g/day (14 ewes/ha) to 310g/day (10 ewes/ha). Lambs received a dose for Nematodirus in early May based on the Department of Agriculture forecast. We also had a number of lambs displaying signs of coccidia infection so all lambs received a treatment/preventative dose for this also. Based on soil, herbage and blood mineral analysis, this year in addition to supplementing the lambs with cobalt we are also supplementing with selenium and copper.

**Table 1. Lamb performance (growth rate g/day)**

Age	10 ewes/ha	12 ewes/ha	14 ewes/ha	Medium Prolificacy	High Prolificacy
0-5 weeks	288	278	279	282	270
0-10 weeks	278	290	271	282	271