

Sheep Research Demonstration Farm, Athenry

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

Rams were turned out to ewes on October 10th. Progress has been good with 40-50% of ewes served in each group by the end of the first week. Ewe body condition going to the ram ranged from 3.4 (high Stocking rate) to 3.6 (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 17st approximately 82% of the lambs in the low stocking rate groups, 74% of lambs in the medium stocking rate groups and 62% of lambs in the high stocking rate groups had been drafted. Lambs are currently being drafted at 46kg liveweight and are achieving a 43% kill-out. Average lamb growth rates at present are in the region of 150g/day on a grass only diet with a liveweight range of 40-43kg so drafting percentages should rise over the coming weeks. Grass growth rates have reduced to around 30-40kg DM/ha/day during October. Currently we have 20-45 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 late October to ensure an adequate build up of grass for next spring.