

Sheep Research Demonstration Farm, Athenry

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

Ewes were scanned in early January. Preliminary analysis shows a scan rate of 1.69 in the medium prolific flocks with the high prolific groups averaging 1.97. Ewes are in good body condition ranging between 3.4 BCS in 10 ewes/ha groups to 3.2 BCS in the 14 ewe/aha groups. The 10 ewe/ha groups were housed at Christmas due to poor grass utilisation levels achieved as discussed in last month's update. Ewes are now being offered grass silage (72 DMD) and have been grouped according to scanned litter size and lambing date as predicted by raddle colour which was changed weekly during mating and will be offered concentrates as shown in Table 1. Over winter grass growth rates have been in the region of 7-8kg DM/ha/day and so grass covers on the first paddocks closed are now in the region of ~800-900kg DM/ha (6-7cm). Nitrogen in the form of urea will be blanket spread at a rate of 23 units/ac (half bag) once soil temperatures are above 6-7 degrees in early to mid February to help boost grass covers prior to turnout in March. We may skip the paddocks with the heaviest covers and apply N in early march or after the first grazing. The pre lambing clostridia booster will be administered in mid-February ahead of lambing start date of March 4th.

Table 1. Concentrates per ewe per day prior to lambing (kg/ewe/day)

	Weeks pre lambing				Total (kg)
	7	6-5	4-3	2-1	
	Concentrates (kg/ewe/day)				
Singles	-	0.1	0.3	0.6	15
Twins	-	0.35	0.55	0.8	24
Triplets	0.2	0.35	0.65	1.0	30