James Fitzgerald, Teagasc Walsh Fellow, Mayo

Micheál and Jonathan Conway

Teagasc Business and Technology drystock advisor, Westport.

How Tyfon can reduce mealfed to finishing lambs

Micheál and his son Jonathan run a flock of 491 purebred Mayoblackface ewes and 300 crossbred ewes, retaining replacements and finishing all lambs, with carcass weights averaging 38kg. The farm selects the best-quality ram ewes and 50 crossbred ewes, retaining the thick-fleeced, high-quality, high-meat lambs in good condition, slaughter and improving kill-out percentage, resulting in higher carcass weights than when finishing lambs on grass alone.

“Before grazing the Tyfon, all lambs were dosed for worms, given a mineral bullet and wool shorn off the tail,” says Micheál. “This ensures lambs stay clean and thrive better. On 3 August, two months after sowing, we put 40 spring-born lambs weighing on average 36kg on to the two acres of Tyfon.”

Keep running working properly

The lambs were given access to a runback of permanent pasture, to keep their rumen working properly while on the brassica-based diet. “On 10 September, these lambs were sent for slaughter and had an average carcass weight of 2.1kg,” says Micheál. The average liveweight of these lambs at slaughter was 47.5kg. Therefore, the lambs put on 11.3kg of weight on the space of 38 days on the Tyfon, which is an average daily gain of 300g.

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The following spring when the Tyfon has been grazed out and is no longer present in the sward.

“Tyfon can deliver weight gains of up to 300g/day for finishing lambs at a time of year when thrice-off grass alone is reduced to around 150g/day. Good grazing management is critical to achieve these gains.

Brassicas should form no more than 70% of the diet - with 30%, coming from a fibre source such as silage, straw, hay or a runback on to permanent pasture.

There are a number of companies supplying Tyfon in Ireland.

Main points on Tyfon

• Time the sowing date to coincide with weaning, the crop needs 60 days to get ready.
• Match stocking rate to amount sown to ensure you can finish a group without running out of Tyfon or letting it go overgrown.
• Lambs need to be a minimum of 34kg going into the crop; smaller lambs do not thrive as well and the heavier lambs will finish on it.
• All lambs need a good-quality mineral and vitamin mix and a mineral salt to focus on a product high in iodine.
• A post-emergence spray in May or June may be used on the reseed to control weeds, as this will kill the Tyfon. However, the reseed can be sprayed the following spring when the Tyfon has been grazed out and is no longer present in the sward.

Christmas. On the final grazing, the bulk of the top of the plant will be eaten as well as the leaves. Tyfon will not recover once the bulb is eaten and as the sward will return to grass and clover.”

James Fitzgerald (left) with Tom Staunton.

Tom Staunton

Farms in Tourmakeady and has a flock of 320 Lanark and 30 pedigree Blue Leicester ewes. Blue Leicester rams are crossed with the Lanark flock to produce mules. The mule ewes are sold through the Mayo Mule and Greyface group, while white lambs are brought to finish on the farm. The best-quality purebred Blue Leicester and Lanark ram lambs are selected for breeding and are sold either as lambs or as yearlings.

Two acres of Tyfon and grass were sown in late May. When it came time to graze the crop in late July, Tom put 26 male wether lambs into the crop and allowed access to a field of aftergrass next to the field of Tyfon. The lambs spent a fortnight on the Tyfon and had access to the aftergrass for the full duration. “I was very impressed with the way the lambs fleshed out in a short period while on the Tyfon,” says Tom. “They also seemed to be very healthy on the new diet. The kill-out sheet was also very impressive. The 26 male lambs had an average kill-out weight percent of 46% and an average carcass weight of 29kg. 25 of the 26 lambs were U grade with only 1 K. Tom plans to finish more of his weather lambs on Tyfon next year.

David Heraty

David runs a flock of 130 ewes at Liscahern, Co Mayo. Of these sheep, 100 are Blackface Mountain and Lanark sheep and the other 30 are mule and Hillites ewes.

Replacement hill sheep are bred by mating a Blackface mountain ram, with the best hill ewes and all other sheep are mated with Aberfield rams (Taran-cross Blue Leicester). “I reseeded three acres with Tyfon and grass in late May and have grazed two batches of 25 lambs on the crop so far,” says David.

“Each batch grazed the Tyfon for one month, with a fortnight of a regrowth period in between the two batches. The lambs had an average daily gain of 289g while on the Tyfon, with 15 lambs being sold to the factory at the end of each grazing period, which lasted about 30 days.

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