



# SHEEP

January 2018

## Sheep conferences

Teagasc is presenting a number of sheep conferences over the next

month that you may be interested in attending. Details below.

### National Sheep Conferences - January 30 and February 1

- Loughrea Hotel & Spa, Loughrea, Co. Galway; Tuesday, January 30
- Nuremore Hotel, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan; Thursday, February 1

Speakers	Topics
Dr Philip Creighton, Grassland and Systems Researcher (Teagasc)	Grass10 – grazing management, infrastructure, utilisation and opportunities
Prof. Michael Diskin, Head of Animal Bioscience Dept and Sheep Enterprise Leader (Teagasc)	Meat quality – factors influencing lamb meat quality
Dr Fiona Lovatt, DSHP, DipECSRHM MRCVS, Specialist in Sheep Health and Production, Flock Health Ltd.	Flock health – iceberg diseases, diagnosis, control measures and potential for accreditation
Prof. Tommy Boland, UCD, Professor in Ruminant Nutrition and Sheep Production	Ewe nutrition, requirements, dietary influences on production and flock health

*The National Hill Sheep Conference will be held in Westport on the February 21. Details will be supplied later.*

Edited by  
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### Sheep census

The closing date for receipt of completed 2017 sheep and goat census forms is January 31. Farmers who submit their return online have until February 14 to make the submission. However, it is advisable to do this as soon as possible.

Registered sheep and goat farmers received their annual census forms from mid-December. All farmers registered with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) should have received their forms by now.

If you have not received yours, please contact the DAFM immediately.

The census date for 2017 is Sunday, December 31, 2017. A full count of sheep on the farm (and goats where it applies) must be taken on that date and recorded on the relevant form.

The completed census form may be returned either by post using the addressed envelope provided with the census form, or it can be completed online via the [agfood.ie](http://agfood.ie) website. When the form is being posted, it is important to obtain proof of postage. The only acceptable proof of postage is a receipt of registered post in the case of disputes regarding postal returns. A certificate of postage is not acceptable as proof of postage.



*Closing date for return of sheep and goat census forms is January 31, with online returns accepted up to February 14. The census date for 2017 is Sunday, December 31, 2017.*

### Liver fluke

Liver fluke is a problem again this winter. The prolonged spell of wet weather from August onwards has led to severe cases of liver fluke disease.

There is a high risk throughout the country, but it has shown up to be a particular problem in the west and north-west of the country. However, no

part of the country is guaranteed to be free of the disease.

Out-wintered sheep should be dosed regularly, possibly every five to six weeks, with products capable of killing early immature and immature fluke. You should discuss a control programme with your veterinary surgeon.

## Sheep Welfare Scheme

The first year of the Sheep Welfare Scheme comes to an end on February 3.

Participants were supplied with a Scheme Action Record Book to be used to record all compliance actions and proofs of same.

It is essential that the Action Record Book and associated documents are retained and updated to reflect the completion of actions undertaken by participants. It is important that each farmer checks that his/her record book is up to date.

The records to be maintained are straightforward but must be kept up to date.

They may be requested at any stage by the DAFM to be examined as a means of

checking compliance with actions. Failure to produce or forward the Scheme Action Record Book when requested will be seen as a breach of the Scheme obligations and will result in no payments for the relevant year as well as additional penalties. It is also important to retain all receipts, documentation and other evidence to prove compliance with scheme actions.

Where scanning was selected as a task, you must ensure ewes are scanned between February 4, 2017 and February 3, 2018.

A new Action Record Book will be supplied to participants for each year of the Scheme – subject to notification of their continuing in the Scheme.



### HEALTH & SAFETY

## Manage workload

Workload rises from January onwards in Irish grass-based farming. Farm accidents in spring are often associated with doing work in a hurry and not concentrating on the job in hand. Work planning is key to safe work. At the start of each week, consciously plan and prioritise your essential work tasks. Postpone non-urgent tasks until a later date. Work planning prevents fatigue from setting in as the spring progresses. There is a lot of walking around farms in spring, so keep walkways clear of trip hazards. Work at a steady pace.



*Speed kills.*



## Challenge to maintain clover

Philip Creighton, Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Teagasc Athenry, Co. Galway reports from the Sheep Research Demonstration Farm.



*Sheep Open Day 2017 – sheep grazing at the Sheep Research Demonstration Farm, Athenry.*

Drafting of lambs is almost complete with approximately 97% of lambs finished from each of the groups. As mentioned in our last update, due to weather conditions we housed all remaining lambs in mid-October. By the end of October, we had 70% of lambs drafted from the grass-only groups and 81% from the grass plus white clover groups. There was 7% more lambs drafted from the lower stocking rate (11 ewes/ha) at 79% compared to 72% at the 13 ewe/ha stocking rate. Preliminary analysis shows that lambs from the grass-clover groups reached slaughter eight days earlier than the grass-only lambs. Average live weight at slaughter for lambs killed in 2017 was 45.7kg with a carcass weight of 19.7kg. This represents an average kill out percentage of 43%, 1% lower than our long-term average. The grass-clover fed lambs consistently had a 1% higher kill out compared to the grass-only fed lambs. Ewe body condition measured in early December ranged from 3.3 (13 ewe/ha stocking rate) to 3.4 (11 ewe/ha stocking rate) which is an

improvement of around 0.25 since the start of mating. The slight improvement in ground conditions in late November/early December, coupled with higher covers of grass due to higher than normal grass growth rates in late October/early November has meant that we have been able to extend the grazing season well into December for all ewes. The 13 ewe/ha stocking rate groups were housed Christmas week with the 11 ewe/ha groups grazing into the new year, weather permitting. We currently have 80-90% of all farmlets closed for the winter, which is on target for mid-December. In terms of sward DM production, the grass-clover swards grew 13,500kg DM/ha relative to the grass-only sward at 12,800kg DM/ha. Interestingly the grass-clover low nitrogen (N) (90kg N/ha/yr) treatments produced the same level of DM/ha as the grass-clover high N (145kg N/ha/yr) treatments. Our challenge is to maintain this production and the persistency of clover in our swards, which will be a key focus of our work over the coming years.