



SHEEP

July 2019

Grassland management

Good grass growth rates in June have resulted in challenges on many farms in terms of keeping on top of grass. If grass ahead is getting strong (greater than 9-10cm) then it is best to skip over these areas and take them out for silage.

Use ewes post weaning or a mower (mow down to 4cm) to remove stem from grazing paddocks that have got ahead of you.

Using protected urea as your nitrogen (N) source will save you money and reduce emissions associated with spreading CAN.

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Reseeding

July is the ideal month to reseed unproductive pastures. Reseeding is expensive and should only be carried out where:

- the stocking rate on the farm is such that the extra grass grown from the reseeded sward will be utilised; and,
- management practices such as improving soil fertility, weed control and grazing infrastructure (paddocks, etc.) are such that grass growth has already been maximised from the existing sward.

Stomach worms

Stomach worms that are resistant to the commonly available sheep wormers are present on most Irish sheep farms. Continuing to use wormers that are no longer working properly (killing >95% of the worms in the sheep) makes the problem worse (it increases resistance to the product). It also wastes wormer, time and feed as the sheep will still be infected with parasites after treatment.

In order to be able to effectively treat sheep for worms, it is important to find out what wormers are effective on your farm. Mid to late summer is the ideal time to carry out drench tests to ascertain which products are still effective on your farm and to draw up a sustainable parasite control plan. Contact your adviser or vet for more information about how to do this.

Prepare for breeding

Ewes: don't allow ewes to lose too much condition after weaning as this is not a positive thing. Pick out thin ewes and run them on better grass so that they can gain condition. Thin ewes may need up to 12 weeks of preferential feeding to pick up enough body condition and the clock is ticking.

Abortion vaccines: July is the month to start thinking about vaccinating ewes for toxoplasmosis and enzootic abortion if these form part of your flock health plan.

Rams: go through your rams and see what if any replacements are required. Replacement rams should be sourced early in the season when:

- the selection of rams available will be greatest;
- there will be more time for the rams to acclimatise to their new surroundings before being pressed into service; and,
- this allows time for appropriate quarantine procedures to be implemented to avoid bringing disease onto your farm.

All the evidence shows that using high-index performance-recorded (star rated) rams increases farm profitability and reduces labour associated with difficult lambing and reduced mortality. Purchasing rams that are not performance recorded is a shot in the dark.

Early lambing 2020

Easter Sunday falls on April 12, 2020. Lambs destined for this market need to be fit for slaughter around April 5. Aim to lamb ewes towards the end of December to have lambs fit for the Easter market.

Upcoming events

Sheep Breeding Workshops

This year, Sheep Ireland and Teagasc are holding breeding workshops throughout Ireland (see **Table 1**).

These events will cater for both pedigree and commercial farmers who want to improve the output of their farm through improved breeding practices.

Topics at each Workshop will include:

- Sheep Ireland genetic evaluations (€uroStars);
- benefits from using evaluations;
- how to use evaluations to promote your business;
- the importance of having a strategic breeding policy;
- maximising the use of electronic identification (EID); and,
- flock health and biosecurity.

Table 1. List of Sheep Breeding Workshops

Date	Farm	Location	Eircode
Thursday July 4	Andrew Moloney	Rathgreedan House, Edenderry, Co. Offaly	R45 W596
Tuesday July 9	Brian Nicholson	Tullyvolty House, Johnstown, Co. Kilkenny	E41 RT66
Thursday July 11	PJ Finnerty	Kilcar, Brideswell, Co. Roscommon	N37 TK83
Tuesday July 16	John O'Connell	Cloverhill House, Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim	N41 N977
Thursday July 18	Patrick Dunne	Ballinabarney, Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow	A67 E162
Tuesday July 23	Alistair McNair	Killyverry, Newtowncunningham, Co. Donegal	F93 FE82
Wednesday July 31	D and S Carroll	Killeen, Killarney, Co. Kerry	V93 D458

Each event will begin at 7.00pm with light refreshments available afterwards.

RESEARCH UPDATE

Good grass growth

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

Grass growth has remained strong in May and early June, averaging 82kg DM/ha/day. This allowed ground closed for silage to bulk up quickly and we were able to cut our main silage in late May in ideal conditions. We also have cut quite a lot of surplus grass from paddocks so we now have our silage requirements for winter 2019/20.

Very rapid grass growth in early June following the wet weather made maintaining grass quality very challenging.

While taking out as much surplus grass as we could to maintain quality, remaining grass still had more stem than we would like and some strategic topping was carried out.

Lamb performance from birth to 12 weeks for

the 11 ewe/ha groups averaged 265g/day, with lambs in the 13 ewe/ha groups averaging 255g/day. The clover content of the swards has been slow to increase so far this year and so the difference in average daily gain (ADG) between grass and grass-clover treatment lambs is low to date averaging 7g/hd/day.

Fortnightly faecal egg counts commenced in mid May with lambs receiving a worm dose in early June based on egg counts rising above or approaching 500 eggs/gram.

Lambs have also been supplemented with cobalt fortnightly from eight weeks of age. Lambs will be weaned in late June at 14 weeks (100 days).



HEALTH & SAFETY

The most dangerous month

July is the most dangerous month of the year on farms. For the 15-year period 2004-2018, almost 17% of farm deaths occurred during July.

This is double the average per month.

The principal causes of accidents in July are: vehicle and machine use (particularly



Use three contact points when getting up/down from a tractor.

tractors and loaders); falls from heights and falling objects; cattle; and, slurry.

During this month in particular, give attention to operating machinery safely. Never get into a 'crush zone' and always operate a vehicle from the driver's seat.



BETTER FARM UPDATE



Weaning and worming

Frank Campion of the Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Teagasc, Athenry, reports from the BETTER Sheep farms.

Weaning of lambs on the lowland flocks is well under way with most of the flocks hoping to have weaned by early July with lambs at approximately 14 weeks of age.

Once weaned, lambs will graze to a residual of 5.5-6cm on grazing paddocks with the dry ewes used to remove the remainder down to a residual of 4cm.

Many of the farms recorded very high grass growth rates in early June which, combined with the relatively wet weather, made grazing conditions difficult for some. The rain also slowed down silage cutting and removal of excess paddocks for silage thus slowing down the return of these paddocks into the grazing rotation.

Some of the farms have begun selling lambs with the majority of lambs fit so far mainly being singles and pet lambs finished indoors.

Most of the flocks were dosed using either a group 2-LV or 3-ML product for trichostrongylus based on the result of FECPAK analysis in early to mid-June (see **Table 2**). A count of greater than 500 eggs/gram is considered the threshold for dosing. A regular check will be kept on FECPAK counts throughout the summer and lambs dosed in accordance with the results. This year very careful attention is being paid to the anthelmintic usage on the farms to identify resistance issues and extend the effectiveness of the anthelmintic types that do work.

Rumen fluke was also detected on two of the heavier farms in the programme. Ewes were dosed in response to these egg counts but it is important that fluke dosing is only carried out where necessary and following faecal egg count analysis where possible.

Table 2. Mean, minimum and maximum egg counts from FECPAK analysis carried out during the week of June 3.

	Mean	Min	Max
Trichostrongylus	400	120	750