

## BETTER Farm Update

By Ciaran Lynch

The lowland flocks will be gearing up for another round of lambing. However, they are also planning for another grazing season. Each of the farmers along with their advisors will examine their soil results from previous years and plan out their fertilizer in some cases lime applications for the coming spring. This is a good opportunity to address some soil fertility deficits and make better more efficient use of the ground available for grazing.

**Early lamb flocks:** Lambing went well for John Doyle's, Tomas O'Leary's and Peadar Kearney's early lambing ewes. Although conditions were difficult during January the flocks in Wexford and Louth got the ewe's turnout onto pasture that was rested up from Late September/ Early October previous. These ewes are being supplemented post turnout at a rate of 0.5 to 0.75 kg until the lambs are consuming sufficient amounts of concentrate themselves. The flock in Kerry as in previous years is maintaining the flock indoors, this is a trade off as the demand for early spring grass will be greater in early march for his mid- season flock and beef enterprise. Here ewes rearing twins are receiving 1.5 kg of concentrate per day alongside high quality forage.

**Mid-season flocks:** With scanning complete in January for the remaining flocks the farmers can now better meet the nutritional demands of the flocks. The scan results have improved this year for individual flocks, these results for the 8 lowland flocks are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Mid-season flocks scan results

	Average	Range
Scanned litter size	2.01	1.83 – 2.2
Scanned pregnancy rate	96.8	92.7 – 100
Scanning rate	1.95	1.78 – 2.16

There was a big improvement in scan for the 5 farmers with ewe lamb flocks as summarised in Table 2. These lambs were heavier this season going to the ram and in turn have scanned with a better crop. On average the scanning rate is 0.36 lambs higher this year. Each of these flocks has been supplementing these lambs since January and will now supplement those with multiples accordingly.

**Table 2.** Scanning results for the ewe lamb flocks

	O'Connell Leitrim	Spillane Tipperary	Nicholson Kilkenny	Doyle Wexford	O'Leary Kerry
Scanned litter size	1.44	1.57	1.58	1.67	1.61
Scanned pregnancy rate	90.0	93.8	84.8	83.8	92.5
Scanning rate	1.30	1.48	1.34	1.40	1.49

**Hill flocks:** the hill flocks in the programme will gather the ewe flocks this month for scanning. At this stage the flocks will be split into those carrying twins and singles for feeding purposes. Some of the thinner ewes carrying singles will also be retained with the twin ewes to receive extra supplementation.