

BETTER Farm Update

Ciaran Lynch, AGRIC , Athenry Co Galway

Grass growth

After a slow start growth rates have picked up on the farms. There is still some variation among the farms with individual farms achieving growth rates of 65 kg/Dm/ha . Most of the farms are on their 3rd round of fertilizer application to capitalise on growing conditions during April and May. For the 3rd application any fields with soil fertility issues will receive a further application of compound whilst those with acceptable levels will receive straight nitrogen. Silage ground has been closed up on a number of farms have silage ground closed, in all cases these paddocks were grazed out before closing.

Health issues

A number of the farmers are reporting an early occurrence of scald in lambs in mid to late April, it's important that this is treated quickly to avoid any potential setback. Individual flocks have had issues with coccidiosis in lambs in early April which required treatment. All lambs in these flocks have will be treated for Nematodirus with a product from either the white (Benzimidazole; 1-BZ) or yellow (Levamisole; 2-LV) anthelmintic. Depending on how much variation there is in the age of the lambs within their management groups repeat drench may be necessary on some as younger lambs may not have been old enough at the time of drenching.

Hill flocks

Lambing is nearly complete for a number of the hill flocks. Overall it has gone well this year with two if the new participants in the programme getting to terms with tagging and recording lambs at birth. There was huge variability in grass supply on the closed in areas used for lambing among the farms. For the flock in Mayo poor growing conditions in early march for the flock resulted in a grass scarcity at lambing. it was necessary to supplement ewes post lambing to meet ewe requirements, with limited grass ewes received 0.5kg of concentrate supplementation per day.