

## BETTER Farm Update

*By Ciaran Lynch, Animal and Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Teagasc Athenry, Co. Galway.*

A summary of grass growth this season to date is presented in Figure 1. Grass growth during June improved substantially on all farms. A number took the opportunity to drop out extra paddocks with heavy covers for silage. However with increasing flock demand during the month put pressure on an number of the systems with individual flocks requiring up to 74 kg/DM/day growth to sustain flock demand once paddocks were removed. Once weaned this demand will drop dramatically thereby reducing grazing pressure and providing an opportunity to graze out paddocks fully with dry ewes whilst giving priority to lambs. A number of the flocks will also have new reseeds entering the system during June. This should benefit overall production and provide an opportunity to achieve high levels of lamb performance post weaning.

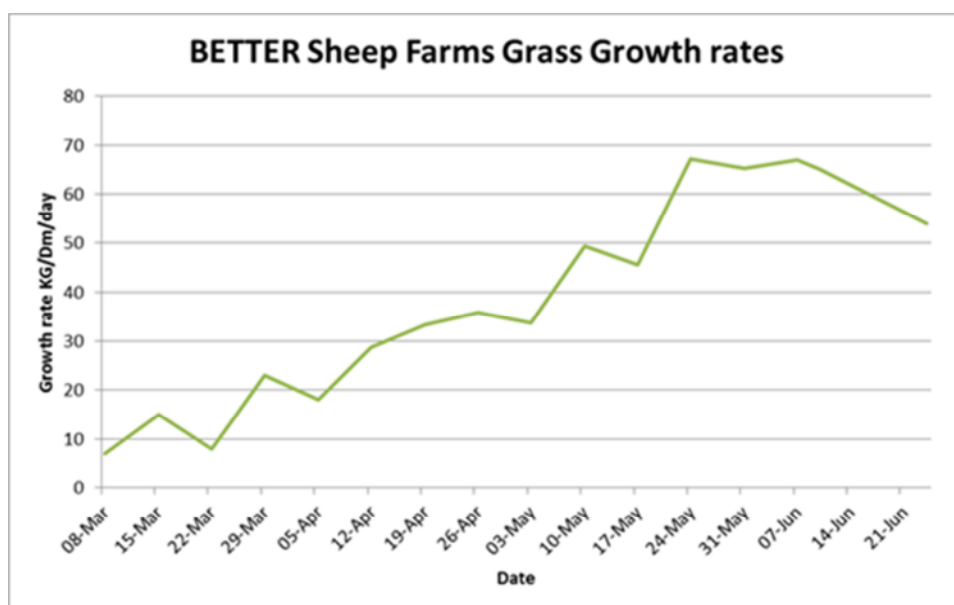


Figure 1. Grass growth rates to date on the lowland BETTER Farms

During June there was a sharp increase in parasite burden as measured in Fecpak samples received from the lowland flocks. A summary of the results in the early part of the month prior to treatment is presented in Table 1. This increase was unsurprising as it coincided with increased grass intake by lambs and hence increased exposure, secondly there was a shift to warmer weather which providing ideal conditions for higher burdens. Although there was some variation among flocks and between individual group on farm nearly all lambs have by now

received their second routing anthelmintic treatment. The farms used either a 2-LV r a 3-ML based product. A number of these flocks will complete a drench test post weaning to assess how the various groups of anthelmintic are performing on their farm.

Table 2. Results of Fecpak analysis on BETTER Farm flocks in June

|       | Nematodirus (epg) |                    | Strongyles (epg) |             |              |
|-------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------|--------------|
|       | Average           | Range (min to max) | Average          | Range       | (min to max) |
| Count | 610               | 105 to 1605        | 463              | 120 to 1110 |              |

At weaning parietal replacements will be marked, many of these are identified at birth but this provides an opportunity to assess how they performed. The farmers will select 5 to 10 % more than is required so as they have an opportunity to remove those that don't perform sufficiently from the group. These lambs will be co grazed with the rest of the lambs on the farms for 2 to 3 weeks until settled before being separated and managed as a separated group generally with the lighter lambs present on the farms.

The flocks planning for early lamb next season will complete their pre breeding preparation during July, ewes and rams in the flocks will be assessed and given access to better pasture to ensure condition is right for mating in August.