

## **BETTER Farm update January 2018**

Frank Champion, Animal & Grassland Research & Innovation Centre

January heralds the start of a new year but it is also an important time to have a look back on what has happened the previous year. With that in mind all the BETTER sheep farmers will complete an E-profit monitor in January which will be used to review their individual farm plans and to inform decisions for the year ahead. The flocks will also hope to complete a grass walk at some stage in January to have an opening cover for the farm.

For the mid-season flocks late December/January will see all the flocks scan the mature ewes put to the ram the previous October. Following scanning ewes will be divided by litter size and raddle colours (lambing date) so that winter feeding plans can be put into action for the various groups. For the Co. Wexford BETTER farm the early lambing flock will begin lambing around the 1<sup>st</sup> of January and with the ewes only receiving one cycle with the ram following sponging lambing will very compact and quick. These ewes were housed during the second week of December after grazing forage crops in-situ with forage and concentrate supplementation prior to housing.

Rams were removed from all hill flocks in December and the ewes returned to the hill until scanning time. Poor mating BCS meant some ewes were held back from the hill to try and maintain/build some condition on these ewes. The plan would be to let some of these thinner ewes out to the hill once their condition improves.