

BETTER Farm update August 2019

Frank Campion, Animal & Grassland Research & Innovation Centre

As the hill flocks begin weaning this month attention turns to what to do with these lambs. A lot of this decision will hinge on the amount of grass available and how much will be needed for the ewes in run up to mating time. With this in mind the management of the lamb crop from weaning will differ on the farms with some needing to sell the majority as stores and others looking at options for finishing lambs outdoors and indoors later in the year. The performance of the lambs to seven weeks on three of the flocks is summarised in Table 1. Overall this performance was quite good and the number of lambs returned at 7 weeks compared to what was born was for the most part also good.

Table 1. Lamb performance on three of the BETTER farm hill sheep flocks from birth to 7 weeks

	Birth Weight (kg)		Growth Rate (g/day)		7 Week Weight (kg)	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
Birth Type						
1	5.3	5.3-5.5	297	278-320	19.8	18.6-21.0
2	4.5	4.1-4.8	246	219-298	16.7	15.9-19.4

On the lowland flocks weaning is now completed and ram and ewe lambs divided where necessary. Drafting rates are currently ahead of previous years and overall lamb's performance is good. The performance of the lambs on the lowland flocks from the mature ewes to 14 weeks (weaning) is summarised in Table 2. Over the next few weeks ewes will be assessed for BCS and thin ewes picked out, marked and given preferential treatment. Any thin ewes who fail to re-gain condition will be culled prior to mating.

Table 2. Preliminary analysis of the lamb performance on 5 of the BETTER farm lowland sheep flocks from birth to 14 weeks (weaning).

	Growth Rate (g/day)		14 Week Weight (kg)	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
Birth Type				
1	306	284-324	35	29.7-37.6
2	268	250-285	30.5	28.3-32.5

3+

268

248-285

29.9

28.3-31.0
