

BETTER Farm update January 2020

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Rams were removed from all hill flocks in December and the ewes returned to the hill until scanning time. Mating BCS was generally good across the flocks (Table 1.) which will make management of the flocks easier prior to scanning time and in the run up to lambing. Where there are thin ewes these will be assessed prior to going back to the hill and where possible kept down off the hill. Ewes will be gathered again from late January onwards in time for pregnancy scanning in all the hill flocks.

Table 1. Ewe mating weight and BCS on 5 of the BETTER hill sheep farms

Flock	Dunne	Fitzgerald	Gonley	O’Riordan	O’Toole
County	Wicklow	Kerry	Sligo	Cork	Galway
Average ewe live weight (kg)	55.0	54.1	52.4	49.0	58.3
Average ewe BCS	3.0	2.9	3.0	2.9	3.2
% < 2.5	2.6	2.0	3.3	0.0	0.0

For the mid-season flocks during late December/January all the flocks will scan 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.

In January all of the farmers in the programme will complete their E-profit monitor for 2019 with their advisors. By completing the profit monitors it provides a means to critically assess the performance of the farms from a financial perspective and provides an opportunity to scrutinize the impact the changes made to the farming systems as part of the programme.