

BETTER Farm update November 2019

Frank Campion, Animal & Grassland Research & Innovation Centre

Mating on the lowland flocks is in full swing at this stage with all the flocks having joined ewes with rams during October. Flocks lambing ewe lambs delayed letting the ram out with the ewe lambs until 2-3 weeks after the mature ewes in most cases. At the time of writing approximately half of the lowland ewes in the programme have been weighed and condition scored with ewe condition by and large being within acceptable ranges (initial analysis for four of the flocks is presented in Table 1) but until all ewes are done and the data analysed it is hard to make a definitive comment on this. The policy of the flocks pulling off thin ewes for extra attention and from 8 weeks prior to mating and culling non-performing ewes in this group as discussed in a previous update has allowed the flocks to reduce the number of very thin and chronically thin ewes within the flocks.

Table 1. Initial analysis of ewe live weight and BCS on four of the lowland sheep flocks.

Flock	Doyle	Dunne	Gonley	Moore
County	Wexford	Wicklow	Sligo	Roscommon
Average ewe live weight (kg)	74.1	75.6	70.1	76.0
Average ewe BCS	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.5

All the lowland flocks are also implementing their paddock winter closing plans at this stage. The comparatively wet weather since August for most of the country is making it somewhat difficult for some farms to get covers grazed out fully, particularly heavy covers. Remaining lambs on the farms are finishing at a steady rate throughout the flocks with some opting to house remaining lambs or house heavier lambs to save grass for ewes. Attractive store lamb prices in some parts of the country have allowed some of the lowland flocks to sell small numbers of lambs this way.