

BETTER Farm update January 2019

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The end of 2018 and the promise of a new year will be very much welcomed by most farmers after difficulties of 2018! However, it is also an important time of year to reflect on the previous year in order to plan for the future. With that in mind all the BETTER sheep farmers will complete an E-profit monitor in January which will be used as part of a review of 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.

Most of the mid-season flocks have begun housing ewes in order to rest paddocks and begin feeding in the run up to lambing. Fodder budgets carried out in November on the BETTER sheep farms indicated that most of the farms have sufficient fodder for this winter. However, those worst affected by the drought have been forced into taking remedial action such as growing fodder crops or buying in silage and feed such as beet to try and stretch their own limited feed supplies. Given the fodder shortages in parts of the country this year doing these fodder budgets is a very useful exercise and will be used in conjunction with the silage test results currently being compiled to manage winter feeding plans.

Table 1. Initial results from silage analysis on four of the lowland sheep BETTER farms

	Mean	Min	Max
DM (%)	31.0	15.9	48.6
PH	4.5	4.2	5.1
NH3	7.4	5.3	16.2
Protein (% DM)	14.7	13.5	17.1
ME (Mj/kg DM)	10.5	10	10.9
DMD (% DM)	72.9	69.5	75.2
Pred. DMI (g/kgW^{0.75})	93.8	64	119