

## BETTER Farm update November 2018

Frank Campion, Animal & Grassland Research & Innovation Centre

All the lowland flocks are now well and truly into the mating season at this point. Flocks breeding ewe lambs joined the ewe lambs near the end of October, a couple of weeks after introducing rams to the main flock. Across the flocks ewe BCS for the most part has been within acceptable ranges (Table 1.) but the difficult Spring/Summer has shown in some flocks particularly in younger ewes who lambed for the first time last spring. However, most of the flocks are reporting that grass supplies for ewes are good and the aim would be to try and build some BCS on the thinner ewes prior to housing. Focus for these flocks at the moment is to get paddocks grazed out and closed off to allow covers to build for next spring.

**Table 1.** Average ewe live weight and ewe BCS at mating for lowland BETTER sheep farms

<b>Flock</b>	<b>Kearney</b>	<b>O'Leary</b>	<b>Prendergast</b>	<b>Doyle</b>	<b>McLaughlin</b>	<b>O'Connell</b>
<b>County</b>	<b>Louth</b>	<b>Kerry</b>	<b>Mayo</b>	<b>Wexford</b>	<b>Donegal</b>	<b>Leitrim</b>
<b>Average ewe live weight (kg)</b>	85.3	74.1	73.6	72.3	64.9	73.4
<b>Average ewe BCS</b>	3.5	3.3	3.2	3.1	3.3	3.2

November brings about mating time for the hill flocks with most of the flocks introducing rams from the 4<sup>th</sup> of November up to around the 12<sup>th</sup>. Flocks are gathering ewes at the time of writing and initial reports suggest that ewe condition is mixed but better than last year.