

## BETTER Farm update December 2020

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Rams are being removed from ewes at 5-6 weeks after joining across the lowland flocks and as discussed in previous updates this is vitally important in order to ensure lambing season is compact and not drawn out for what is usually a very small proportion of ewes in the flock. Where flocks mated ewe lambs the rams will also be pulled at the same time and in most farms after a shorter mating season for these ewes than the mature ewes. The live weights and condition scores at mating for the ewe lambs is presented in Table 1 with all flocks ensuring lambs that went to the ram were at least 60% of their mature weight.

Table 1. Ewe lamb mating weight and BCS on 4 of the BETTER lowland sheep flocks

<b>Flock</b>	<b>Dunne</b>	<b>Moore</b>	<b>O'Connell</b>	<b>O'Leary</b>
<b>County</b>	<b>Wicklow</b>	<b>Roscommon</b>	<b>Leitrim</b>	<b>Kerry</b>
<b>Average ewe live weight (kg)</b>	46.3	49.0	51.9	48.5
<b>Average ewe BCS</b>	3.3	3.1	3.2	3.3

The hill flocks joined rams to the flocks in recent weeks and nearly all the flocks are cross breeding a proportion of the flock in line with what there weaning rates allow. Initial reports suggest that ewe BCS and weights is mixed across the flocks with some reporting that ewe BCS was lower than anticipated when ewes were gathered from the hill.

As the year draws to a close it is important time to have a look back on what has happened during the year from both a physical and financial performance perspective on farm. With that in mind all the BETTER sheep farmers will complete an E-profit monitor in January which will be used to review their individual farm plans and to inform decisions for 2021.