

## BETTER Farm update November 2016

Frank Campion, AGRIC

Reports from the mid-season flocks suggest high numbers of ewes have been mated during the first two to three weeks of mating. Table 1 shows the average ewe BCS and weight from three of the mid-season flocks with the majority of ewes in these flocks having a BCS of 3.0 or greater. Ewe BCS and live weight was good across all eight flocks although down slightly on last year for some of the farmers. Ewes were joined with rams in small groups initially on these farms to facilitate single sire mating but are grouped into larger groups after approximately 17-21 days (farm dependent) to reduce risks from exposure to infertile/sub fertile rams and increase grazing power for cleaning out paddocks. The strong grass growth on some of the farms in September and early October has meant some farms have had to sub-divide paddocks in order to get paddocks grazed out cleanly and stop ewes being in low cover paddocks for long periods while mating.

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

<b>Flock</b>	<b>Kearney</b>	<b>O'Leary</b>	<b>Prendergast</b>
<b>Average ewe live weight (kg)</b>	83.5	73.4	72.2
<b>Average ewe BCS</b>	3.4	3.5	3.3

The early lambing flock in Co. Wexford scanned during October with 72% of ewes joined scanning in lamb. These ewes were joined for mating cycle only following sponging and were single sire mated using 12 rams. Of the ewes scanned in lamb litter size was 1.86 and ewes not in lamb at scanning have been added to the mid-season ewes for mating.