

BETTER Farm update October 2020

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The mid-season lowland flocks will begin joining rams to the flocks between the 1st and 26th of October depending on desired lambing date. Rams will be raddled and the colour changed frequently so as to identify rams that are not performing but also to allow later lambing ewes and repeats to be fed separately where possible during late pregnancy. Rams will remain with ewes for approximately 6 weeks. Leaving rams in longer than this can seem advantageous at this time of year to potentially increase pregnancy rate but as shown in Table 1 the time it can take for the last 5% of the flock to lamb can drag on when leaving rams in for a longer periods. For the flocks taking a long time for the last 5% to lamb the justification of this time and labour needs to be considered. An alternative option is to let a few more ewes out to the ram than is needed so that when the empty ewes are culled the number of ewes remains on target.

Table 1. Summary of some of the lambing statistics from lowland BETTER sheep farms in 2020.

	Mean	Min	Max
% of ewes lambed in first 3 weeks of lambing	83	64	96
No. days for last 5% to lamb	13	2	29

New Flocks

We are pleased to announce that two new flocks are joining the BETTER farm sheep program this year; Paul Boyle who runs both a hill and lowland flock near Bruckless in Co. Donegal and Kevin Carey who also runs both a hill and lowland flock near Belmullet in Co. Mayo. Both flocks begun performance recording ahead of the breeding season and a detailed farm plan for each farm is being put together.