

BETTER Farm Update

By Ciaran Lynch

Lowland flocks

This year's scan results for the lowland flocks were particularly good with each on course for a potentially large lamb crop. The results are summarised in Table 1. With a feeding plan in place on the farms there are a couple of key areas the farmers will be mindful of: Ensuring sufficient feeding space, ewes getting thin that may need preferential treatment e.g. twin bearing ewes being moved into the triplet pens etc. in addition to the nutritional management the farmers will also be administering the booster shot of their clostridial vaccines in February prior to lambing.

Table 1. scanning results on lowland BETTER farms

Farm	O'Leary	McLaughlin	Kearney	Curley	O'Connell	Doyle	Nicholson*
Location	Kerry	Donegal	Louth	Roscommon	Leitrim	Wexford	Kilkenny
Scanned Litter size	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.0
Scanned Pregnancy rate	97.7	97.5	95.8	96.1	96.8	94.6	97.0
Scanning rate	2.2	2.2	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.9

Yearling ewes

For the flocks with replacement ewe lambs lambing as 1 year olds supplementation has already begun in January. In the majority of cases these farmers are providing these ewes with 300g/day concentrate in addition to ad-lib silage. These lambs will be scanned in late January to early February and divided accordingly thereafter.

Grass

Grass supplies ahead of previous seasons the farms. In preparation for turnout, the farmers will apply the first round of fertilizer from mid to late February – depending on region. In the majority of cases this will be in the form of Urea applied at the rate of 28 kg N per hectare or 23 units per acre. In a number of cases where soil fertility issues have been identified an application of compound such as 27.2.5.5 or 18.6.12 will be used. A number of them have completed soil sampling to monitor soil fertility levels on the farm. Once the results are received this information will feed back into a fertilizer plan for each farm.

Hill flocks

Ewes will be gathered in the hill flocks in the programme early in February for scanning. Following this, the ewes will be split into those carrying twins and singles for feeding purposes. Some of the thinner ewes carrying singles will also be retained with the twin ewes to receive extra supplementation. In addition many of the flocks use this opportunity to treat ewes for fluke at this stage.