

BETTER Farm update July 2020

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For the lowland flocks weaning has either taken place or is just about to be carried out with the target to wean lambs from mature ewes at approximately 14 weeks of age and lambs from yearling ewes at 12 weeks of age. The dry weather conditions and the slowdown in grass growth associated with this has forced some of the farms to consider weaning a couple of weeks earlier than usual to reduce grass demand on the farm and ensure there is grass available for the lambs to be weaned onto. For most of the flocks grass growth levels have held at or above demand making management easier, but for some it has meant sacrificing some areas that were marked for 2nd cut silage. Assuming weather conditions allow grass supply to be maintained to meet demand then lambs will be grazing to 5.5-6cm with ewes following behind to clean out paddocks to 3.5-4cm.

Table 1. Mean lamb performance from lambs from five of the BETTER hill flocks from birth to 7 weeks.

Birth Type	Birth Weight (kg)	Growth Rate (g/day)	7 Week Weight (kg)
1	4.9	290	19.1
2	4.0	230	15.3

As presented in Table 1. the hill flocks in the programme carried out 7 week weights in June with the mean performance of the lambs from five of the flocks weighed to date presented. Overall lamb performance was good across the flocks with growth rates for single lambs ranging from 273g/day to 306g/day. For some of the flock's single rearing ewes were put to the hill after 3-5 weeks post-lambing with the remainder letting single bearing lambs out to the hill after the 7 week weight. Twin rearing ewes will remain on improved hill or enclosed green ground until weaning in most flocks.