

## BETTER Farm Update June 2020

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At the time of writing nearly all of the 7 week weights from the mature ewes on the lowland flocks have been collected. Table 1 shows the mean birth weight, growth rate to seven weeks and 7 week weight for five of the lowland flocks weighed in early May. Growth rates for the lambs to seven weeks are on target with lambs generally performing well so far this year. The key for these flocks will be to maintain grass quality in front of the ewes and lambs up to weaning.

Table 1. Mean lamb performance on lowland flocks from birth to 7 weeks

<b>Birth Type</b>	<b>Birth Weight (kg)</b>	<b>Growth Rate (g/day)</b>	<b>7 Week Weight (kg)</b>
<b>1</b>	6.2	350	23.5
<b>2</b>	5.4	297	20.0
<b>3+*</b>	4.6	302	19.4

\*Born as triplets and reared as twins

Grass growth rates have on average been steady at approximately 55kg DM/Ha in the first half of May on the farms but with a wide variation most weeks. Comparatively long periods of dry weather for this time of year in some parts of the country are slowing grass growth rates on some of the farms. A number of the farms made silage in early May, mainly as a result of dropping out surplus paddocks from the rotation. When the data from PastureBase Ireland for the BETTER sheep flocks is examined it shows that the total grass grown per hectare this year is very similar to 2018 and approximately ½ a tonne less than where it was at this time in 2019.

The first weighing of lambs from the hill flocks will take place in the coming weeks with anecdotal evidence from the flocks suggesting that lambs are doing well so far this year. Where possible the flocks have begun letting single rearing ewes and their lambs back out to the hill.