

BETTER Farm Update May 2017

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Lowland Flocks

All of the lowland flocks have now completed the 7 week weights on the lambs from the mature ewes as summarised in Table 1. Growth rates for the most part were within acceptable levels with flock health hindering lamb growth for one of the flocks. The excessive grass supplies this spring proved challenging for some of the flocks in terms of getting ewes to graze out high covers quickly and maintain flock performance. The challenge for the this month will be ensure there is high quality grass for the ewes and lambs as the quantity of grass consumed by the lambs increases and contributes more to their growth rates. Most of the flocks have cut some silage in May and will continue to take cuts of silage throughout the summer to build winter fodder supplies and manage surplus grass covers.

Table 1. Lamb performance on the lowland flocks from birth to 7 weeks

	Birth Weight (kg)		Growth Rate (g/day)		7 Week Weight (kg)	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
Birth Type						
1	5.9	5.6 – 6.7	360	309 – 424	23.7	21.8 – 26.8
2	5.0	4.6 – 5.5	301	262 – 326	19.9	17.6 – 20.9
3+	4.3	3.9 – 5.5	298	261 – 336	19.1	17.0 – 20.8

All the flocks began collecting lamb faecal samples for FECPAK analysis in May and will continue to do so throughout the year. As a result of the analysis of these samples some of the flocks have given lambs a second dose for Nematodirus with minimal sign of Trichostrongylus in the current samples analysed but this will become an increasing issue this month.

Hill Flocks

Work on collecting the 7 week weights from the hill flocks is currently underway with mild winter/spring meaning the farmers have been able to get sheep back to hill slightly earlier this year. While grass supplies on the in-land ground was excellent initially this spring the dry spell in late-April/early-May meant supplies decreased quickly.