

BETTER Farm Update May 2017

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Lambing

All the lowland flocks have finished lambing including those lambing ewe lambs. Overall lambing went well for most with the biggest issues coming after lambing with trying to get ewes and lambs to graze out heavy first rotation covers. The hill flocks are a long way through lambing at this time also with relatively dry weather making lambing easier in the most part for the flocks.

Grass

All the lowland flocks are now into their second grazing rotation and have finished grouping ewes and lambs together following lambing. These group sizes will depend on the size of the flock but vary from 60 to 280 ewes and their lambs per group. Grass growth rates throughout the spring were ahead of last year and ranged from an average of 20kg DM/ha/day at the start of April up to an average of 50 kg DM/ha/day by mid-April this year. A number of the farms have closed off paddocks for silage since the middle of April in order to control grass while also using temporary fencing divisions to reduce paddock size so ewes graze out paddocks better and to allow parts of paddocks to be removed for silage. Despite good grass growth all the flocks have continued to apply fertilizer even if at reduced rates in order to maintain grass quality and for addressing soil fertility issues where necessary.

Flock Management

Over the next two to three weeks all lambs will be weighed for their 7 week weight given the first proper indication of how the flocks are performing this year. Lambs were treated for nematodirus in mid to late April using either a white (Benzimidazole; 1-BZ) or yellow (Levamisole; 2-LV) anthelmintic. Drafting of lambs is now in full swing for the early flock on the Wexford BETTER farm with 21% of lambs drafted as of mid-April at a live weight of 40kg and over.