

BETTER Farm update September 2020

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Grass growth rate have been exceeding demand for the lowland flocks throughout the end of July and into August. For the lower stocked flocks this presented a greater challenge to manage compared to the flocks at their targeted stocking rate but the strong grass growth rates has meant that silage supplied across the flocks are good after a slow start for some due to the dry conditions earlier in the year. Lamb drafting is continuing on the flocks with some of the flock's supplementing heavier ram lambs at grass. The end of July/early August also saw a sharp increase in faecal worm counts on some of the flocks and lambs have been dosed accordingly, but the sharp increase highlighted the importance of carrying out faecal egg counts to assess worm burdens in lambs.

Table 1. Lamb performance from 3 of the Teagasc BETTER hill sheep flocks from birth to 14 weeks (weaning).

Birth Type	Growth Rate Birth to 14 Weeks (g/day)		14 Week Weight (kg)	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
1	250	202-323	26	24.9-27.3
2	172	154-185	21	19.0-22.1

The hill flocks weaned their lambs during August and a summary of the weights is presented in Table 1 from three of the flocks. Overall, the performance of lambs was along expected lines with the farmers happy with how lambs had done since the 7 week weights. A breakdown of the lamb weights by weights category (e.g. how many are over 30kg how many are less than 25kg etc.) will be used in conjunction with available grass supplies on the farm and assessing current store lamb prices to make a decision as to how many, if any, lambs will be finished on farm and how many sold as stores.