

## Teagasc Notes for week ending Friday 6<sup>th</sup> August 2021

### Sheep

Lamb prices are good at the moment and all sheep farmers should start drafting lambs for sale as they become fit to take advantage of the good prices. Young lambs, early in the season, can have adequate fat cover for slaughter from as low as 40kg. This will increase to 45kg and higher later in the season. Kill-out percentages can vary significantly and lambs that are drafted and killed before weaning can achieve a kill out of up to 50% for well-conformed, young, creep-fed lambs, early in the season. Whereas, poorer conformed lambs finished off grass that are killed later in the season after weaning may only kill out at 42-44%

When drafting lambs it is important to determine the target carcass weights and draft lambs as these weights are being achieved. Therefore, weighing lambs regularly is crucial to making this decision. Assess the fat cover also and draft lambs as they become fit. It is important to monitor lamb performance at this time of the year to avoid animals going overweight. Farmers should also bear in mind the upper carcass weight limits imposed by factories and aim to reduce the number of lambs going overweight and out of spec.

Keep a close eye on lamb performance. On a grass only diet, lambs should average a pre-weaning daily live weight gain of 270g and 320g for twin and single lambs respectively. If performance is below these targets, consider the possible causes: genetics; ewe milk yield; grass yield/quality; mineral deficiency; and possible worm burdens.

With regard to worms, Faecal egg counts (FEC) are especially useful in identifying worm burdens in lambs. Faecal egg counts for stomach worms have risen rapidly during July. When treating lambs for stomach worms ensure you get a faecal egg count done after drenching to ensure that the wormer is still working on your farm. Samples should be taken either seven days (for levamisole-based products) or 14 days (for all other products) after the lambs have been treated. Discuss with your vet or advisor if you find you still have a positive egg count after treatment.

Grassland management - many farmers have a lot of grass that is getting stemmy and digestibility is reducing rapidly. Fields that have gone ahead should be taken out for silage. Keep on top of grass quality by grazing at the correct sward height and using dry ewes (or by topping down to 4cm) to clean out paddocks after the lambs. For good weight gains, lambs should only be eating short (7-9cm) leafy grass. Blowfly strike prevention is a task all sheep farmers have to do each year. While blowfly is an external parasite that commonly appears over the summer months, it is not uncommon to hear of cases as early as April and as late as November. Flystrike can reduce performance, is expensive to treat and can be a fatal condition in sheep. It affects all ages of sheep and is caused when Blowflies lay their eggs on soiled areas of the fleece. The number of fly eggs can increase very rapidly causing severe irritation to the sheep. When it comes to Blowfly strike the aim should really be to prevent it from happening in the first place. There are a number of preventative options that can be used: Dipping. Sheep should remain in the solution for a minimum of 60 seconds and make sure you follow manufacturer's instructions for dilution rates; Pour-ons. Pyrethroid based pour-ons offer short-term cover (6-8 weeks) from flystrike on the areas where they are applied; Insect Growth Regulators (IGR's). IGR's work by preventing the maggots from developing from the stage one (non-feeding larvae) to stage two larvae (feeding - damage causing larvae); Shearing:

For season long control the best option is to use a long duration insect growth regulator pour-on early in the year. Where sheep are already have blowfly maggots and other parasites, then choose between plunge dipping or a Pyrethroid based Pour-on. Always follow manufacturer's instructions carefully.

