



Hill Sheep Farm Walk

September 8th 2021

Farm of John Joe Fitzgerald

Ballydavid, Tralee, Co. Kerry



Farm Details

Farm size

- Hill grazing – 80ha share of open commonage (Mount Brandon)
11ha share of enclosed rough ground (used for lambing)
- 12ha of green/improved ground



Figure 1. Map of Fitzgerald's enclosed ground

Hill ewe flock

- 135 ewes joined in November 2020
 - Lot of Xbred ewes in the flock presently
- Ewe flock out wintered on the hill
- Following scanning
 - Singles returned to hill until near lambing
 - Twins kept on enclosed rough ground
- Lambing outdoors from 10th of April onwards
 - Moved indoors for ~ 24 hours after lambing
- Strong single rearing ewes and lambs returned to hill at ~ 7 weeks old
 - Challenging at present due to improved green ground grass production and low stock numbers

Farm Plan

Farm Targets

Gross margin target - >€20/ewe

Ewe numbers – 190 ewes

Scan rate target - > 1.3 lambs per ewe joined

Weaning rate target - > 1.0 lambs per ewe joined

1. Breeding Plan

- Start using pure BFM rams on BFM ewes
 - Aim to only retain replacements from BFM ewes not crossbreds
- Build ewe numbers to 190
- Select replacements from first 2 weeks of lambing
- Cross breed poorer ewes to terminal rams
- Have a small Xbred flock for green ground (long term goal)

2. Soil Fertility & Grassland Management

- Address soil fertility issues
 - Use NMP plan for fertilizer
 - Targeted fertilizer spreading over the summer
- Start using temporary fencing to control grass on green ground
- Graze ewes on hill for 9 months of the year
 - Put singles back to hill after 5 weeks to keep grass for twins

3. Flock Management

- Winter feeding plan for ewes
 - Stepped meal feeding plan
- Use weaning weights to decide plan for selling hill lambs
 - Aim to finish some lambs on farm
 - Need to try increase price/lamb

4. Flock Health

- Give lambs cobalt bolus
- Stop worm dosing ewes
- Rotate fluke dosing products

Ewe Performance

Table 1. Changes in ewe live weight and BCS from 2018/19 to 2020/21

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Average ewe live weight (kg)	50.4	54.1	53.8
Average ewe BCS	2.6	2.9	.
% < 2.5	25	2	.

Table 2. Performance of hill flock in 2019, 2020 and 2021

	2019	2020	2021
No ewes mated	151	156	135
Litter size	1.18	1.58	1.42
Ewes lambed (%)	88.2	82.1	73.3
Lambs weaned per ewe joined	1.07	1.14	0.99

- No BCS data collected in November 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions
- Low pregnancy rates being investigated
- Significant improvement in ewe BCS in first 2 years

Lamb Performance

Table 3. Lamb performance in 2021

Birth type	Birth weight (kg)	7 Week Weight (kg)	Weaning Weight (kg)	ADG Birth to Weaning (g/day)
Single	4.6	16.1	24.6	202
Twins	3.5	12.6	18.8	154

Hill Grazing Management

October/November

Ewes gather in 2 weeks before mating. Ewes giving pre-mating check and anything not fit for the ram culled

20th December to Mid-January

Ewes gathered and pregnancy scanned
Twins stay down for feeding enclosed rough ground
Singles put back to the hill

Mid-March

Singles come gathered down for lambing and kept on enclosed rough ground
After lambing housed for ~ 24 hours before going to green ground
Hoggets remain on the hill throughout the winter/spring and come down for shearing mid-June

Mid-June to August

Singles go back to the hill after 7 weeks with lambs

August to October

After weaning all ewes put back up to the hill until being gathered for mating

Green Ground Soil Fertility

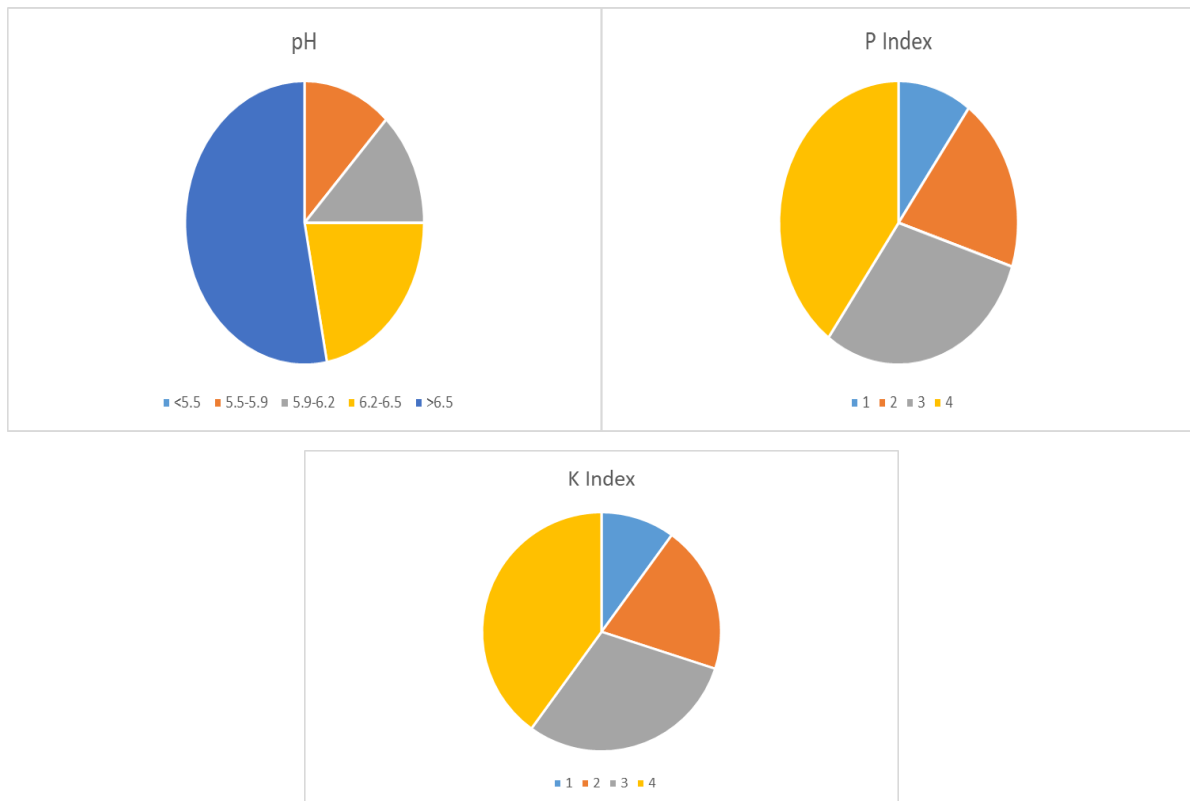


Figure 2. Soil analysis for Fitzgerald ‘green’ ground

- 75% of the farm has a pH \geq 6.2
- 72% of the farm is either index 3 or 4 for P
- All of the farm is either index 1 or 2 for K

Profit Monitor

Table 4. Profit monitor results for the farm from 2020

	€/ewe
Gross Output	67.42
Total Variable Costs	65.72
Gross Margin	1.7

Table 5. Sheep variable costs (€/ewe) for 2020

Variable Cost	€/ewe
Purchased Concentrate	15.28
Fertiliser	11.44
Lime	3.37
Veterinary	14.16
Contractor	6.04
Seed & Spray	2.85
Levies & Transport	2.41
Straw	2.41
Sundry	5.82
Total	65.72

Drench Test Key steps:

1. Contact approved lab for sample kit
2. Select a group of 15 lambs at random and hold in a clean pen
 - a. Place a mark or record tag numbers to identify these lambs
 - b. Allow up to 1 to 2 hours for the lambs to defecate
 - c. Collect 10 separate fresh dung samples and place in containers
3. Dose lambs with chosen product
 - a. Calibrate dosing equipment
 - b. Dose to the heaviest in the group and according to the manufacturer's instructions
 - c. Ensure all lambs are dosed correctly
4. Post sample as soon as possible with relevant details included, preferably on the day of sampling.

Should there be some delay prior to posting place samples in refrigerator / cool box (***Do not freeze or leave in direct sunlight***).
5. A post dosing sample is needed to check efficacy and so steps 2 to 4 will need to be repeated:
 - a. Group 2-LV products retest 7 days later
 - b. Group 1-BZ or group 3-ML products retest 14 days later
6. Calculate the percentage reduction as follows:

$$\frac{(\text{Egg count Test1} - \text{egg count Test2}) \times 100}{\text{Egg count Test1}}$$

Egg count Test1

- Greater than 95% reduction = product working effectively
- Less than 95% reduction = product not working effectively

The initial egg count would need to be in excess of 200 epg (i.e. burden present) to draw conclusions regarding product efficacy if count is lower repeat at the next dosing interval.

7. Consult your vet or advisor to assist in interpreting the results and discussing control measures

Control of stomach worms

1

Don't dose adult ewes for stomach worms unless there is a demonstrated need

2

Use only products from group 1-BZ (white drenches) to treat *Nematodirus* in lambs

3

Quarantine drench - prevent 'buying in' resistance on arrival to the farm

4

Drench test/Faecal egg count

