BETTER Farm Update March 2022

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As presented in Table 1. all bar one of the Teagasc BETTER hill sheep flocks have pregnancy scanned ewes at the time of writing. Pregnancy rates across the flocks are very good this year with all flocks exceeding a 90% pregnancy rate. Some of the flocks with harsher hills and more restricted green ground are targeting a scanned litter size of 1.2 to maximise the amount of single available to go the hill early in the summer. Scanned litters sizes while still high for a couple of flocks are close to target though and moving in the right direction as some of the flock numbers reach target and the ewes spend more time on the hill rather than the green ground.

Table 1. Pregnancy scanning results from the BETTER farm hill sheep flocks.

Location	Donegal	Mayo	Wicklow	Kerry	Sligo	Galway
Scanned Litter size	1.35	1.36	1.33	1.39	1.30	1.29
Scanned Pregnancy rate	94.3	83.9	93.5	95.9	91.5	93.3
Scanning rate	1.27	1.14	1.25	1.34	1.19	1.20

As presented in Table 2. the flocks that are lambing replacements as yearling ewes have scanned in recent weeks. On most of the flocks these ewes will be starting to lambs 2-3 weeks after the start of the main flock. The scanned litter sizes and pregnancy rates are variable but good in the most part. Most of the flocks only mated yearling ewes for 3 weeks so they should be finished lambing as the same time as repeats from the main flocks keeping the lambing season as compact as possible. A vital part of managing these ewes and lambs will be for them to run as a separate group until weaning time with supplementation offered to the yearling ewes initially after lambing and to their lambs until weaning time.

Table 2. Pregnancy scanning results from yearling ewes on the BETTER farm sheep flocks.

Location	Sligo	Roscommon	Leitrim	Kerry	Tipperary	Wexford
Scanned Litter size	1.56	1.48	1.40	1.33	1.45	1.18
Scanned Pregnancy rate (%)	81.8	83.3	92.06	79.5	80.0	70.2
Scanning rate	1.27	1.23	1.29	1.05	1.16	0.83