

## Sheep Research Demonstration Farm, Athenry

Philip Creighton, Animal and Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Teagasc Athenry, Co Galway.

While April was extremely challenging conditions in May have been much more favourable. Grass growth has averaged 65kg DM/ha for the first 3 weeks of May with growth rates of over 100kg DM/ha/day recorded. We closed 20 % of each of the farmlets for silage in late April and we have already made 50 bales of silage from surplus grass skipped over during the rapid growth in mid-May. This silage yielded approximately 4 bales per acre and was of exceptional quality. We will continue to remove strong paddocks to control grass quality over the coming weeks. It is hoped (weather permitting) that we will cut the main crop of silage next week (last week of May). All paddocks are being subdivided into two sections for grazing. Sheep are spending 3-4 days in each section. Current post grazing heights are ranging between 3.7cm to 4.5cm. To date we have spread between 70 to 90kg N/ha and are also applying P and K based on soil test results. Lamb performance for the periods 0-5 weeks and 0-9 weeks is presented in table 1 below with ewe body condition scores at lambing and 5 weeks post lambing presented in table 2. Performance overall is on a par with previous years. Lambs received a dose for Nematodirus in early May based on the Department of Agriculture forecast. Lambs also received a dose for coccidia and have been vaccinated for clostridia and pasturella.

**Table 1. Lamb performance to 5 and 9 weeks of age**

Age	10 ewes/ha	12 ewes/ha	14 ewes/ha	Medium Prolificacy	High Prolificacy
0-5 weeks	288	288	255	287	262
0-9 weeks	271	277	255	264	271

**Table 2. Ewe body condition score at lambing and 5 weeks post lambing**

Period	10 ewes/ha	12 ewes/ha	14 ewes/ha	Medium Prolificacy	High Prolificacy
At lambing	3.3	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.2
At 5 weeks	3.1	3.0	2.9	2.9	3.0

