

SHEEP

June 2022

Teagasc Sheep Open Day

Edited by
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Athenry, June 18, 2022 – 10.00am to 4.00pm

Join us in Athenry on Saturday, June 18 for our Teagasc Sheep Open Day and take the opportunity to review the latest research and technical advice from the Teagasc Sheep programme. On the day, we will be dealing with all the main areas important to Irish sheep production. There will be presentations covering such research areas as grass and forage, maternal breeding, internal parasites and wormer resistance, and hill sheep production. In addition, a series of workshops and interactive demonstrations will deal with topical issues relating to each of the main areas of sheep production, with a special emphasis on the current challenges around feed, fodder and fertiliser costs, and steps that can be taken to address this issue.

There will also be an opportunity to review the wider research programme and meet with



advisors, researchers, students and technical staff. Staff from other Teagasc programmes such as organics, environment, forestry, education and health and safety will also be available to provide information and advice relevant to the sheep industry.

We are delighted to be able to host in-person events again and this will be a day not to be missed for anyone involved in the sheep industry. The open day is free to attend and all are welcome. Further information is available at: www.teagasc.ie/sheepopenday.



An option to shorten residency times is to group up stock.

Grassland

In June, target a pre-grazing yield of 1,250-1,500kg DM/ha or 7-9cm, grazing to a residual of 4.5cm. Where swards have become stemmy, increase the residual on this rotation and ensure a good graze out on the next rotation with either dry ewes or by mechanical means. Aim for a short residency period (i.e., the time spent grazing) to reduce the amount of time the flock (in particular lambs) spend grazing out paddocks. Grouping up stock into larger grazing groups, adding cattle to the rotation or subdividing paddocks are all easy-to-implement ways to achieve this. This will help improve animal performance and protect regrowths.

Consider getting clover into the system. Research work from Teagasc Athenry has shown increasing clover content in swards improves lamb performance and allows for a reduction in

chemical nitrogen (N) input.

For those considering over sowing, this will need to be completed by early June to take advantage of weather conditions and to allow the clover plant a chance to establish. Post-sowing management has a big impact on a successful establishment. Over-sown fields need to be grazed frequently at low covers of ~7cm (1,000kg DM/ha) to allow as much light as possible into the base of the sward to allow for clover establishment and development. We can start preparing for next year by tackling soil pH and controlling any weed issues in selected fields this season. To find out more about over-sowing clover and the factors that can influence its success, have a listen to an episode of *OviCast*, where it is discussed in detail – scan the QR code.



Fodder supplies

Have you checked your silage stocks? Why not use the online calculator and complete a fodder budget for your farm? Scan the QR code to get started. Having enough fodder is essential but equally, having quality will have a big impact next winter. On farms where silage harvesting was delayed, there is still the

option to produce high feed value silage in a second cut. It's important to ensure the field(s) is well grazed out, target a short closing period of six to seven weeks, and aim for a rapid wilt where conditions allow.



BETTER FARM UPDATE

Lamb growth

FRANK CAMPION, Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Athenry, Co. Galway reports on lamb growth and silage making on the BETTER sheep farms.

Lamb growth rates to seven weeks post partum are presented in **Table 1**, and for the most part are on target. Some of the flocks have seen exceptional lamb performance, with the combination of good grass supplies and comparatively settled weather conditions (particularly initially after lambing) for most helping flocks to maximise performance at grass. All the farms dosed for nematodes using a white drench, with some farms going with a second white drench in mid May. Faecal egg counts will be used to determine when to worm-dose lambs for the remainder of the year, with the farms starting to sample in late May.

Some of the farms got to make a small amount of silage in mid May and at the time of writing, most are waiting for the weather to settle to cut the main crop for the year, with a big focus on



Lamb growth rates were on target.

trying to make high-quality silage. The farms will be targeting 10 grazing days ahead from early June and will be dropping out paddocks and sub-dividing paddocks as necessary to keep to this target and optimise performance of the flock. Second rounds of fertiliser have been applied and all the farms are going with a reduced amount to previous years. Rates varied depending on grass supply on the farms, but even where supplies were good, at least 25 units/ha were applied (10 units/ac) to try and keep grass quality high.

Table 1: Mean lamb performance from the lowland flocks from birth to seven weeks of age with range in brackets.

Birth type	Birth weight (kg)	Growth rate (g/day)	Seven-week weight (kg)
1	6.4 (5.8-6.8)	353 (315-381)	24.0 (21.2-26.0)
2	5.3 (4.9-5.7)	291 (260-331)	19.6 (17.6-22.0)
3+*	4.7 (4.2-5.4)	398 (292-312)	19.5 (18.8-20.3)

*Born as triplets and reared as twins.

Prevent blowfly



Blowfly is a high risk on farms at present. It's advisable to get in early and treat rather than wait for the occurrence of strike.

Once strike occurs on one animal, it increases the risk for others on farm. Check unshorn ewes regularly and crutch those with heavily soiled fleeces to reduce the risk of strike. Farms that haven't implemented preventive measures to protect lambs need to do so early this month. There are a number of products that offer protection against blowfly strike. Correct application procedure is essential.



Keep an eye out for blowfly strike.

To understand how different products work and the period of cover they provide scan the QR code for a short video explaining this in more detail.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Keeping children safe on the farm



The health and safety of children is paramount on farms, especially during the busy summer months. In recent years, there has been an increase in children dying on farms. What can be done? Firstly, a farm childhood safety code of practice is available

on the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) website, giving authoritative guidance. Parents

or guardians have the key role to play in motivating, instructing and guiding children and youth about farm safety. A recent Canadian study clearly shows the positive motivational influence of parents. Key approaches include ensuring that farmyards are free of hazards to children, and that they do not have access to farm locations when hazardous work is in progress. A secure play area is a crucial requirement for younger children. The Teagasc Jessy's Smart Kids newsletter series for children can be downloaded from the Teagasc website. These provide enjoyable and motivating puzzles and quizzes for kids related to farm safety.