

SHEEP

February 2024

Grassland management

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Apply N when soil temperatures are above the 6°C required for growth.

A lack of nitrogen (N) in the soil will limit grass growth in spring. When conditions are right, apply 19-25kg/ha (15-20 units per acre) of N in the form of protected urea. As well as having suitable ground conditions, applications should be delayed until soil temperature is above the 6°C required for growth. Keep a close eye on the weather forecast and avoid spreading before a severe drop in temperature or heavy rain. The best response to early chemical N applications will be on dry fields with optimum soil fertility, containing a high proportion of perennial ryegrass and with covers above 6cm.



APPLY
19-25 kg/ha

**(15-20 UNITS
PER ACRE)**

**of N in the form of
protected urea
when conditions
are right.**

Flock health

Keep on top of lameness. It depresses feed intake, making affected ewes less inclined to compete for feed. Untreated sheep will lose body condition score (BCS) and can develop metabolic diseases. Separate and treat lame sheep promptly, consulting with your vet if necessary for diagnosis and prescription. When vaccinating/fluke dosing



Untreated lameness will affect BCS.

ewes take the opportunity to footbath. As lambing is close, it's important to move and handle ewes in a stress-free manner.

Planning for lambing

Make a list and buy essential lambing supplies and equipment now. Having

these items when you need them will save lambs. Best of luck for lambing 2024.

Sheep Census deadline

Postal submissions for the Sheep Census are closed. Online submission is still

possible up to February 14 through your www.agfood.ie account.

Hill Sheep Conference

The Teagasc National Hill Sheep Conference 2024 is on Thursday, February 15 at 7.00pm in the Glendalough Hotel, Co.

Wicklow, A98 X9C1. Full details are available through the Teagasc website and social media channels.

Teagasc/FBD
Environmental
Sustainability
AWARDS 2024

Prize Fund: €30,000

Promoting environmentally sustainable farming and recognising the progress that farmers are making to lighten the load of farming on the environment, while continuing to produce high quality, nutritious food, in a profitable manner.

Closing Date
29th February 2024

Scan the QR code to apply!





Lambing on the horizon

FRANK CAMPION, of AGRIC, Athenry, Co. Galway reports on scanning rates and preparation for lambing.

Scan rates and litter sizes are presented in **Table 1**. Litter sizes are slightly ahead of 2023 on average, at +0.1 for the group. For pregnancy rates, most farms achieved 95% or higher. At scanning time, the ewes were also condition scored, with BCS varying across the flocks. This was unsurprising, as some of the flocks had a lower than desired BCS at mating time. Building BCS during autumn/winter is very challenging.

An eye on thin ewes

Ewes identified as thin at scanning time were marked and separated for additional feeding. They will be put into

separate groups or moved into groups being fed higher concentrate levels pre lambing.



Thin ewes will be fed more concentrates.

Getting on top of lameness

Lame ewes were also treated. All sheep were footbathed to reduce the spread of lameness at housing. Where possible, lame sheep were put into separate groups until cured to reduce the risk of lameness spreading.

Table 1: Mature ewe scanning results from six of the lowland BETTER farms 2023/24.

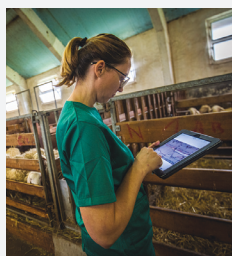
Farm	Forde	Gavin	Gonley	Keane	Moore	O'Connor
Location	Galway	Carlow	Sligo	Wexford	Roscommon	Wicklow
Scanned litter size	1.82	1.94	1.97	1.80	2.01	1.80
Scanned pregnancy rate (%)	96	95	92	95	95	95
Scanning rate	1.75	1.85	1.81	1.71	1.90	1.71



Lambing season preparation

EDEL O'CONNOR and ANNE BIGGINS, of AGRIC, Teagasc
Athenry report on lambing preparations on the INZAC flock.

RESEARCH UPDATE



Data is crucial for INZAC research.

INZAC ewes were scanned to assist pre-lambing management.

Results show a pregnancy rate to first service (AI) of 76%. Scan rates

were 1.25 lambs

per ewe joined for Irish low genetic merit ewes, 1.56 for Irish high genetic merit ewes, 1.79 for New Zealand ewes, and 1.84 for NZ X high Irish ewes.

Tracking weight

All ewes were weighed and had BCS taken before being penned by scanned

litter size and lambing date. Average liveweight was 78kg. BCS was good at an average of 3.75. Since housing, ewes were offered silage (76 DMD) *ad lib*.

Supplementation with a 20% protein nut (Table 2) began at eight, six and four weeks pre lambing for triplet-, twin- and single-bearing ewes, respectively. The pre-lambing clostridia booster was given in late January.

Lambing start date is March 1. All supplies are being bought now. We have checklists for equipment and medicines required. We are refreshing everyone on the traits we are recording, how recording is carried out and the equipment used.

Table 2: Concentrate supplementation of the INZAC flock.

Weeks pre lambing					
	8-7	6-5	4-3	2-1	Total
Concentrates (kg/ewe/day)					
Singles	-	-	0.3	0.5	11.2
Twins	-	0.30	0.55	0.85	23.8
Triplets	0.30	0.55	0.75	0.95	35.7