



Sheep 2025: celebrating tradition and innovation

The Sheep 2025 event at the Teagasc campus in Athenry will showcase the latest technology and research driving progress in the sector

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Ireland's sheep farming community will come together next month for Sheep 2025, the largest dedicated sheep-focused open day on the calendar. This exciting gathering will take place at the Teagasc Mellows Campus in Athenry, County Galway on Saturday 21 June from 10am to 5pm.

A joint industry collaboration between Teagasc, Bord Bia, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, *Irish Farmers Journal*, and Sheep Ireland, the event is more than just an open day—it's a showcase of the latest technology and research driving progress in the sheep industry.

Whether you're a seasoned farmer, a new entrant to agriculture, or simply someone curious about where your food comes from, the event will supply valuable insights across a wide range of topics.

The technical programme will cover everything from grassland management and breeding techniques to nutrition, flock health, and organic farming.

With growing awareness around sustainability, attendees can also expect detailed sessions on environmental practices, water quality, and the Signpost Programme, which is helping farmers reduce greenhouse gas emissions while maintaining productivity.

The event also offers tailored content on hill sheep production, forestry integration, and agricultural advisory services. There will be information on the wider market landscape, the meat industry, market trends, and opportunities for agricultural education and career pathways.

Consumer expectations

This year's event is particularly timely, as Irish agriculture continues to adapt to new consumer expectations, regulatory demands, and environmental goals. Sheep 2025 offers a platform for farmers to connect, learn, and share best practices that will help future-proof their flocks and livelihoods. The following is a selection of projects being undertaken by Teagasc researchers which will be presented on the day.



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Flock Health: Lameness Survey

Walsh Scholar Jake Delaney will present learnings from the National Lameness Survey, conducted between February 2023 and June 2024. Major findings include the inconsistency in participants' ability to identify lameness-causing lesions. Over 20% of sheep farmers surveyed were unable to correctly identify scald and foot rot.

To address this, a dedicated section will display key symptoms using photos and visual aids. Another section will present key survey insights including the apparent rise of Contagious Ovine Digital Dermatitis (CODD) cases which the results of this work indicate is present on approximately 50% of the sheep farms surveyed.

The display will also feature a walk through/visual of correct foot-bathing techniques, displaying proper active ingredient concentrations and mixing.

Store Lamb Finishing Trials

In recent years Teagasc Athenry studies have investigated outdoor finishing options for store lambs using forage brassica crops. Researcher Frank Campion will present findings showing that hill bred lambs have achieved average growth rates of 130g/day during the autumn/winter months on these crops.

There will be a display of the different forages used and the key factors affecting lamb performance when grazing brassica crops post weaning. There will also be information about recent studies investigating the options for finishing lambs in an organic system both indoors and outdoors.

A key component of these systems is the requirement for more forage based diets and some of the options within the study being investigated will be displayed and initial findings presented.

Hill Sheep Grazing Study

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the earlier sheep are re-introduced to hill grazing post-lambing, the higher they rise up the hill, potentially improving grazing management on hills. PhD Student Michael Dever will be providing an update on a new sustainable hill grazing study which has commenced this year.

This stand will display the GPS technology being used to track ewe grazing location and behaviour alongside examples of the GIS maps and data being examined to identify the locations of the sheep while grazing the hill so that performance of sheep relative to where they graze can be evaluated.

Pasture-based Sheep Production Systems

Researcher Sarah Woodmartin will present a summary of the results of a recently completed study which investigated the addition of a companion forage, namely legumes (white clover or red clover) or herbs (chicory or plantain) into perennial ryegrass swards.

The objective was to assess the role of more diverse sward types within an intensive lowland sheep production system. Key drivers included improving lamb growth rates directly from pasture and reducing enteric methane emissions thereby enhancing production efficiency and supporting the development of more sustainable lamb-finishing systems.

The results demonstrated improved sward quality and dry matter intake among animals consuming a more diverse sward, compared to those grazing a perennial ryegrass monoculture. This led to higher average daily gain, particularly in the post-weaning period, ultimately reducing age at slaughter.

Adding legumes directly reduced methane output, while the inclusion of any companion forage indirectly contributed to lower methane and total farm-gate emissions, through the reduced age at slaughter and a decreased reliance on concentrate feed in the lamb finishing system.

Overall, the project aimed to identify the most appropriate plant species to include in sheep grazed swards in order to enhance the sustainability and

production efficiency of pasture-based sheep production systems.

A day out for all the family

While Sheep 2025 has a strong technical and industry focus, it's also designed as a fun, engaging day out for families. From the moment you arrive at the Athenry campus, you'll find a mix of lively demonstrations, interactive exhibits, and plenty of good food and entertainment.

Also taking place will be various sheep breed competitions and breed displays in addition to commercial trade stands featuring all things sheep. Workshops on health and safety, quad safety sessions and sheep shearing exhibits will be run throughout the day. A dedicated wool village will showcase what initiatives are currently underway in this area.

Plan your visit

Sheep 2025 will take place at Teagasc's Mellows Campus in Athenry, a site with a long-standing reputation for agricultural excellence.

The event is open from 10am to 5pm, and admission is free. So mark your calendar for Saturday 21 June.

For more information and updates, follow the event organisers – Teagasc, Bord Bia, the Department of Agriculture, the Irish Farmers Journal, and Sheep Ireland – on their social media channels or visit the website to discover what's coming up for the [largest sheep open day](#) for Ireland 2025.



A new study on sustainable hill sheep grazing is using GPS technology to evaluate the performance of sheep relative to where they are grazing.