

SHEEP

May 2025

Grassland

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Monitor your grass supply closely and aim for 15 days ahead in May.

As we head into the peak growing season, it's important to stay on top of grassland management. In May, aim to turn stock into a pre-grazing yield of 1,200-1,500kg DM/ha (7-9 cm), grazing down to 4.5cm. To maintain performance, aim to achieve this in a short window (three to five days). This may require larger grazing groups, e.g., batching up ewes or adding cattle. Or you could reduce the grazing area using temporary electric fencing to subdivide paddocks.

Monitor grass supply closely. In early May, aim for 15 days grazing ahead, reducing as the month progresses. Farms prone to drought may want a higher reserve. Where surpluses arise, remove these areas for early cutting to rebalance supply and return them to the grazing rotation by weaning.



**DELAYING SILAGE
CUTTING
REDUCES DMD BY
APPROXIMATELY**

2-3%

**per week, reducing
feed quality.**

High-quality silage for sheep

Take the opportunity this month to produce some high-quality silage for next winter, whether surplus from the grazing rotation or as dedicated cuts.



A good silage crop sets you up well for the winter.

Silage quality is significantly influenced by the timing of cutting and wilting practices.

Aim to harvest silage between May 15 and 25, before grass develops seed heads. Delaying cutting reduces DMD by approximately 2-3% per week, reducing feed quality. Aim for a rapid wilt of 24 to 36 hours after mowing.

Prolonged wilting can negatively impact silage quality. Each 24-hour period of wilting may reduce silage DMD by 0.5 to 2 percentage points.

Blowfly strike

Blowfly strike can occur as soon as blowfly activity begins — often as early as April. The window between egg laying and visible damage is short, so early detection and prompt action are vital. Preventing blowflies from completing their lifecycle reduces future outbreaks, lowering risk for your farm and the surrounding area for the rest of the season.

Warm, humid weather increases the risk, particularly where fleeces are dirty or sheep have wounds. Flies target soiled areas such as the tail, back, shoulders, feet, and head.

Treatment options

- Plunge dipping: provides effective protection when done correctly. Sheep must be fully immersed for at least 60 seconds, and dip solution should be properly mixed and replenished according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Topical pour-ons: most commonly used, offering seven to 19 weeks cover. Application technique is critical — apply only to a clean fleece using calibrated equipment:
 - insecticidal pour-ons (e.g., cypermethrin based): these kill maggots directly, offer shorter cover (six to eight weeks); and,
 - insect growth regulators (IGRs, e.g., dicyclanil based): these prevent larvae development; must be used before flystrike occurs.
- Shearing: removes fleece, reducing immediate risk. However, protection is short lived and should be combined with other treatments.

Keep on top of lameness

Scald is the most common cause of lameness in lambs and can escalate rapidly if not addressed. Early detection and prompt treatment are crucial to prevent more severe infections like foot rot. Scald often arises in wet conditions and spreads

quickly among lambs. Regular footbathing with a 10% zinc sulphate or copper sulphate solution is effective in controlling scald. More severe cases of lameness may require antibiotic treatment; consult a veterinarian for guidance.

National Sheep Welfare Scheme 2025

Applications for the National Sheep Welfare Scheme 2025 opened on March 28 and must be submitted online via www.agfood.ie by 23:59 on May 15, 2025. All applicants, including previous participants, must submit a new application. The Scheme runs from January 1 to December 31, 2025. To qualify for the full payment of €13 per breeding ewe, applicants must complete two mandatory actions (Category A) and one voluntary action (Category B). Category A actions are valued at €4 each and Category B at €5 each. Category A actions are: shearing; body condition scoring ewes with appropriate follow-on management; and, clostridial vaccination of ewes (or lambs if ewes are already vaccinated). Category B actions are: footbathing; and, plunge dipping to control external parasites. Selected actions must be completed by October 17, 2025. If more time



Apply for the Sheep Welfare Scheme by May 15.

is needed, a final deadline of November 28, 2025 is available, though payment may be delayed until January 2026. This option must be selected at the time of application.

Payment is based on the average number of breeding ewes declared in the 2022-2024 Sheep Census. More information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-agriculture-food-and-the-marine/services/2025-national-sheep-welfare-scheme/>.

Save the Date: Sheep 2025



This summer, Ireland's sheep farming community is set to come together for Sheep 2025, the largest dedicated sheep-focused open day on the island of Ireland. Scheduled for Saturday, June 21, from 10.00am, this exciting gathering will take place at the Teagasc Mellows Campus in Athenry, Co. Galway.

Nematodirus treatment

FRANK CAMPION, Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Athenry, Co. Galway looks at nematodirus treatment of the BETTER sheep farms and the importance of watching grass growth on your own farm.

Lambs on the lowland flocks were treated for nematodirus in line with the DAFM forecast using a white drench (benzimidazole; 1-BZ). In some cases, lambs were still too young at the time of the first dose so a second round of dosing may be necessary in these instances. Following the nematodirus dose, FECPAK analysis will be used for the remainder of the year to establish when further anthelmintic treatments are required. The grazing season is fully under way now and grass growth rates have begun to climb across the farms. Ewes and lambs have been grouped up as much as possible and the second rounds of fertiliser applied.



The grazing season is fully underway.

Grass growth rates for the first half of April averaged 19kg DM/ha, but there was a range going from 5-50kg DM/ha, demonstrating the importance of every farmer walking their own land to assess grass supplies.

Machinery safety

Most injuries on farms are caused by being struck by a farm vehicle. Blind spots exist around vehicles – particularly at close range. Be alert driving and go at a suitable speed. Give consideration to where vehicles and persons may be, particularly children. Implement segregation measures

between vehicles and persons.

Speak positively about dangers to children and young persons. Speak to your machinery contractors about safety. Make sure that PTO and power shafts are adequately covered.

HEALTH AND SAFETY