

DN NEWSLETTER

issue 08

Lambing time is now drawing to a close and you should review 2020 lambing. This weeks issue will discuss a few key points which should be considered and amendments to make for 2021 lambing season. Remember, ewe and grassland management decisions should be made throughout the year and forward planning reduces the risk of rushed choices.

Lambing 2020 - How did it go?

As the lambing season is over for many producers, now is a good time to look back upon the season and evaluate how it went whilst it's fresh in your mind.

For many farms, challenging weather conditions earlier in spring led to poor grass growth rates, which now coupled to dry conditions have caused problems on many farms. Farms are busy now, with early lambing flocks beginning to bring lambs forward to market, and the later lambing flocks ensuring dosing regimes protect performance especially where *Nematodirus* and other parasites are a concern.

It is still worthwhile dedicating the time to review and identify elements that worked well or maybe didn't turn out so well and could perhaps be improved upon next season.

Grassland Management

The poor weather conditions in spring and its impact upon grass growth rates, meant having post lambing paddocks or pastures in reserve was vitally important.

Those who managed to do this successfully had greater supplies of grass for ewes lambing down putting them under less pressure and tending to require less supplementary feeding.

If grass was tight for you this spring, then you could maybe think about closing fields earlier so that you have a sufficient supply of grass to sustain ewe and lambs in early lactation in future years.

Lambing Date

This year, we have also seen some farmers changing their lambing date by either lambing earlier or making the move to lambing later. If you changed your lambing date, now is a good time to begin to evaluate how that worked for you and whether you will stick with the same regime next year. This will help plan grass and forage requirements for next year and dictate how much winter forage is required.



Feeding Regime

Reviewing the lambing season, we need to ask ourselves how well our feeding programme worked? If ewes lambed down in good condition, with plentiful colostrum, decent sized lambs and few issues with prolapsing or twin lamb then ewes were well fed. If this is the case, then look to continue with that feeding programme with minor tweaks where required for next season. However, if the case is that the flock had issues in any of these areas its important that reasons for the issues are identified and addressed for next season.

Facilities

For farms that may have made the decision to increase flock numbers its also important to assess how this went. Did the increase put too much pressure on the facilities and if so, can these be altered efficiently to make the increase more practical? Did the increase in numbers improve profitability or increase losses?



Problems

One common area where farmers fall short is ensuring problem ewes aren't bred again. It's vital that they are identified at lambing time, otherwise they will be missed and end up back to the ram for next season.

Any ewe that has caused problems through the lambing and rearing season should be marked and culled. Problem ewes not only take up valuable time at busy times of the year, but they also reduce the profitability of the flock. Culling and replacing them with productive animals is the only way forward.

Feed Supply

Another important factor to assess is feed supply, did you have enough to get you through the housing period and was it of sufficient quality to meet your ewes needs? If you had to buy a lot of forage in, could you make more yourself this summer or was the shortage due to housing ewes for longer due to the weather?

Forage planning needs to take place now as it also influences many of the key areas discussed above. Do you analyse your forage to calculate how much supplementary feed is actually needed for your sheep?

If your forage is in bales can you mark and store at harvest? Can you sample different bales and keep the better quality forage for ewes closer to lambing?



What numbers are worth recording?

- Scanning results
- Ewes lost from scanning to weaning
- Number ewes aborted
- Number of lambs alive at 48 hours
- Number of lambs at weaning
- Number of lambs sold / reared
- Weight of lambs at 8 weeks
- Weight and age of lambs at weaning
- Antibiotic usage

Summary

Reviewing the season is important for all units not just the ones where things went wrong, lambing season may have gone smoothly for you this year but there is still no harm in looking back to see if anything can be improved upon. Now is the time to put a plan in place for next season, if things need changing or improvements need to be made don't wait until you're ready to face a busy lambing time to do so as it's probably too late!

DN Lamb Feeds

Our range of lamb feeds have been developed to support lambs from birth through to finishing. Starting feeds include Progressive Rumistart Pellets and Pro-Start Coarse Mix, both include a rumen developer to get lambs off to the best start.

Progressive GT Nuts, a high protein nut aimed to grow frame in gimmers and tups. Finishing products comprise of Lamb Finisher Pellets, Intensive Lamb Nuts, Super Lamb Nuts and Alka Finisher Nuts which are designed to put weight and cover on to lambs to meet the market specification.

