

How did the tups perform?

Many areas affect a ram's fertility – they can either be temporary or permanent. Some aspects to consider if you are worried about your ram's performance:

- **Were the rams BCS 3.5 or more at tugging?** Rams in poor condition will not be able to perform as well throughout the breeding season compared to those that have been well fed and are in good BCS.
- **Was the correct ratio of tups: ewes used?** Typically, a ratio of 1:40 ewes would be recommended, although farmers may find that robust fertile rams may be able to serve 80-100 ewes.
- **Did he pass his pre-breeding examination?** All rams should be examined 8-10 weeks prior to tugging and then again 2 weeks before. They should have their testicles, teeth and feet examined. They should also be up to date with their vaccinations and worming treatment where appropriate.
- **Was the tup inexperienced or old?** Ram lambs should have ≤ 40 ewes to serve.
- **Did the tup have any illness over the tugging period?** Any periodic illness can increase the ram's body temperature which will lead to his sperm over-heating.

Disappointing ewe lamb or shearing results?

Young sheep need to be adequate weight to ensure that they are cycling. Ewe lambs need to be at least 60% and shearlings need to be at least 80% of adult body weight at tugging. Weighing 20 of your average ewes in your flock will help to work out the weight you need to achieve.

SCANNING PERFORMANCE

HOW DID YOUR FLOCK PERFORM?

Targets for scanning (lowland flocks):

- **Scanning %: 175-195%**
- **Barren ewes: 2%**

Worried about trace elements?

The right balance of trace elements is crucial for production and has been shown to help with fertility, lamb vigour and preventing conditions such as swayback. However, over-supplementation can be as much a problem than under-supplementing. The best time to analyse levels in your ewes is 6 weeks prior to tugging. If you are worried, please have a chat with us.

Were fewer lambs scanned than usual?

There may be several factors affecting the number of lambs scanned, but the main considerations are listed below:

- **Were ewes at target BCS (BCS 3) at tugging?** Ewe nutrition is a major factor in influencing fertility. Ensuring appropriate long-term nutrition will not only affect a ewe's fertility, but also her future offspring's too.
- **Were ewes flushed prior to tugging?** Increasing nutrition (either forage, concentrates or good grass) 2-3 weeks will increase the number of eggs released by the ewe and therefore the number of potential lambs produced. Recent evidence has shown that NOT all ewes should be flushed prior to tugging: only ewes below target BCS should be flushed. Ewes should NOT be fed red clover grass or silage 45 days before/ after tugging as this will affect their ovulation rates.
- **Were ewes stressed at tugging?** Tugging groups should be in place at least 10 days prior to the ram being introduced to reduce stress. Stress should also be minimised during the first 30 days of pregnancy to ensure that all fertilised eggs are implanted.