

## **Lambing – MALP**

Recording at lambing provides the opportunity to gather important and economically relevant performance information on both the ewe and the lamb(s). In addition recording at lambing ensures that lambs are linked to their sire and dam which is essential in the building of a robust pedigree. In the case of MALP breeders, where DNA will be used to establish parentage, lambing is less involved (see below).

## **Lamb birth date**

If you intend on recording each lambing the following applies.

- Record the ID of the ewe lambing and the date she lambed. When parentage is established birth dates for lambs can be gathered.
- If you are intending on recording births, it is advised that you also identify the lambs that are born in a particular period with a coloured spray mark for each 7 day period (and record the dates over which the colour was used). This will increase the accuracy of assigning lambs to ewes (especially if half sister ewes are lambing in separate “spray” periods). Ensure that the spray is permanent enough to remain for at least 40 days.

If you do not intend on recording each lambing the following applies.

- You should spray lambs born over a 7 day period with an identifiable colour (and record the dates over which the colour was used) in order to gather birth date data. Ensure that the spray is permanent enough to remain for at least 40 days. The aim should be to separate the ewes and lambs into 4 separate groups covering the entire lambing period.

## **Dead lambs**

Dead lambs need not be recorded in the lambing book, however a piece of ear needs to be taken from the lamb and the date (equivalent either to the date the ewe lambed or the “spray” period) \ put on the freezer bag.

## **Ewe lambing difficulty**

Sheep Ireland uses a scoring system on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (no lambing assistance) to 4 (prolonged intervention). During lambing any ewe that requires assistance of any sort should be recorded as doing so i.e. scoring is on an incidence basis. As with dag scoring, **the key is to be consistent when scoring a group of sheep and for these sheep to have been run under similar conditions.** The level of lambing difficulty can be defined based on the level on intervention required at lambing, and can be categorised into the following 4 discrete groups:

1. No assistance
2. Voluntary intervention for convenience (easily pulled)
3. Moderate assistance required, no adverse impact on ewe or lamb (reverse presentation/ leg back)
4. Significant difficulty requiring prolonged intervention by farmer and/or vet, and/or noticeable subsequent impact on ewe and/or lamb performance

### **Recording ewe groups (ewe management)**

Many producers feed single-bearing and multiple-bearing ewes differently from lambing (i.e. during rearing), perhaps providing additional feed or some meal for multiples and so on, as they would for commercial ewes. To fill in the ewe group section accurately in this book, the key points are:

- You will need to identify the group ewes, and therefore lambs, are in (if any) at lambing so that Sheep Ireland can correct for 'group effects' – e.g. better feed to twins during lactation. This is important when groups are fed separate for a long time – e.g. supplemented from lambing through to weaning. The grouping of animal involves assigning ewes to a group from group 1 upwards (depending on the number of groups). It is as simple as ensuring the ewes in the same group get the same group number, not the group number itself. There is no need to explain what the different treatments for the groups are.
- Lambing groups should be as 'genetically random' as you can make them – i.e. by all means lamb singles separate from multiples, but have ewes that went to a mix of sires in each lambing group. If all ewes in group A are mated to sire 1, while all ewes in group B went to sire 2, Sheep Ireland will not be able to say how much of any difference in the performance of lambs born to these ewes is due to the group effect or to the sire effect.
- If there are no separate groups then you may leave this section blank, and we will assume all ewes were treated the same.
- It is best to try and keep management across different ewe groups the same.