
Weighing – MALP

Introduction

Weight records are essential in determining growth rate, and multiple weights are required to achieve this. As a prerequisite to weighing, scales should be calibrated using reference weights to ensure accuracy of weight data collection.

Weighing events

Growth rates can be divided into pre-wean and post-wean. Therefore **weaning weight** is a key **performance measurement**. For 40-day weight and weaning weight the important points to adhere to are:

- Record the weight of all the lambs, including small lambs and later born ones. If one sire leaves small progeny, we need to take account of this, even when we intend to cull them.
- The date that each weight is taken should be recorded.
- It is good practice to treat all animals the same where possible but the Sheep Ireland system's ability to handle 'group effects' will overcome differences if management can't be the same (e.g. one group had to be left in the yard longer before weighing). At weighing record the group if applicable. The grouping of animal involves assigning ewes and/ or lambs to a group from group 1 upwards (depending on the number of groups). It is as simple as ensuring the lambs in the same group get the same group number, not the group number itself.
- Electronic systems will enable efficient recording of weaning weight information. Scales which let you enter the tag number and record the weight save writing. Some data loggers can collect the weights and prepare them for Sheep Ireland in a single operation. Such systems can alert you if you attempt to add another weight for a lamb that already has a weight recorded

For later weights such as autumn weights, and mature weight the protocols are much the same as those for weaning weights. It is best to:

- Weigh all animals still present, male and female, for the best information about post-weaning growth in your flock.
- Remember to identify different groups that have been run separately up to this weighing.
- Record the weighing date. This is most important where groups are weighed on different dates but should be recorded anyway.
- Ewe mature weight should be measured at hogget mating (approximately 18 months) and then subsequently at mating each year.

You or the technician

A technician will support you in gathering weigh information, including providing reference weights, equipment and advice.