

Task 2 – Full Explanation and Questions & Answers

Task 2 (As appears in STAP Terms & Conditions)

The objective of this task is to increase the level of Pedigree & Commercial data being recorded in the Sheep Ireland Database. Completion of this task will be verified by Sheep Ireland.

Participants must choose one of the 3 following options;

Option A: Weight recording

The objective of this measure is to help flock owner's measure flock performance. They must provide on farm lamb weights to Sheep Ireland, subject to a maximum number of 100 lambs. The requirements for this will be set out by Sheep Ireland.

Option B: Maternal flock recording

The objective of this measure is to help sheep farmers identify better replacement females. Participants choosing this option will be encouraged to establish a 'Nucleus recording flock'. This flock would be the source of future replacements and would consist of the best ewes from within the flock. The requirements for this will be set out by Sheep Ireland.

Option C: Identifying full parentage of lambs through detailed mating records

Participants would be required to identify the sires of lambs born in the flock. This will be done through recording rams used on a minimum of 20 ewes in the flock. Full requirements will be set out by Sheep Ireland.

Expanded explanation of Task 2 - Options A, B & C

Option A - Weight recording

Provide on farm lamb weights to Sheep Ireland as specified below:

- Participants in this task are required to weigh 50% of all lambs, subject to a maximum number of 100 lambs. Data must be recorded on Sheep Ireland Website.
- A minimum of 2 weights are required.
 - The first weight can be collected from lambs whenever the farmer wishes – the date of weighing must be recorded accurately. A practical time to collect weights might be at approximately 60 days of age as this will eliminate unnecessary disruption of very young lambs.
 - The second weight can be collected after a minimum of 30 days have passed since the first weighing. It may be practical for farmers to collect the second weight at weaning or as lambs are weighed for drafting for sale.
- Lambs being weighed must be permanently identified in some way at the first weighing to facilitate their accurate identification at subsequent weighings.
- Successful completion of this task will be verified by Sheep Ireland.

The objective of this measure is to help flock owner's measure flock performance.

Option B - Maternal flock recording

- Participants in this option are required to record the lambs of a minimum of 20 ewes in the flock.
- Participants must tag these lambs at birth and match to birth Dam, record lamb deaths, lambing difficulties, birth weight and subsequent lamb weights (minimum of 2 – for example 40 day weight, 100 day weight and/or slaughter/sale weight).
- Successful completion of this task will be verified by Sheep Ireland.

The objective of this measure is to help sheep farmers identify better replacement females.

Option C - Identifying full parentage of lambs through detailed Mating records

Participants are required to identify the sires of lambs born in the flock. This will be done by the following:

- Single Sire Mating (SSM) using a EuroStar performance recorded ram - with a group of ewes in order to assign a sire identity to lambs born the following spring.
- Double Sire Mating (DSM) using EuroStar performance recorded rams of two distinctly different breeds – with a group of ewes allowing sire identification at lambing.

The minimum entry criteria for this measure are as follows:

- A minimum requirement of 20 ewes being mated is required for this option.
- Ewes to be SSM or DSM (as specified above) for a minimum of one full breeding cycle – 16/17 days.
- Successful completion of this task will be verified by Sheep Ireland & a detailed mating protocol will be circulated to all farmers that choose this option.

Farmers that choose this option in one year of STAP, will be required to choose Option B of Task 2 in the following STAP year.

The objective of this measure is the help flock owners evaluate individual ram performance within their flock and help to identify the best rams to cull/retain for future breeding.

Questions & Answers

Option A

Q: Is there a Sheep Ireland charge to partake in this option?

A: No charge.

Q: How do I record my weights?

A: Where electronic recording equipment is not being used, weights will need to be recorded manually. Weight recording sheets can be printed from the Sheep Ireland website. These sheets can be found under the STAP section on the Sheep Ireland homepage. Weights must be recorded in kilogrammes. The date of weighing is critical and must be recorded.

Q: Where do I send these weights?

A: Sheep Ireland will provide an online facility to record these lamb weights. Farmers who choose this option will be allocated a unique code to access the Sheep Ireland website weight recording facility. All weights can be entered here.

Q: When do I collect my first lamb weight?

A: This is up to the discretion of the farmer. It is not necessary to weigh all lambs together on the same day. As long as the date of weighing is recorded accurately, weighings can take place over 2/3 days. A good age to collect the first lamb weight is between 40 and 60 days of age. This will minimise unnecessary disruption to very young lambs.

Q: When do I collect my second lamb weight?

A: The second lamb weight can be collected once 30 days have passed since the first weighing event. It may be practical for farmers to collect this second weight as lambs are weighed for drafting for sale. A further management benefit of weighing at drafting is that farmers can record the NSIS (Department tag number) of each lamb drafted and correlate these weights and tag number with factory kill sheets (if available).

Q: How do I identify the lambs between weighings?

A: Farmers will need to tag the lambs being weighed at the first weighing.

Q: What tags can I use?

A: This is at the discretion of the farmer. As with any animal tag, there is the possibility of tags being lost between first weighing and final weighing. Due to this fact many farmers choose to use temporary management tags. These small tags can be ordered from most tag providers at a small cost. You can single tag or double using these tags. Double tagging will help in the battle against tags being lost. If single tagging the advice would be to tag a number of additional lambs (10%) more than you need to meet the requirements of STAP.

A benefit of using management tags at first weighing and replacing at sale will be greater ease of completing sheep dispatch dockets. Your department tags will be in sequence. Farmers that choose to tag lambs using Department tags at first weighing will find lambs coming ready for slaughter at different times and as a result tag number will not be in sequence.

Also lost Department (NSIS) tags need to be accounted for by each flock owner, whereas temporary management tags do not.

Q: Can I use electronic tags to identify lambs that I am weighing?

A: Yes. The use of electronic tags in association with electronic readers and weigh recorders will make weight recording far less laborious. Farmers that record weights electronically can send electronic files directly to Sheep Ireland which greatly reduces the time and effort required to manually record this information.

Questions and Answers

Option B

Q: Is there a Sheep Ireland charge to partake in this option?

A: No charge.

Q: What ewes should I record in my flock?

A: This is at the discretion of the farmer involved. A minimum of 20 ewes need to be recorded. Best advice is record your best ewes. Which ewes these are might be difficult to identify. Ideally you should identify younger sheep that perform well at lambing time – i.e. have 2 lambs unassisted and both lambs survive birth. These lambs (the female ones), will hopefully carry on the good genetics of their mother so this will be a good start to building a performance history of your flock.

Q: Lambs must be tagged at birth. What tags are to be used.

A: Similar to the weight recording option farmers can choose to use either management tags or permanent tags. When lambs are sold off farm however the Department (NSIS) tag must be recorded and correlated with the management tag number used to identify the lamb at birth.

It is again advisable to double tag the lambs at birth (using either management or Department tags). If lambs lose a single tag, they can still be identified by the second tag.

Q: Lambing difficulty etc must be recorded for my 20 ewes – where do I record all this information?

A: Sheep Ireland will make contact with all farmers that choose this option. A handy pocket sized lambing notebook will be circulated, where all the relevant information can be recorded for each of the 20 ewes involved. Once recorded in the pocket notebook, all the relevant data will need to be recorded on the Sheep Ireland website. Farmers who choose this option will be contacted by Sheep Ireland to help enter this information on the website.

Q: Do Pedigree sheep breeders qualify for this option.

A: Yes. Pedigree are strongly encouraged to join STAP and choose this option.

Questions & Answers

Option C

Q: Is there a Sheep Ireland charge to partake in this option?

A: No charge.

Q: What information do I need to record?

A: The full Department (NSIS) tag numbers of the ewes you are mating need to be recorded and entered on the Sheep Ireland website. Sheep Ireland will contact all breeders that choose this option and circulate information detailing clear mating protocols for this option. The identity of the ram/s used for mating needs to be recorded also.

Q: What sheep should I mate under this option?

A: This is at the discretion of the farmer, although Sheep Ireland would encourage farmers to mate what they would consider their best ewes, with what they might consider their best ram. Best advice would be to mate your younger stock, as these should be remaining in the flock longer than your older ewes.

Q: How and where do I record this mating information?

A: This mating information can be recorded on mating sheets which can be sourced from the Sheep Ireland website under the section 'STAP'. Once a farmer records this information at source on paper, it must then be notified to Sheep Ireland via the Sheep Ireland website (www.sheep.ie). Each farmer that chooses Option C, will be provided with a personal access code to the Sheep Ireland website where the details of all ewes and rams can be recorded.

Q: What rams do I need to use in this Option?

A: The breed of ram is at the farmers discretion. However the ram must be a performance recorded EuroStar ram born in a LambPlus Pedigree breeders flock.

Q: What is the objective of this option?

A: The objective of this option is to highlight to farmers the variation in performance that can exist between the progeny of different rams. The intention is that farmers who choose this option will identify the lambs born to identified rams the following spring. By doing this farmers can track the progress of lambs and assess ram performance.

Q: If I choose this option in Year 1 of STAP, do I need to choose Option 2 of Task 2 in my second year?

A: Yes. Sheep Ireland will require you to track the performance of the lambs born to the rams used the previous Autumn.

Please direct any further questions on STAP Task 2 to the Sheep Ireland office on 1850 601 901. Alternatively, please email query@sheep.ie. Further information is also available on www.sheep.ie.