

Sheep Improvement Scheme (SIS) Genotyped ram task

Frequently asked questions

Date: 12/9/22



Questions

| | |
|---|---|
| How many genotyped rams must I purchase during the SIS? | 2 |
| I am a Lowland farmer and I already have a 4 or 5 Star ram, will that cover my Sheep Improvement Scheme requirements? | 2 |
| What is required of Hill sheep farmers regarding the SIS ram task? | 2 |
| What is genotyping? | 3 |
| What does sire verified mean? | 3 |
| If I have over 150 ewes, I will need to complete the ram task twice during the SIS. Can I use the same ram twice for SIS purposes? | 3 |
| If I purchase a genotyped ram for the purpose of the SIS, can I sell that ram to another SIS participant the following year for the purpose of using within the SIS again? | 3 |
| If I own a genotyped 4 or 5 star ram which has not yet been 'claimed' during the SIS, can I sell this ram to another SIS participant to use within the scheme. | 3 |
| Can I buy a hybrid ram as part of the scheme? | 3 |
| Can I genotype my existing ram/s for the purpose of the ram task in the SIS? | 4 |
| Where can genotyped rams be found? | 4 |
| I have signed up to the scheme, I just purchased a ram (before the start date of the scheme – 1 st Feb) that is 4 or 5 stars and is genotyped and meets the criteria for the SIS scheme, is this ram eligible? | 4 |

How many genotyped rams must I purchase during the SIS?

All participants will be required to carry out the Genotyped Ram action at least once during the first three years of the scheme. The Genotyped Ram action becomes your Category B action for that year(s). Participants will carry out the Genotyped Ram task rather than the other Category B action in the year they have selected to carry out the Genotyped Ram action. Where a participant has a scheme ewe reference number greater than 150 breeding ewes, the participant will be required to carry out the Genotyped Ram action twice over the lifetime of the scheme. The year in which the genotyped ram action is to be carried out by each participant was selected at the point of applying for the scheme.

I am a Lowland farmer and I already have a 4 or 5 Star ram. Will that cover my Sheep Improvement Scheme requirements?

No. The SIS requires farmers to purchase a ram in the year (or years) that they chose to carry out the task when applying for the scheme. A ram purchased outside of this chosen year will not meet the requirements of the SIS.

What is required of Hill sheep farmers regarding the SIS ram task?

Hill farmers have the option to purchase either a ram that meets the Lowland requirements (a genomically tested 4/5 star scrapie type 1/2/3) **OR** a genotyped hill ram that is sire verified, scrapie

type 1/2/3. Hill flocks with over 150 ewes must purchase two genotyped rams over the course of the scheme.

What is genotyping?

The term 'genotyping' has traditionally become associated with scrapie resistance testing for most Irish sheep farmers. Scrapie testing is one use for genotyping but there are many, many additional benefits to modern day genotyping that were not available in the past.

When a sheep is genotyped with Sheep Ireland today, it is possible to assess the level of inbreeding within that individual (an inbreeding % figure is published for each genotyped sheep). The Sheep Ireland genotype can also verify if the parentage of a sheep is correct or not (provided the parents of the sheep are also genotyped). Finally, the Sheep Ireland genotype will provide a scrapie resistance result for each genotyped sheep.

Genotyping requires a tissue sample to be collected from the ear of an animal. DNA is extracted from the tissue sample and sent to the genotyping lab for analysis. Sheep Ireland uses the lab results to determine the level of inbreeding (if any), the parentage of the animal (if parents were previously genotyped) and the scrapie type of the animal.

Genotyping also helps to make the EuroStar indexes assigned to a sheep much more accurate and robust which is leading to faster genetic improvement in sheep breeds which have embraced this technology.

What does sire verified mean?

To achieve 'sire verified' status, a ram must be genotyped and be proven to be the progeny of another hill sire. This requires the sire to be genotyped also. The objective of this task is to kickstart parentage recording and flockbooks among Irelands hill sheep breeds. This will help to preserve the many strains of hill sheep populations in Ireland while also helping to monitor and combat inbreeding.

If I have over 150 ewes, I will need to complete the ram task twice during the SIS. Can I use the same ram twice for SIS purposes?

Unfortunately, no. For a ram to qualify for the SIS, the ram must be 'purchased' and 'used' in the year which the farmer selected the ram genotyping task. For flock in excess of 150 scheme reference ewes, this will require two separate rams to be purchased during the scheme. Evidence of purchase may be required upon request by the DAFM.

If I purchase a genotyped ram for the purpose of the SIS, can I sell that ram to another SIS participant the following year for the purpose of using within the SIS again?

Yes. A ram can be purchased and used by another farmer in the year following your successful completion of the genotyped ram task.

If I own a genotyped 4 or 5 star ram which has not yet been 'claimed' during the SIS, can I sell this ram to another SIS participant to use within the scheme.

Yes. This ram can be sold to another farmer to meet the requirements of the ram task.

Can I buy a hybrid ram as part of the scheme?

Yes, but the EuroStar evaluation's for male hybrid sheep will not be published by Sheep Ireland on platforms such as the online Ram Search or on the Sheep Ireland Sales Catalogues etc. Only purebred animals will appear on these portals. If you are purchasing a hybrid ram, then ram sellers will need to check the details of the rams EuroStars through their own online Sheep Ireland account and provide

the purchaser with those details himself. They will need to provide you with that printout so that you can use this if/when the Department request proof of purchase and eligibility.

Can I genotype my existing ram/s for the purpose of the ram task in the SIS?

No this will not suffice for the SIS. Scheme participants are required to purchase the genotyped ram in the year/s selected on their scheme proposal.

Where can genotyped rams be found?

There are a number of ways that farmers can locate genotyped rams. One of the easiest ways is via the Sheep Ireland online ram search (www.ramsearch.ie). A list of ram breeders with suitable rams for sale will also be included in the Sheep Ireland Guide and Directory of Breeders which is published in August each year (electronic version available on www.sheep.ie under the 'Publications' tab). Breed societies sales across Ireland will also be providing this information, so view your relevant breeds website/Facebook page to identify ram sale dates. Sheep Ireland also host an annual genotyped ram, 5 Star ram sale on the fourth Saturday of August in Tullamore mart.

I have signed up to the scheme, I just purchased a ram (before the start date of the scheme – 1st Feb) that is 4 or 5 stars and is genotyped and meets the criteria for the SIS scheme, is this ram eligible?

No. The scheme does not begin until 1st Feb 2023, if you selected 2023 as the year that you will purchase a ram, then you will be required to purchase and use a ram for the SIS scheme **AFTER** Feb 1st 2023 and before the end of 2023 .

Will there be enough Rams available for me to purchase?

Yes, the number of performance recording flocks has significantly increased year on year in the lowland sector, and Sheep Ireland expects this to continue to increase in the coming years. On the hill sector, we have the infrastructure in place to quickly ram up the number of hill rams that are genomically tested and sire verified. Sheep Ireland will be working with hill groups all over the country to maximise the number of rams available. Early engagement with hill ram groups has been extremely positive and Sheep Ireland have no doubt this will lead to large numbers of scheme eligible hill rams being available across Ireland.

What will I need to verify that I completed the genotyped ram task during a DAFM Inspection?

You will need to show the dispatch docket that clearly shows the full tag number of the ram you purchased for the SIS. The year of purchase must match the year selected in the scheme.

For lowland rams, you should also have a copy of the rams stars at the time of purchase. If the ram was bought at a catalogued sale, a copy of the catalogue with the stars included would suffice. Ram breeders will be instructed by Sheep Ireland to furnish buyers with a copy of rams EuroStars. Ram buyers can also view a copy of the rams stars from the Ram Search (www.ramsearch.ie) on the day of the sale.

For hill rams, participants will be furnished proof of sire verification for each SIS eligible ram. This 'proof' will be provided to ram breeders by Sheep Ireland.

What if my ram dies or can't work?

For example: If you had selected to purchase a ram in year 2 (2024) for the genotyped ram task, however due to a stock ram dying/unable to work, you need to buy a ram in year 1 (2023), you can apply to the DAFM for Force Majeure. For this you will need to contact the Sheep Improvement

Scheme section of the Department of Agriculture and inform them of your issue. Such requests to amend the year(s) selected to carry out the Genotyped Ram action will be reviewed by the DAFM on a case by-case basis.