

Lamb Crop 2022

Maximise lamb survival in hill lambing

Farmer Focus: Bobby Lennox, Shantron & Shemore Farms



The Lamb Crop webinar series focussed on highlighting methods to maximise lamb survival for indoor, outdoor and hill systems. The second in the series focussed on hill lambing where we heard from Poppy Frater, SAC Consulting Sheep and Grassland Specialist, Davy McCracken, Head of SRUC's Department of Integrated Land Management and Head of SRUC's Hill & Mountain Research Centre and Bobby Lennox of Shantron & Shemore Farms.

Bobby and his family farm at Shantron & Shemore Farms, Loch Lomond, where the family have been tenants since 1750. The farm is 20 feet to 2,275 feet above sea level and runs 1,100 blackface ewes and 20 suckler cows over 4,000 acres as well as having successful Agritourism enterprises. The business has been recording easy care traits and easy lambing traits since 1979, Signet recording, backfat scanning and sire referencing since the 1990s. 400 ewes in the flock are recorded and the rams from this flock used for the commercial ewes. Singles are lambed in hill parks (due to predators on the hill) and the rest of the flock are lambed indoors before returning to the hill. They aim for minimal assistance at lambing time with under 1% of ewes being assisted.

Bobby's key points to maximise lamb survival

- Recording ewes and giving tag notches to decide on culling and culling hard for: assistance at lambing (and notch for that ewe's ewe lambs), bad feet, scanning empty and losing a lamb. Gimmers get second chance in commercial flock.
- Scan ewes and manage feeding according to number of lambs carried and condition.
- Housing ewes, predators, weather etc. make it hard to lamb on the hill.
- Using technology: cameras in sheds help manage time at lambing, drones to check sheep in fields, less disturbance and time saving.
- Weaning lambs at 12 weeks old to allow lambs to get best feeding and ewes time to recover and be in condition score 3 for a successful mating.



Using Recording and EBVs

The Lennox's have used recording and EBVs in their flock to improve ewe and slaughtered lamb performance. They pay particular attention to improving 8 week weights, scan weights, maternal ability and muscle depth while trying to keep control of mature size and litter size as they do not want ewes too big or nursing too many lambs for the hill environment. They have added around 3 kg to 8 week lamb weights since 1999 and more lambs are meeting higher grade carcass specifications.

