

# Lamb Crop 2022

## Maximise lamb survival in hill lambing

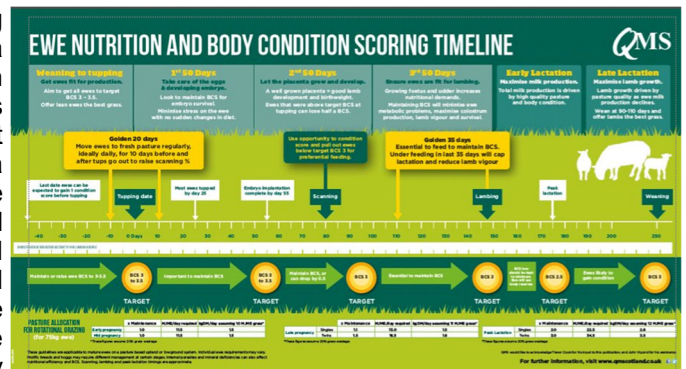


### Nutrition Focus: Ewe Nutrition & Managing Hill Ewes for Lambing

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, Bobby Lennox of Shantron & Shemore Farms and Davy McCracken, Head of SRUC's Department of Integrated Land Management and Head of SRUC's Hill & Mountain Research Centre.

### Monitoring ewe body condition score (BCS) is fundamental to flock productivity and lamb survival.

The QMS Ewe Nutrition & Body Condition Scoring Timeline poster (request from [info@qmscotland.co.uk](mailto:info@qmscotland.co.uk)) is a good guide to ewe management, adjusting the condition score targets to 0.5- 1 BCS less for hill ewes. This is because hill type ewes carry more of their body fat internally. It is important to get hands on and build up a picture of BCS in your own flock and managing this the best you can. Key times for management of nutrition and productivity of the hill ewe are the 'Golden 20 days' around tugging and the 'Golden 35 days' pre-lambing. In a hill situation there are less opportunities to control the nutritional environment for the ewes, so it is vital too have a handle on body condition score of the flock at these key times so action can be taken to rectify any issues.



Think about other wintering opportunities on your farm to relieve pressure on winter grazing and allowing more grass for lambing time, options such as:

- Deferred grazing
- Fencing (not always easy!)
- Feeding (where appropriate to balance forage)
- Forage crops (not always an option)
- Housing (expensive) or away grazing (less control?)



To help ewes get in good condition again for tugging, research shows benefits to weaning lambs at 12 - 14 weeks of age (13.5 - 15.5 weeks from start of lambing). Nearer lambing time knowing forage quality is key. There is a range in metabolisable energy (ME), protein and dry matter in forages which can have a huge effect on the amount of forage the ewes will eat and the quantity of supplementation required. The nutrition (focussing on energy) from forage is also only available if the ewes have good access to the forage and can consume enough of it. To help with this bear in mind the number of ewes per forage feeder and feeder design to avoid bullying. Are the ewes eating enough? Carry out simple calculations to estimate ewes daily intakes and seek advice from a trusted nutritionist.

When choosing compound feeds to supplement forage look for good quality, high energy feeds high up on the list of ingredients. Lower energy compounds may be more expensive per Megajoule (MJ) of energy supplied and more will need to be fed. Too many sources of minerals and trace elements such as boluses, compounds and buckets could lead to over-supply. This is especially important for iodine where too much can lower the lambs' ability to absorb colostrum.

### Key Messages

- Condition score is key, an essential part of nutritional management.
- Consider alternative wintering opportunities on your farm to allow grass to recover quicker.
- Know your forage quality to supplement appropriately and maximise the use of quality forage.
- Beware of false economies in purchased feeds and keep an eye on trace element supplementation.

### Trace Elements

- Check for deficiency first:
  - Bloods
  - Tissues
  - Grass
  - Soil

Key

High influence	Dark Blue
Moderate influence	Medium Blue
Possible influence	Light Blue

Issue	Copper	Cobalt	Selenium	Iodine
Reduced production	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
Reduced appetite	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
Poor condition	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
Reduced immune function	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
Infertility	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
Abortions	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
Retained placenta or vaginal prolapse	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
Anaemia	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
Muscular disease	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
Lameness	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
Weak bones	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
Skin/hair disease	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
Enlarged thyroid	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
Diarrhoea	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
Eating non-food items	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue