

Lamb Crop 2022

Maximise lamb survival indoors



Farmer Focus: Graham Lofthouse, Bankhouse Farm

The Lamb Crop webinar series focussed on highlighting methods to maximise lamb survival for indoor, outdoor and hill systems. The first in the series focussed on indoor lambing where we heard from Poppy Frater, SAC Consulting Sheep and Grassland Specialist, Heather Stevenson, SRUC Veterinary Investigation Officer and Graham Lofthouse, Bankhouse Farm.

Graham and his family farm at Bankhouse Farm, Galashiels, where they run cattle and sheep breeding enterprises. The sheep enterprise comprises of 452 Easycare ewes and 147 ewe lambs, with 599 head being tupped in 2021. Lambing begins on the 6th April. Over the last number of years the business has averaged lamb losses from lambing to sale of 8%, the industry average for Scotland from lambing to marking is 15%.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Scan	181%	194%	194%	188%	189%
Mortality at lambing	9.0%	5.0%	7.0%	6.8%	7.5%
Lamb loss to Sale	10.3%	6.0%	7.9%	7.4%	8.5%



What are the secret to Grahams success?

1. **Body Condition Score** - Aim for condition score 3 (tupping through to lambing), for successful ovulation, placenta development and colostrum production
2. **Nutrition** - Early cut silage to deliver 11.6 MJ/kg DM metabolise energy and 16% protein. Twins are offered 3.5kg silage. In 2022, this was supplemented with 0.3kg of wheat dark grains per ewe per day from 4 weeks to provide 18% protein.
3. **Genetics** - Maternal traits are priority for ram and ewe lamb selection. Graham scores the ewes based on their milk production, udder shape and general mothering behaviour.



Further key points

- 6 weeks pre lambing group according to body condition and scan result e.g. thin twins with triplet ewes, for additional nutrition.
- Feed space, ensuring there is space for every ewe to feed at the same time.
- In the last month pre lambing, Graham gets his vet to blood test 20 randomly selected twins and triplets to ensure their energy and protein levels are adequate.
- Bedding regularly, the main group pens are bedded every three days and mucked out pre lambing.
- Mobile individual pens in the main group pens to avoid moving the ewe and lambs too soon, before moving them to individual pens for 24 hours.
- Double iodine application, the first at lambing, the second 4 - 6 hours later.