

Lamb Crop 2022

Maximise lamb survival outdoors



Nutrition Focus: Poppy Frater, SAC Consulting Sheep and Grassland Specialist

The Lamb Crop webinar series focussed on highlighting methods to maximise lamb survival for indoor, outdoor and hill systems. The last in the series focussed on outdoor lambing where we heard from Poppy Frater, SAC Consulting Sheep and Grassland Specialist, Cathy Dwyer, SRUC Animal Behaviour & Welfare Researcher and Neil McGowan, Incheoch Farm.

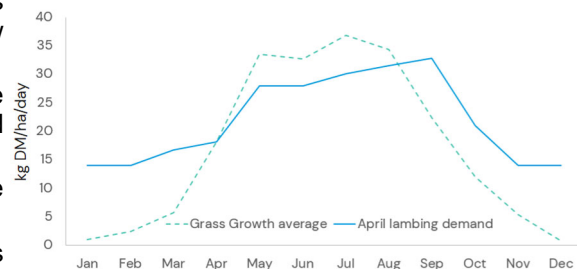
Proactive flock management and nutrition for outdoor lambing

As in all sheep systems body condition scoring is key for success. The Ewe Nutrition and Body Condition Score Timeline poster from QMS (request at info@qmscotland.co.uk) is an excellent reference resource.

The graph shows grass supply and demand for April lambing. The key influencer of spring grass yield is how well the grass has been rested in the winter months. Research shows that if grass is grazed continuously January to March, then April yield will be 40% lower than rested pasture. Filling in the areas when demand outstrips supply can be done through few avenues:

- All grass wintering a rotational grazing system in the winter months to allow lambing paddocks to rest and have grass ready in March time.
- Forage feeding (hay/silage) could do done on sacrifice areas and save grass on the rest of the farm.
- Forage crops are an option to buffer poorer grass growing months (careful management required, seek advice).

Grass: Supply and Demand



Consider a pre-lambing rotation, if grass growth, weather and ground conditions allow. Grass needs to be at least 6 cm giving it a quick graze down to 4 cm to help improve grass quality and tillering.

At lambing time if grass is less than 4 cm ewes will need supplemented. Failure to supplement can increase mastitis in ewes through pressure from lambs and lower growth rates of lambs which is more costly in the long run.

Lambing management: Mob size is a big influencer of lamb survival outdoors

Guideline stocking rate:

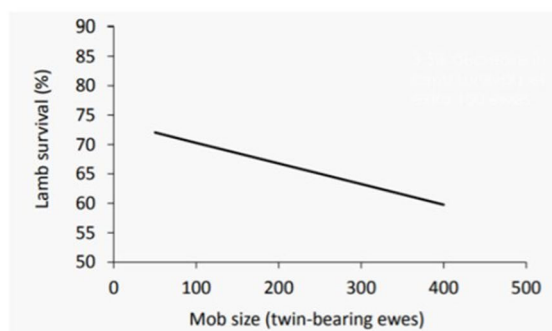
Singles 10-11 ewes/Ha

Twins 8-9 ewes/Ha

Triplets 6-7 ewes/Ha

Suggest:

- <30 triplet bearing ewes/group
- <50 twins/group



Relationship between mob size and lamb survival (Best Wool Best Lamb survey)

Selection management for easy outdoor lambing: cull hard for undesirable traits and select ewe lambs that are born and suckle unaided, born in first cycle, have good weaning weights, from ewes with no udder or feet issues.