

Peadar Kearney- Implementing Grazing Infrastructure to Grow More Grass on a Sheep Farm

Farm: Peadar Kearney

Location: Ardee, Co. Louth, Ireland



Background

The farm comprises of 27 Ha of which 16 Ha is located on an out farm and 10 Ha on the home block. Peadar operates a sheep only enterprise of 300 ewes producing lambs for the factory and replacement ewe lambs for sale. Replacements are kept on the farm. However ewe lambs are not mated. The running of the farm is greatly assisted by local farmer and Ag. Graduate Joanne Martin who has a keen interest in the breeding and performance recording taking place on the farm.

Detailed description

Grazing Infrastructure on Peadar's Farm

Originally when Peadar started farming this block of land where we stand today there was 7 large fields. From this point the paddocks were mostly divided in two resulting in 14 paddocks being created. This comprised of a combination of permanent and temporary fencing. Water pipes were laid with moveable drinkers. This increased grass utilisation on farm. However paddock sizes were still difficult to operate a rotational grazing system.

Following on peadar strategically placed temporary fencing to crease a total of 24 paddocks on the farm approx 1.6 acres per paddock. Even though 3 reels of temporeary fencing are used they remain in place during the main grazing season on a permanent bases. This reduces the labour involved in moving them on a regular basis.

Strip Grazing

1. Set up a grazing block to feed your livestock for a maximum of 3 days.
2. Put up a back-fence when moving livestock on to the next block.
3. Sheep get fresh grass while regrowth occurs on grazed block.
4. Sheep should graze down to (3.5-4cm ewes) (5.5-6cm lambs post weaning) before moving them on.
5. Sheep should be entering grass covers of 8cm grass.



Adoption criteria

- Discussion group member
- Registered on PastureBase Ireland
- Walks the farm once per week
- Contacts his advisor when guidance is required to make good decisions

Peadar has had a keen focus on grassland management over the past number of years. He started measuring grass in 2010 with his local Teagasc advisor Hugh Rooney. The farm is walked on a weekly basis and the measurements are inputted into PastureBase Ireland. This has been a huge aid to manage grass on the farm. Last year the farm produced over 12t DM/Ha last year.

Future prospects

- Increase the amount of quality grass in the lambs diet
- Less workload feeding silage, meal etc.
- Overall make more profit through quality grass!



Creation and monitoring of case studies

There have been significant improvements made in previous years increasing the number of paddocks on the farm to increase grass utilisation. Peadar is also a member of the BETTER farm sheep programme since 2014 which has improved the efficiency and output from the flock with the help of BETTER farm sheep advisor Frank Campion. Peadar also actively participates in the local Knowledge Transfer discussion group facilitated by local Teagasc advisor Hugh Rooney.