

NE Organic Discussion Group

Newsletter



July 2021

Welcome to the July edition of the Newsletter.

I think some rain is forecast which will be very welcome as the ground is now very dry.

This month the Newsletter contains articles on: -

Separating Siblings At Weaning?

Maternal ability EBV

Improving Utilisation of Forage Crops

Links to the Farming for a Better Climate Newsletter and Soil Regenerative Agriculture

And finally, a request to take part in a survey on reducing soil runoff and erosion

As ever, get in touch if you have any questions or want more information.

Separating Siblings At Weaning?

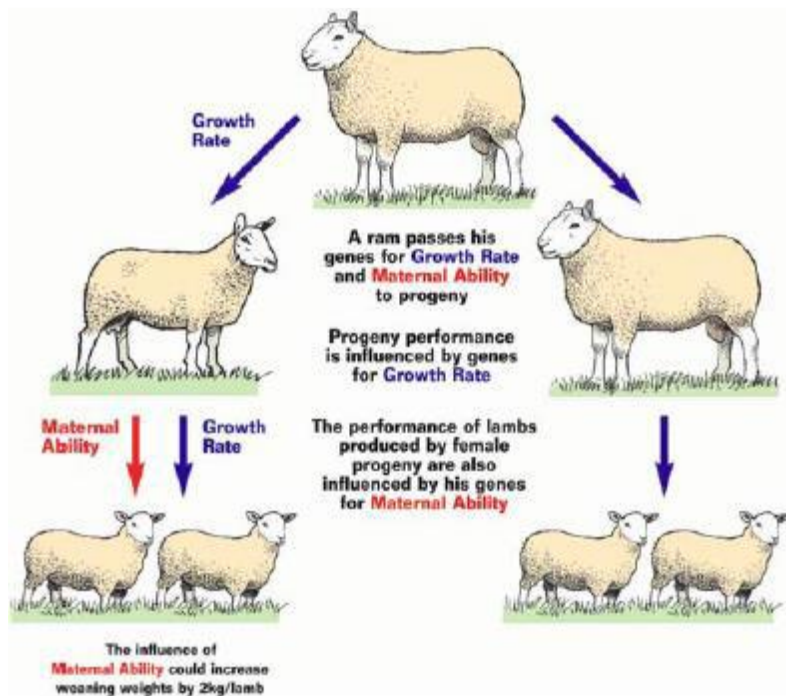
We often describe how stress should be minimised at weaning and avoid additional tasks that may cause stress, such as vaccination. Another consideration is the stress of losing a sibling when we separate them by gender. Ewes do recognise their counterparts which is why we advocate to avoid mixing ewe groups too frequently so to reduce the stress associated with unfamiliar faces. Lambs will miss their mothers but perhaps the presence of their sibling will help them settle. This is a particularly fine balance for those opting to leave rams entire but splitting the males and females later in the year should be better than splitting them at weaning.

Poppy Frater, SAC Consulting Sheep Specialist

poppy.frater@sac.co.uk

Maternal Ability EBV

The Maternal Ability estimated breeding value (EBV) is used to identify maternal genetics that can produce heavier lambs at 8 weeks of age through superior maternal care in particular milking ability. It is not a reflection of the ewe's, or in the tups' case its daughters, ability to produce more lambs as is sometimes mistaken.



The Maternal Ability EBV is derived by separating the maternal genetic influence on offspring 8 week weights from direct genetics for growth rate potential. Source: Signet
A tup with an EBV of +1 kg is estimated to produce ewes whose lambs, through superior milking ability and care, are 0.5 kg heavier at 8 weeks than a ram with an EBV of 0. In the Lleyn breed this is the difference between a breed average tup (0.71) or a top 5% tup (>1.66) for Maternal Ability EBV.

If looking to purchase stock recorded using the NZ SIL evaluation, then the traits is known as Weaning Weight Maternal (WWTM) defined as the ewes milking ability contributing to lamb weaning weights derived from offspring 12-week weights.

If you're looking to buy performance recorded maternal sires this season, then the following guide is worth a read: [Buying recorded rams for maternal sire traits | AHDB](#)

Daniel Stout, SAC Consulting Agricultural Consultant
daniel.stout@sac.co.uk

Improving Utilisation of Forage Crops

For those new to forage crops this year or those looking to improve utilisation, it is worth considering means to uphold good animal welfare and performance whilst maximising utilisation of these crops.

1. Plan to strip graze to provide fresh material daily – all animals should be able to access the forage at the same time to minimise trampling and wastage.
2. Weigh crop, calculate how long it will last and how far the fence can be moved to meet their needs, methods described in this FAS Technical note: [Forage crops for livestock](#).
3. Maintain a dry lie area or grass runback. Have back-up options if the weather turns: e.g. straw on the ground, moving to better drained/more sheltered fields or scope to increase the grass run back.
4. Place silage or hay bales to supplement the forage before the winter to avoid trafficking on wet fields. Silage or hay should be analysed.
5. Consider lower risk water supply options for cold weather, e.g. buried pipes, bigger troughs, shorter pipes or even heated water troughs.
6. Only feed to ewes from 50 days after tup introduction to avoid impacting embryo implantation.
7. Transition over 5-7 days for sheep or 10-15 days for cattle by introducing animals with full stomachs initially for a couple of hours a day.
8. Observe behaviour, performance and/or condition and move any that are not doing well into an alternative feeding group on silage, grazing or indoor space for example.
9. Keep an eye on bulb crop leaf – if lost to frost additional protein might be required – the silage/hay will help depending on the quality.
10. Additional minerals are often required.

Poppy Frater, poppy.frater@sac.co.uk

Farming for a Better Climate Newsletter

you can click on the link [here](#), or access it via www.farmingforabetterclimate.org

In this edition, there is an update on some of the activities underway within the [Soil Regenerative Agriculture Group](#), take a look at the International Climate Conference COP26 hosted in Glasgow in November and have plenty of ideas that could help you move your business closer towards net zero carbon.

If you would like to be added to the mailing list email Rebecca Audsley rebecca.audsley@sac.co.uk and she will add you on. There are two editions per year, and they do not share the mailing list.

You can also get more regular updates, on [Facebook](#) and following them on [Twitter](#).

Reducing soil runoff and erosion knowledge transfer survey

If you can spare a few minutes, Joanna Cloy would be really grateful if you could complete a short survey. As part of a CREW-funded project, we are gathering feedback on pilot knowledge transfer products with the aim of reducing soil runoff and erosion:

<https://twitter.com/SRUC/status/1407685231717539847>

We are needing feedback from farmers ideally.

For more information contact:-

Dr Joanna Cloy
Researcher
Department of Agriculture, Horticulture and Engineering Sciences
SRUC
King's Buildings
West Mains Road
Edinburgh
EH9 3JG