



CHALLENGE SHEEP: Why EID offers a high return on investment



Dr Amey Brassington focuses on how to use Electronic Identification (EID) to get the most out of your ewes.

Farms involved in AHDB's Challenge Sheep project have found that using EID systems improve time efficiency and on-farm profit, with some seeing figures as high as an 11-fold return on investment. Using EID data to identify and improve or remove underperforming ewes from the flock is one way to enhance flock performance. Recording regular ewe weights and body condition scores (BCS) and interrogating the data to identify where improvements can be made, can help make sheep production more profitable, sustainable and viable.

At a recent AHDB event, one Challenge Sheep farm presented data on the improvements they have made since introducing EID 10 years ago. Weighing and monitoring daily liveweight gains (DLWG) of ewes destined for breeding in the autumn from as early as February, has influenced decisions on breeding and feeding as well as identifying any potential health issues.

Ensuring shearing replacement ewes achieve at least 80% of their target mature weight by first tupping has resulted in significant improvements in productivity, including increased twinning rates, increased scanning percentages from 145% to 180%, and increased average eight-week lamb weights of 3 kg.

These improvements haven't happened overnight, but data recording has made it easier to see trends, to benchmark year-on-year and to calculate a return on investment, all of which gives confidence in the changes implemented. While implementing EID does require an investment of time and potential extra labour costs, the extra lambs produced made the investment worthwhile.

Research has found a strong link between record keeping and improved flock profitability. Sheep farmers who keep records and base decisions on their data are found to have greater flock productivity than those who do not. When deciding which KPIs to monitor, remember less is more.

Key points to consider when recording data for your sheep enterprise:

- Make use of the data you collect
- Time is money – only record data that will add value (or save costs)
- Keep data collection as simple as possible and combine with other tasks

Find out more

The Farming Equipment and Technology Fund (FETF) provides support for businesses to invest in equipment and technology to improve sustainable agricultural productivity. Find out more about recent grant announcements for EID equipment here bit.ly/FarmEquip

For further information on EID take a look at our Electronic Identification of Beef and Sheep manual bit.ly/useEID

See the Challenge Sheep webpage ahdb.org.uk/challenge-sheep