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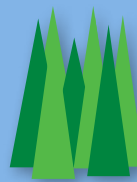
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Irish Grassland
Association

FREE
EVENT

SHEEP EVENT 2023
CO. OFFALY
18th May 6-8pm



Est. 1893

Programme for the event

Venue: Eddie and Aidan Connell,
Clonbullogue, Co Offaly R45HW22

Date: 18th May 6pm – 8pm

6.00pm Assembly & Light Refreshments

6.30pm Opening Address

Welcome & opening of sheep event.

Alan Kelly, President, Irish Grassland Association

**6.40pm Farm walk on the farm of
The Connell Family**

Topics to be covered:

- Introduction & farm overview
- Grassland Management & flock performance
- Labour Efficiency
- Creating a sustainable production system

8.00pm Close of event



Farmer Profile

The Connell family, Eddie, Bernadette and Aidan, farm a total of 90 Ha, 65 Ha of owned land plus an additional 25 Ha of leased ground in a farm partnership. The majority of the farm is grassland based however there is 15 Ha of tillage which is used to provide feed for finishing animals. There are two main enterprises on the Connell farm: a 400 ewe mid-season lambing flock and a bull beef operation. At any one time there are approximately 150 head of cattle on the farm.

The ewe flock consists predominantly of Borris ewes, a maternal Cheviot X Suffolk for those less familiar. The sheep enterprise has had a scanning rate of 1.8-1.9 lambs per ewe joined to the ram, consistently up until this year, when it was 1.65 lambs per ewe joined. Lamb finishing is an important focus for Eddie and Aidan with all lambs finished on farm.

Grazing management is a priority for both Eddie and Aidan. The 75 Ha of grassland is divided into permanent paddocks with mains electric fence and water available in all paddocks. The average paddock size is 4.5 acres (~2 Ha). Paddocks are further sub-divided using temporary electric fence where necessary during the grazing season. The Connell's are strong advocates for mixed grazing with the cattle and sheep grazing together when and where possible. Eddie believes that this contributes to achieving better grass utilisation and animal performance compared to grazing animals separately.

Lamb rearing and finishing from a mainly grass based diet is a major objective for both Eddie and Aidan, with little or no meal used in most years. All lambs are reared on ewes, where possible, with cross fostering of triplet lambs on to single ewes a priority at lambing. Lambs are weaned in mid-June to coincide with the availability of after grass from first cut silage. The aim is to have the majority of lambs sold off farm by September, at which point weanlings are purchased for the bull beef enterprise and ewes get priority for grass pre-mating.

Investing in labour efficiency is a goal shared by both Eddie and Aidan. The erection of a new sheep shed in 2018 has made life a lot easier for the Connell family, particularly at lambing time. This, combined with a sheep handling unit saves time while also making it easier to work with animals as and when required.

The Connell farm is a high output and efficient farm system. It is a mixed farming operation with a large mid-season ewe flock, a bull beef system and some tillage which is used to provide winter feed and straw. Grass is central to the farm operation, with the majority of lambs sold off grass by September with little or no meal, and grass is used to maximise weight gain on the bulls.