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FARMCENTRES

FLOCK FERTILITY · SHEEP FLOCK SERIES

Scanning Results

protecting the lamb crop after a hot, dry summer

A practical, plain English guide to protecting next spring's lamb crop by getting ewes and rams fit in the weeks before tupping. What you do now, during the heat and drought, is what shows up on the scanner.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Why this summer decides your scan
- Get condition on, and check the ram
- Fix the trace element gaps
- The right product for each job

"Providing sound, technical advice to the farming community."

FAMILY RUN · FARMING SINCE 1960



Your scan result is decided at tupping, not on scanning day

By the time the scanner arrives, the result is already set. What decides how many lambs show up on that screen is what happens to your ewes and rams **now, in the run up to tupping**. That is why the long spell of heat and dry weather we are having matters. It feeds straight into your autumn tupping, and quietly, into next spring's lamb crop.

A hard, dry summer works against you in a few ways at once. Grazing has been thin, so ewes are carrying less condition than they should. Heat knocks fertility in both ewes and rams. And when forage is short and variable, trace element gaps open up.

The good news is that the window to influence your scan is open **right now**. Four things move the needle more than anything else.

1

Ewe body condition

Condition at tupping is the single biggest driver of how many eggs a ewe releases. After a dry summer, many will be in poor condition.

2

The ram

Heat now damages sperm for weeks. A sub fertile ram can flatten a whole group's result, and it is the easiest thing to miss.

3

Trace elements

Selenium, cobalt and iodine sit behind fertility and early embryo survival. Dry, variable forage makes gaps more likely.

4

Intakes in the heat

Heat stress makes ewes eat less, which slows condition recovery at exactly the wrong time of year.



Get condition on, and check the ram

1

Get condition back on your ewes

Thin ewes ovulate fewer eggs, leading to a lower scanning. Aim for a body condition score of **around 3 to 3.5 at tupping** for lowland ewes, a little lower for hill flocks. After this summer a lot of ewes will be behind, so start now rather than hoping grass does the job.

A rising plane of nutrition in the few weeks before and during tupping, often called flushing, lifts ovulation rate.

+20%

In one peer reviewed study of ewe lambs, an extra half a condition score, up to around 3.3, lifted reproductive rate by roughly a fifth. Condition is the single lever that moves your scan most.

Thompson et al., Animals, 2024 • 17,000+ ewe-lamb records, 22 flocks

2

Do not forget the ram

Heat hits the ram harder than most people think. Sperm takes **around two months to produce**, so a hot spell over summer can quietly dent fertility going into an autumn tupping. Judge a ram on the previous eight to ten weeks, not just how he looks on the day. The damage is often done before you ever see a problem.

Keep rams cool and shaded now, and give them a proper once over well before tupping. A ram MOT runs through the **five Ts: toes, teeth, testicles, tone** (body condition) **and treat** for anything you find. A fertility check with a semen test a few weeks ahead is cheap insurance. One dud tup running with a group can turn a good scan into a poor one.

£20 to £25

The cost of a ram MOT with a semen test, against a tup worth £600 or more. A sub fertile ram can cut first cycle pregnancy rates by about 20%, and some vets find up to 2 in 10 tups they test come back infertile.

Farmers Weekly, annual ram MOT feature, 2026 (vet estimates)



Fix the gaps, and keep them eating

3

Sort out trace elements

Selenium, cobalt and iodine all sit behind fertility and early embryo survival. When they are short, it shows up as empty ewes and a disappointing scan. Dry summers and patchy forage make deficiency more likely, and this is common ground across a lot of our area.

Test before you treat. A forage mineral analysis, or a blood test through your vet, tells you what is actually short, so you spend on what your flock needs rather than guessing. From there the options run from free access licks and buckets through to a longer acting bolus.

12 to 21%

Where ewes were genuinely deficient, correcting selenium cut barren ewes by around 12% in one trial, and iodine lifted lambs born by up to 21% in another. The key word is deficient, and responses vary between flocks, which is exactly why we test first.

Iodine: Manawatu Romney trial, NZ Vet Journal; selenium: NZ trial (Vetlife)

4

Keep intakes up through the heat

Heat stress makes ewes lethargic and off their feed, which drags on condition recovery just when you need them gaining. The fix is mostly management: **plenty of clean, cool water**, shade in grazing areas, and feeding little and often in the cooler parts of the day.

Good quality forage and a free access energy and mineral supplement helps keep intake and rumen function ticking over. Siting licks and buckets in the shade encourages ewes to use them without standing out in the sun.

1 score ≈ 8kg

A ewe that goes off her feed in the heat can slip a whole condition score, and one score is around 8kg on a 70kg ewe. That is ground you then have to win back before the tups go in.

AHDB, Feeding the Ewe (1 score ≈ 10 to 13% of bodyweight)

What better results are worth

A finished lamb is worth **well over £100** at today's prices, and an empty ewe still costs you a full year's keep for nothing. On a 500 ewe flock, lifting your scan by just **five lambs in every hundred is 25 more lambs** to sell. The steps in this guide are how you protect that.

Lamb value: GB deadweight lamb price, AHDB, 2026.



Spend where it counts, not on guesswork

We would rather help you get the result than sell you a shed full of buckets. The most useful thing we do is help you work out what your flock is actually short of, then match the right product to the job.

START HERE • FIND OUT WHAT IS SHORT

Testing and advice

Forage mineral and nutritional analysis, and Micron faecal egg counts so worms are not quietly costing you condition. A few pounds here tells you where to spend the rest, and where not to.

CONDITION AND FERTILITY AT TUPPING

Opti-Mol Sheep Natural Energy

Energy • protein • fertility

High energy and quality protein for tupping through to lambing, with fish oil for omega 3, plus vitamin E and selenium. **Why it pays:** hits the two biggest scan drivers together, condition and fertility, in the run up to the tups going in.

Opti-Lix High Energy

Condition • forage use

A high energy and protein lick for right through the tupping period, with protected, highly available selenium and zinc. **Why it pays:** high sugar helps ewes squeeze more out of tired late summer grazing, so condition goes on without a big bought in feed bill.

TOPPING UP TRACE ELEMENTS

Superstock Ewe & Lamb plus Fish Oil

Year round minerals

A high specification lick, high in the trace elements typically short around here, plus omega 3 and protected zinc. **Why it pays:** covers the common gaps in one product, once testing shows you need them.

Essential Sheep bolus

6 month cover

One bolus gives a steady supply of cobalt, iodine and selenium for six months. **Why it pays:** handy for hill ground or ground where you cannot keep topping up licks, where a confirmed deficiency needs covering.



Here to help

Seeing thin or poor doing ewes, or just want a plan that fits your flock before the tups go out? Come and talk to us. Bring a forage sample into your nearest Farmcentre, call the team, or ask one of our SQPs to help you read the results and match the right product, with no obligation.

Your next step: get ewes and rams condition scored now, test where you suspect a gap, and call your local branch below. We will help you make sense of it.

FIND YOUR NEAREST FARMCENTRE

Hay-on-Wye

HEAD OFFICE**01497 820410**

ask@rmjones.com

Oxford Road, Hay-on-Wye, Herefordshire, HR3 5AJ

Mon to Fri 8.30am to 5pm · Sat 9am to 12pm

Hereford

01432 769527

hereford@rmjones.com

Livestock Market, Roman Road, Hereford, HR4 7AN

Mon to Fri 8.30am to 5pm · Sat 9am to 12pm

Abergavenny

01873 858300

abergavenny@rmjones.com

Brecon Road, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, NP7 7RB

Mon to Fri 9am to 5pm · Sat 9am to 12pm

Ledbury

01531 806130

ledbury@rmjones.com

Hazle Meadows Auction Centre, Ledbury, HR8 2LP

Mon to Fri 8.30am to 5pm · Sat 9am to 12pm

Want to go deeper? AHDB and SCOPS publish free, independent UK guidance on ewe nutrition, body condition scoring and flock health, at ahdb.org.uk and scops.org.uk.

This guide is general information and is not a substitute for advice from your vet or a qualified animal medicines adviser (SQP or RAMA). Decisions should be based on your own flock, testing and circumstances.