

# Red Meat Development Programme

## Ewe lambs for breeding



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Mating ewe lambs can increase flock efficiency and lifetime returns but only if production targets are met at tupping, in pregnancy and at lambing.

### Key points for selection

- Reject lambs with physical defects and those failing to respond to treatments for parasites and lameness.
- Select ewe lambs that are born in the first 21 days of lambing. These are likely to be more fertile than those born in later cycles.
- Beware of using home bred crosses by a terminal sire. These may have better conformation but are generally less maternal and prolific than those sired by maternal breeds.

Target weights are 60% of mature body weight (MBW) by eight months and 80% a year later.

	MBW (Kg)	Weight at first mating (kg)	
		As ewe lamb	At 20 months
Cheviot	55	33	44
Lleyn	60	36	48
Welsh Mule	65	39	52
Continental X	80	48	64

To help reduce lambing difficulty choose a sire with high maternal Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs), these are generally easier lambing.

### Management

A teaser ram (a vasectomised ram) is useful to improve breeding success. Introduce teasers 19 days before the planned mating date but remove 5 days before turning in the ram. During this period avoid flushing, especially prolific breeds. It is also important to avoid over feeding in the month after tupping. Ewe lambs tend to have lower progesterone levels than mature ewes and excess feeding, that is lush pasture or concentrates, reduces progesterone levels. This will impair embryo implantation and placenta function leading to poorer conception rates and offspring survival.

Do not try to compensate for poor growth after mating, feed at maintenance levels and target condition score 2.5 - 3.0 through to lambing.



Monitoring Body Condition Score (BCS) and parasite burdens is important in breeding ewe lambs

Lambs holding to service in the first 17 days have higher lifetime productivity so make better replacements. Sell later mated ones according to raddle marks or scanning results. Using a fit, fertile and mature ram will help to achieve a compact lambing.

### Late pregnancy and lambing

- Manage the ewe lambs as a separate flock.
- Aim to allow the ewe lambs to rear one lamb (foster surplus lambs).
- Wean as early as feasible (from 12 weeks of age) to allow time for weight and condition recovery.

**In summary - aim to lamb in a single cycle, one week after the main flock starts and to rear one lamb each.**

**The Red Meat Development Programme is delivered by Hybu Cig Cymru (HCC) on behalf of Farming Connect.**

Further information on subsidised on-farm support and other related farm management options is available from the Red Meat Development Programme on 01970 625050 or visit [www.hccmpw.org.uk](http://www.hccmpw.org.uk)