

Nutrition News

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Lamb finishing

Making money from finishing lambs depends on the buying price, the carcase price and the cost of weight gain during the finishing period. The first two factors are largely out of a finisher's control, so the focus needs to be on cost-efficient performance prior to slaughter.

FINISHING SYSTEMS

1. Pasture-based

Pasture provides a low-cost finishing system, but grass must be highly digestible to achieve the required outcomes. The two Qs of quality and quantity are needed for pasture-based systems to be successful. If forced to graze too low, lambs are eating the lower energy stems and leaf sheaths. Protein and energy are the most important nutritional elements contributing to lamb growth with optimum levels found in the top third of a sward. Leaves contains over 11.5MJ ME/kg DM compared to the 10.5 MJ ME/kg DM found in the stem.

Pressure on pasture has inevitably led to interest and research into the use of alternative forages, such as tyfon or chicory. Both offer potential



TIPS FOR FINISHING LAMBS COST EFFECTIVELY

- Provide enough pasture so lambs don't have to graze too low
- Measure grass and silage quality to determine supplementary feed levels
- Draft intensively-fed lamb regularly to prevent them becoming over-fat
- Ensure a constant supply of clean water
- Monitor health status to ensure poor health isn't inhibiting optimum weight gain

advantages, but research so far shows little benefit over well-managed pastures. Reseeding with dense, productive swards from July onwards can provide high feed value grasses for finishing later in the year.

2. Supplementation

Lambs can achieve good liveweight gain on pasture, but supplementation with concentrates is often needed to achieve the required weight and conformation, particularly when grass availability is limited. The need for supplementary feeds is identified by monitoring grazing pastures and tracking lamb performance. In this situation, an intensive ration is usually required.

3. Intensive indoor

More intensive indoor systems use measured or ad lib concentrates in addition to silage. As with supplementation, increasing weight gain is seen with an increased intake of concentrate regardless of silage quality. Feed conversion is therefore better with concentrates. As a result, this system requires regular drafting to prevent lambs 'over-achieving' and becoming over-fat. Intensive indoor systems are particularly effective for larger lambs able to be finished off grass. Lambs being moved indoors for finishing may require training to eat concentrates either through creep feeding outdoors before being housed or inside with additional silage.

Lambs generally transition onto new feeds better prior to weaning while still with their mothers. They can also be batched according to their weight to facilitate more targeted and effective feeding. This helps to optimise the cost efficiency of supplementary and intensive feeding systems.

Shearing

There is debate around the need to shear lambs during finishing. Research shows shearing can increase feed intake but with little impact on subsequent carcase weight, indicating that shearing can reduce the efficiency of feed conversion into weight gain.

Health management

Lambs grow quicker and more efficiently when they're healthy and not using feed to fight illness and disease. Animal health protocols, including vaccination and health monitoring, ensure target weight gains are achieved more easily. Vaccinations and other treatments are best done prior to weaning.





Enda McMahon runs a mixed farming operation at Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan, as well as a restaurant, which he supplies with beef and lamb from the farm. Enda buys in 150-160 store lambs in September at 32-35kg liveweight, aiming to finish at 50-52kg from the end of November. Enda uses the Intensive Lamb Pellet for his younger lambs, and once off the grass, uses the Intensive Maize Lamb Pellet for finishing hoggets. **“They perform exceptionally well on it,” he said, “Corby Rock products contain good ingredients and are well labelled.”**

Corby Rock Mill Lamb Feeds

Spec No.	Product	Description	Additives
493	Golden Lamb Crunch	Palatable crunch including 3mm concentrated pellet suitable for use as a complementary creep starter ration through to finish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Molasses for increased palatability • Vitamins B1 & B2 to assist metabolism • Actisaf yeast for aiding fibre digestion and maintaining rumen health • Biotin to improve hoof hardness • Ammonium Chloride to prevent urinary calculi
90	Intensive Lamb Pellet	Complementary pellet feed for intensively-fed lambs and ad-lib feeding systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Megalac – a protected fat to increase energy density • Ammonium Chloride to prevent urinary calculi
93	Intensive Lamb Maize Pellet	Complementary high maize pellet feed for intensively-fed lambs and ad-lib feeding systems with reduced protein. Ideal where grass cover is good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ammonium Chloride to prevent urinary calculi

Crunch suitable from one month of age; pellets from two months.

Available in:



For more information on lamb growth and our range of lamb feeds, contact your local Corby Rock Mill representative.

