

# Questions & Answers on The Road

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As a ruminant nutritionist we get asked an array of questions on an abundance of topics. These vary from Beef to Dairy to Sheep. We will discuss what some of the most common are some of which don't always have the easiest of answers. Here are a sample of some

## Which is better hay or silage?

I started with this simple question, but it isn't a simple answer. In a year like this hay is not the typical low protein low energy feed that can persist in other years. Hay this year was made from the end of April to the end of May for the most part. It has protein levels of up to 14% this year and 10.3 to 10.7ME sugar content is around 10%. Silage this year varies from 10%-16% crude protein with an energy level from 10.5-11.5ME with DMD values from 60 -82. The crucial point with either is there any mould present? If not the highest quality or either is perfectly ok to use. As silage has a higher protein content it will generally save money on concentrates fed to pregnant ewes and ewes are far more likely to have milk when there is adequate protein.

## Do I need to dose my Ewes & Lambs?

Yes. It should be done after dung samples have been analysed. The main groups of parasites are Liver fluke, Rumen fluke, Worms and Coccidia. Any of the above has a detrimental effect to the health and performance of animals. Using the same Drenches or injectables for parasite control is not recommended as resistance will build up.

## Silage is good this year do I need to feed my ewes before lambing?

In short yes. However, the concentrate feed levels vary greatly depending on the quality of the forage, the condition of the ewe and the number of lambs that she is carrying. See table below as an example for a ewe bearing twins. Ewes carrying triplet require additional feeding.

Table 1: Concentrate requirements for twin bearing ewes pre lambing

Silage quality	Weeks before lambing (daily conc. requirement kg/ewe)							Total (kg)
	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Precision chopped silage</b>								
72% DMD		.2	.2	.2	.3	.5	.75	15
65% DMD		.3	.3	.4	.5	.6	.8	20
<b>Big bale/single chop</b>								
72% DMD		.3	.3	.4	.5	.6	.8	20
65% DMD	.4	.4	.4	.6	.7	.8	.9	30

### Is it true that I can feed copper to lambs?

It is true that copper can be fed in very limited circumstances. This is only after a vet has diagnosed a copper deficiency and recommended additional copper supplementation.

### How many drinkers do I need for 200 lambs in a shed?

A store lamb has a requirement for 4 to 8 litres of water depending on forage type and level of concentrates being fed. Therefore 200 X 8l = 1600l per day maximum requirement. 4 medium sized drinkers required.

### Can I make up my own mix?

Yes, it's possible to make up Ewe diets and Lamb diets. It's important to ensure to have them formulated by a qualified nutritionist to ensure they match available forage. An important point is to ensure that the raw materials are of a high standard and are free from moulds.

### Are minerals a waste of money?

As regards minerals they are essential for a multitude of functions within all animals. Some in particular like Vitamin E and Organic Selenium drive vigour in young lambs. Cobalt is needed for vitamin B12 metabolism which is needed for energy release. Other additives such as Ammonium Chloride is essential in the prevention of urinary calculi in ram lambs.

### What's the best type of flooring in a shed?

Solid floor or slats are the most comfortable for sheep. Expanded metal creates pressure points on the hooves as their weight is not spread evenly across the hoof.

### My ewes don't have any milk after lambing what's wrong?

This can have several different causes. Nutrition plays a key role in this. Protein balance is key to milk production. As mentioned earlier forage quality needs to be balanced with the correct protein. Soya quantities within concentrates is very important. Some Ewe with Lamb feeds contain very little soya. It needs to be the main protein source for Ewes as it drives milk quantity and milk quality. With average forage 20% protein concentrates are required to balance the forage.

Also concentrates must be introduced in time and at the right quantities. Most importantly ewes need to be healthy. As mentioned earlier parasite control is very important as parasites like liver fluke damage liver function and thus reduce the animal's ability to produce milk.

### Who am I?

I have been working A.W Ennis Ltd for the last 6 years as their Ruminant and Pig nutritionist. A W Ennis Ltd are a family owned and run company based in Virginia Co. Cavan. We manufacture 300,000 T of feed per year between Pig Poultry and Ruminant. We are one of the largest manufacturers of Sheep feeds in Ireland. Our specialist 18% lamb crunch and 20% Ewe with Lamb nuts are fed in almost every county. With Full fat Soya as its main ingredient our Lamb Crunch and soya and Selplex plus Vitamin E in our Ewe with Lamb, they are unmatched by our competitors.

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