

Easicare Systems in our flocks

There has been a lot said for “Easicare” systems this year, firstly by the SAC and by feed and supplementary companies, but this is nothing new! It is a term that has been about for years, and takes years to fully implement into any farm system.

The problem is many people have differing views on Easicare, what it actually means and how it is implemented onto farm. People may look upon the breeding side or the feeding side for Easicare, but it involves all aspects of the farming industry. Farmers must decide if they are looking for a short, or long-term fix.

Short term – Simple feeding options offered by easicare systems are flat rate feeding, offering supplementary feeding for up to 10 weeks pre-lambing at one level, once a day and continuing with this throughout till lambing. These systems can be supplemented with pre lambing feed buckets, for example the well documented ‘Lifeline’ range, that have been shown in SAC studies to improve lamb vigour, produce better milk let down in the ewe and improve colostrums quality and quantity. These along with a compound feed offer one system that reduces labour requirement.

Long term – If we look over seas at countries like New Zealand that have hill stations on mass scales, running 10-25000 ewes and still getting 150% lambing averages, we can surely take something from there to use to our benefit and implement in these Easicare systems. This seems to be what Easicare is mainly about. Breeding beneficial traits into flocks and culling traits that are non beneficial is the way forward to having a successful, low labour, easy lambing, high health flock that will fit this term ‘Easicare’ a lot better. Sheep that continue to possess problems and require assistance at lambing, give poor milk and are not hardy and fit should be removed from flocks. Wool production is an annual expense to many Scottish farmers, rather than income in most cases. Shearing is no longer providing that average farmer with an extra income, so what can be done? Part of this Easicare is the continued breeding of ewes with little wool production, therefore eliminating the need for annual shearing.

With continued pressure on the industry for fewer and larger enterprises, better attention to detail is needed to improve efficiency and continue to operate in the most economic way possible. Future generations coming into farming need to be aware of this change in agriculture and not continue along the same roads as those before otherwise the industry will continue to look bleaker.