

The impact of lameness on the body condition score of ewes on three Irish farms

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Overview

Introduction

Materials
and
Methods

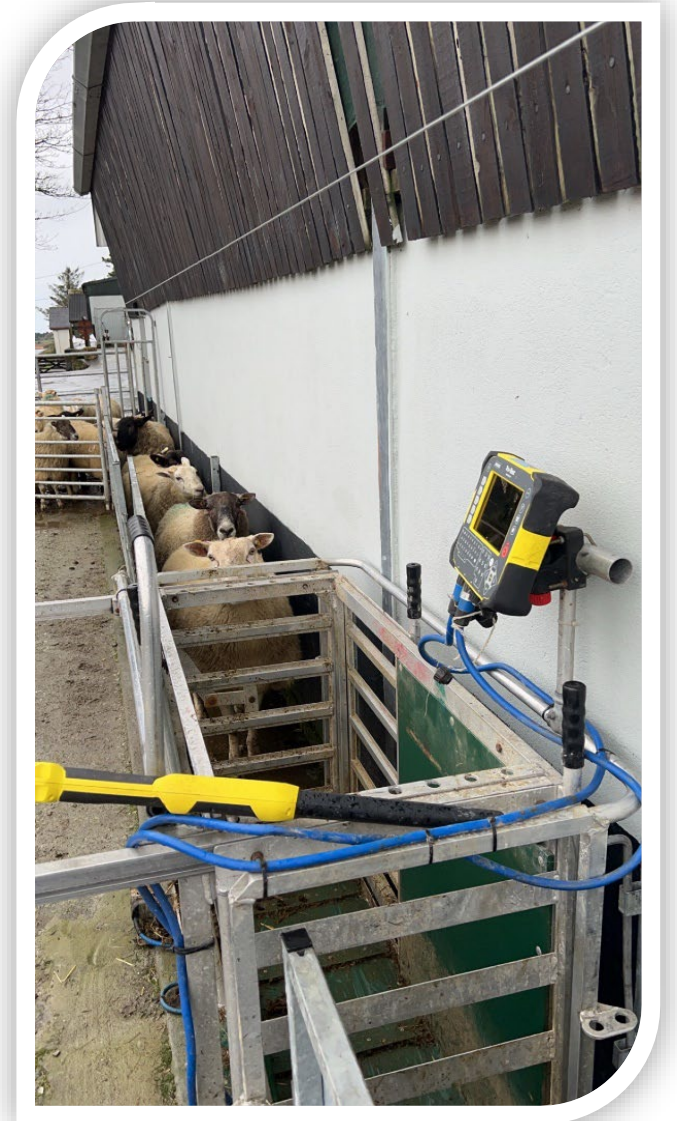
Results

Conclusion



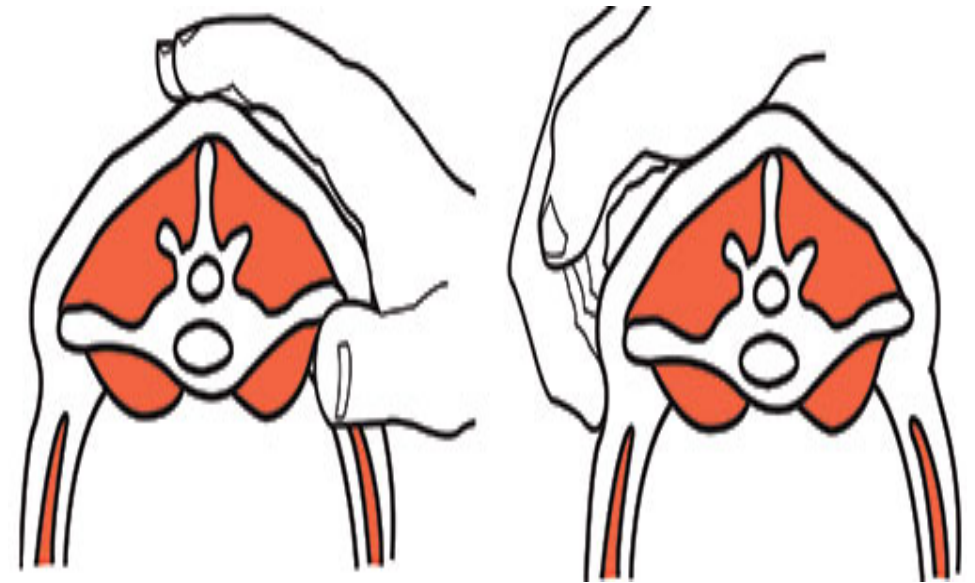
Introduction

- Lameness is a painful condition and is cited by animal science specialists and veterinarians as one of the most important factors impacting upon sheep welfare
- Currently a paucity exists as to the impact infectious lameness has on key production targets
- Data on the effects of these impacts is particularly lacking for grass based production systems as operated in Ireland
- Lameness costs the UK sheep industry between £24–£80 million per annum due to its production impacts



Irish mid-season lowland sheep systems

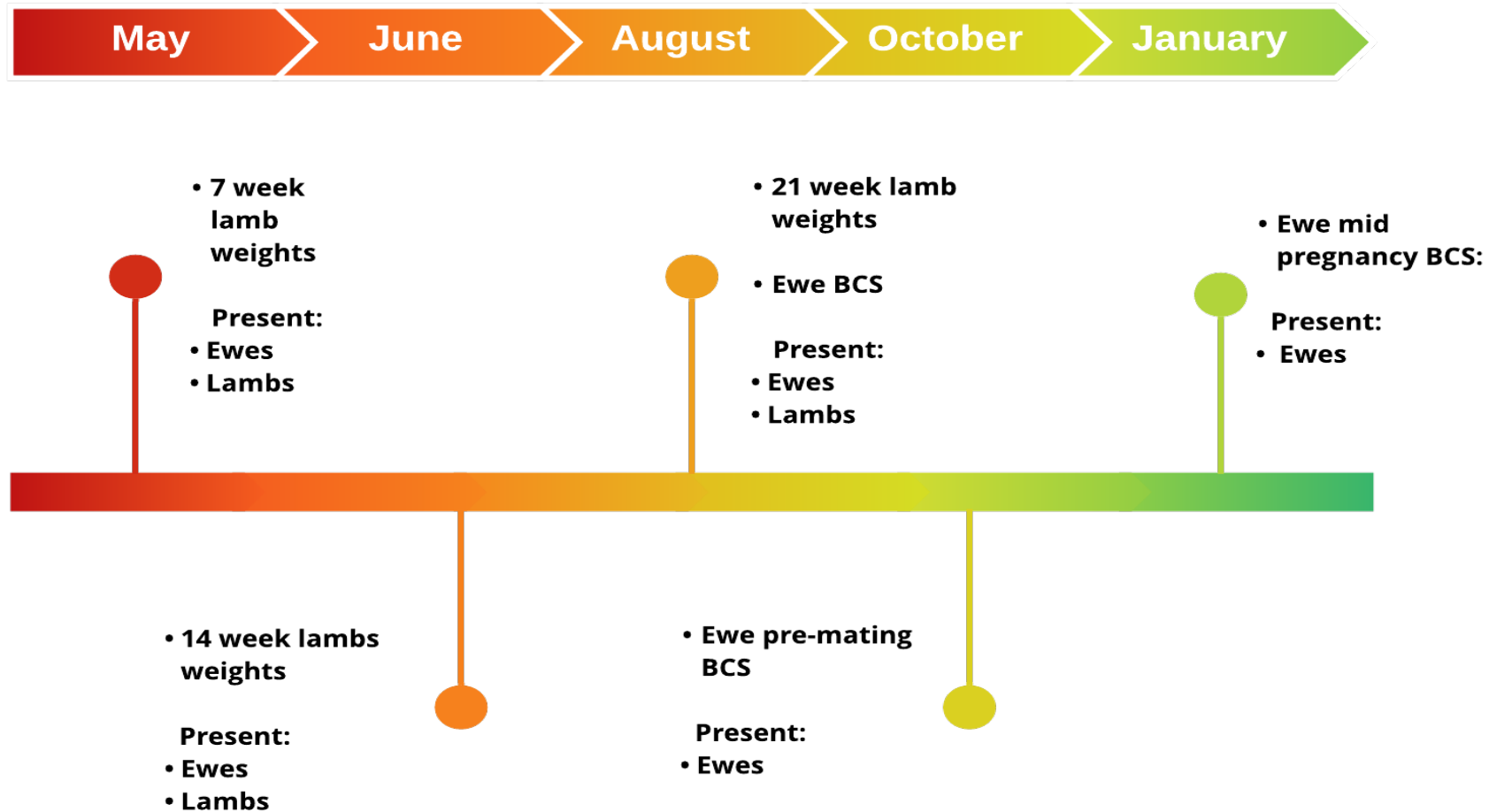
- 2.56 million breeding ewes across over 34,000 flocks
- Predominantly grass based system
- Concentrate supplementation kept to a minimum
- Majority of ewes remain outdoors until winter (housed)
- Average yearly lamb weaning rate – ~1.3 lambs/ewe
- ~ 23% ewe replacement rate
- Target BCS of ewe ~3.5 (pre-mating & mid-pregnancy scanning)



Source: AHDB

Methodology

- Study based on subset of larger ongoing study looking at the impact of infectious lameness on flock performance



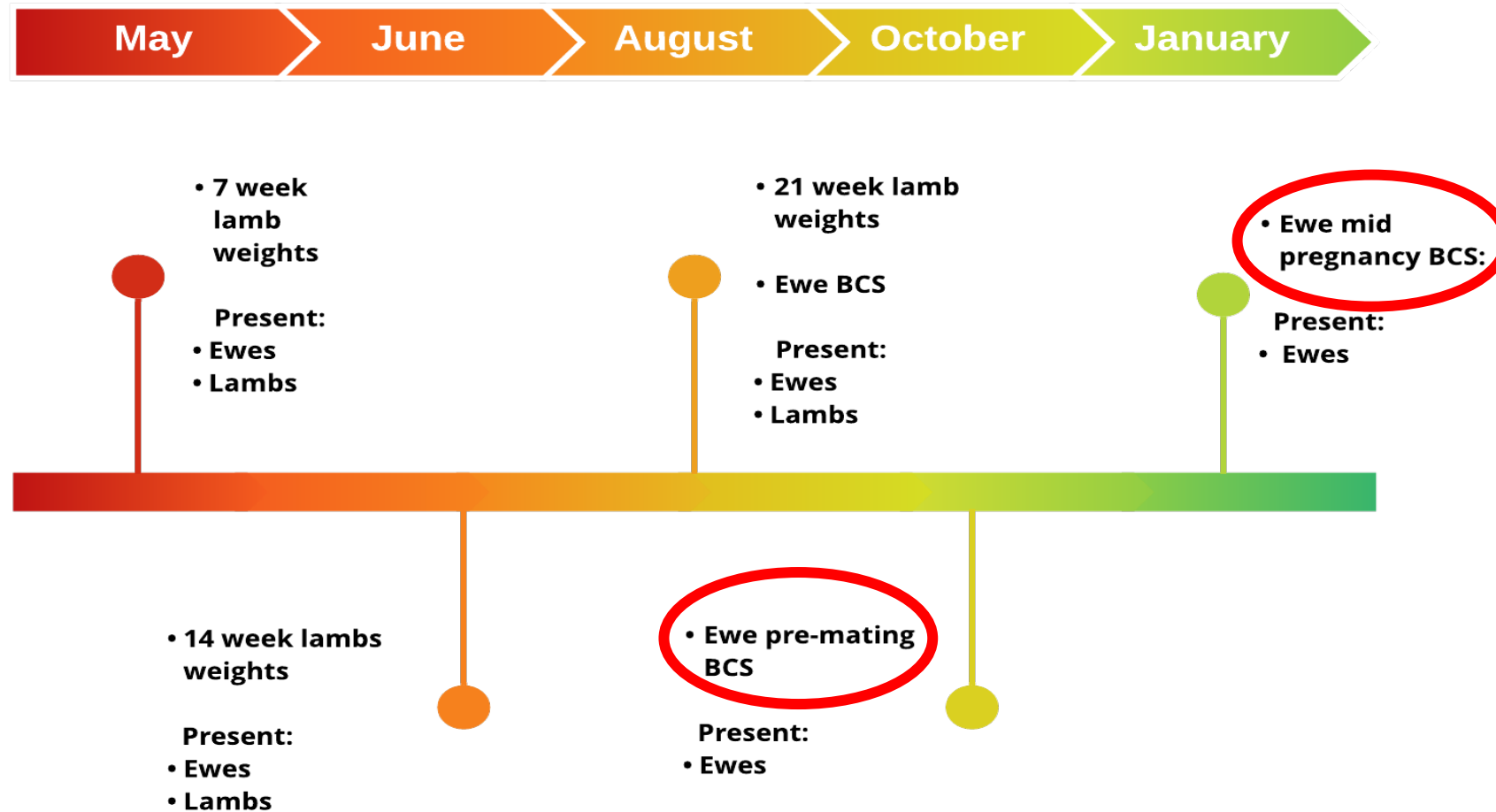
Objective

To quantify the impact that episodes of infectious lameness have on the BCS of lowland ewes while assessing the quantity of ‘persistently’ lame sheep within a flock between mating and pregnancy scanning



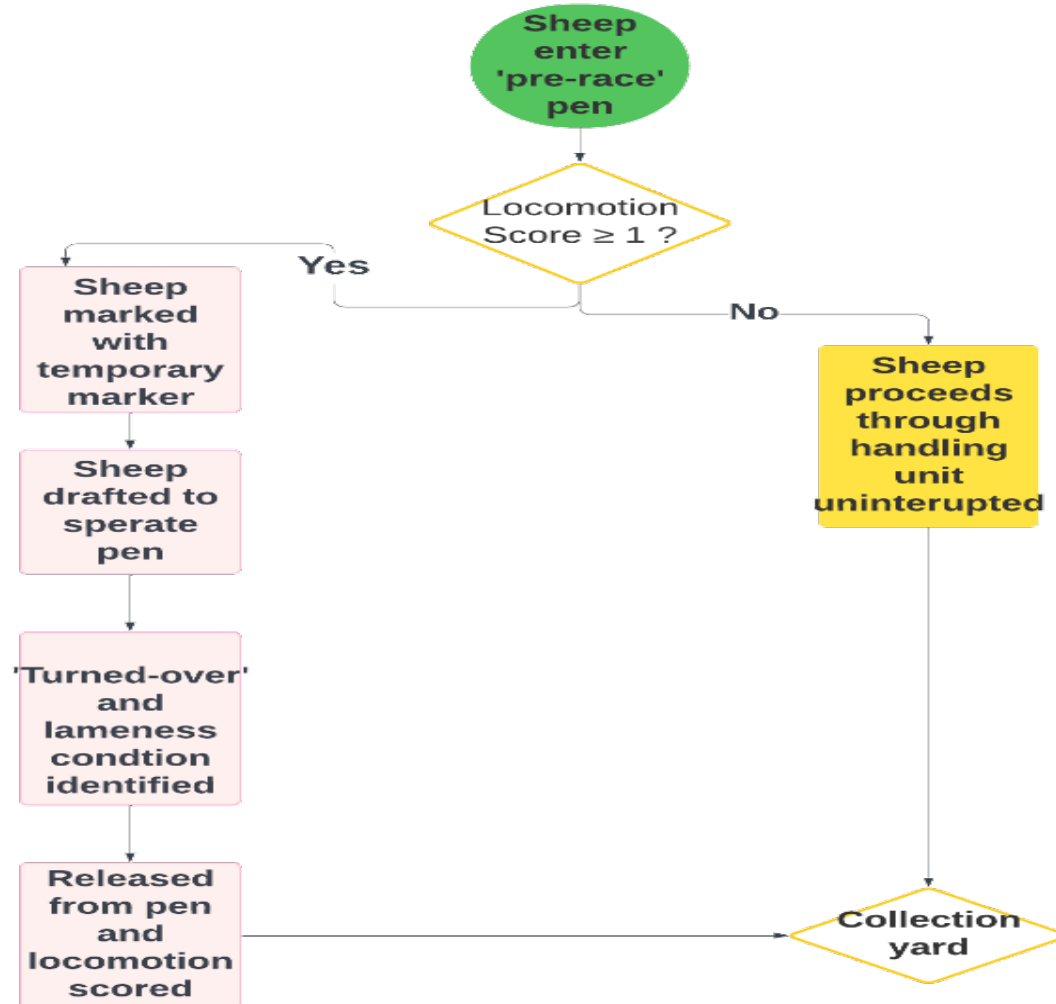
Methodology

- For this presentation we are focusing on ewe body condition score (BCS) taken at two time points on three lowland sheep farms with a mean flock size of 259 ewes visited over a 5 month period



Methodology

- Lam e ewes (Locomotion score ≥ 1) were identified prior to mating and again during mid-pregnancy (no lesion ID) when ewes were scanned to determine pregnancy status



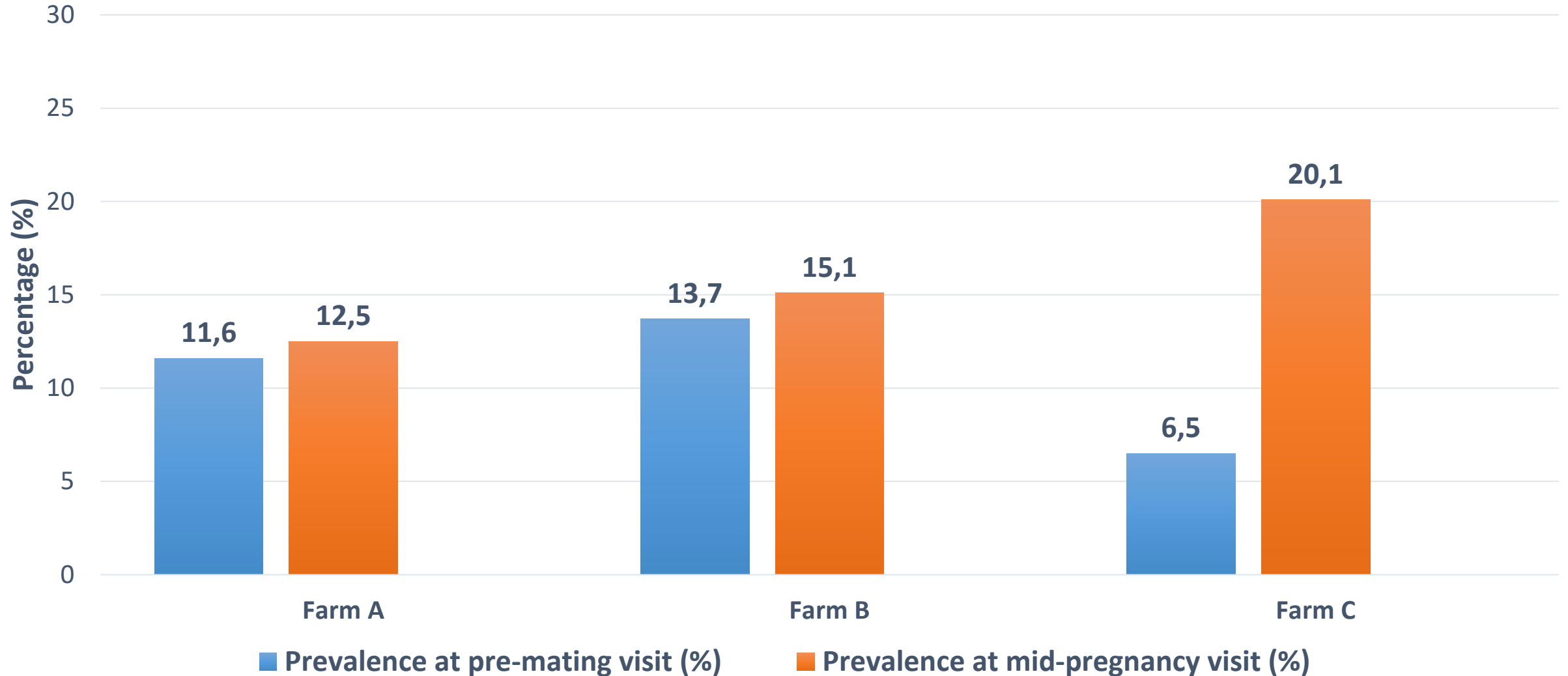
Methodology

- BCS of non-lame ewes was compared to BCS of lame ewes at the pre-mating and mid-pregnancy farm visits
- Ewes presenting as lame at pre-mating/mid pregnancy visits were then compared to non-lame ewes at these time points
- Ewes were classed as 'persistently lame' if they received a locomotion score of ≥ 1 on both visits
- Data was analysed using SAS 9.4



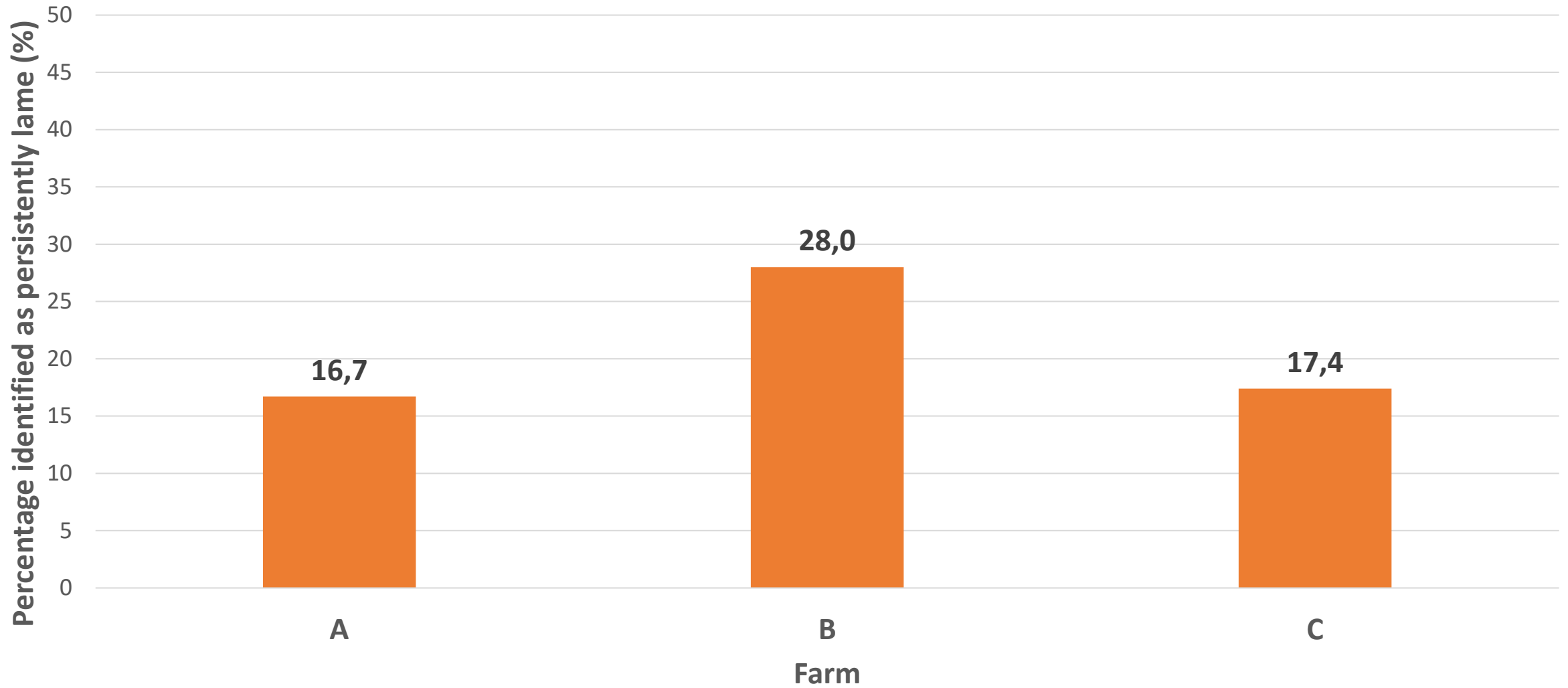
Results

Lameness Prevalence Across Three Production Study Farms



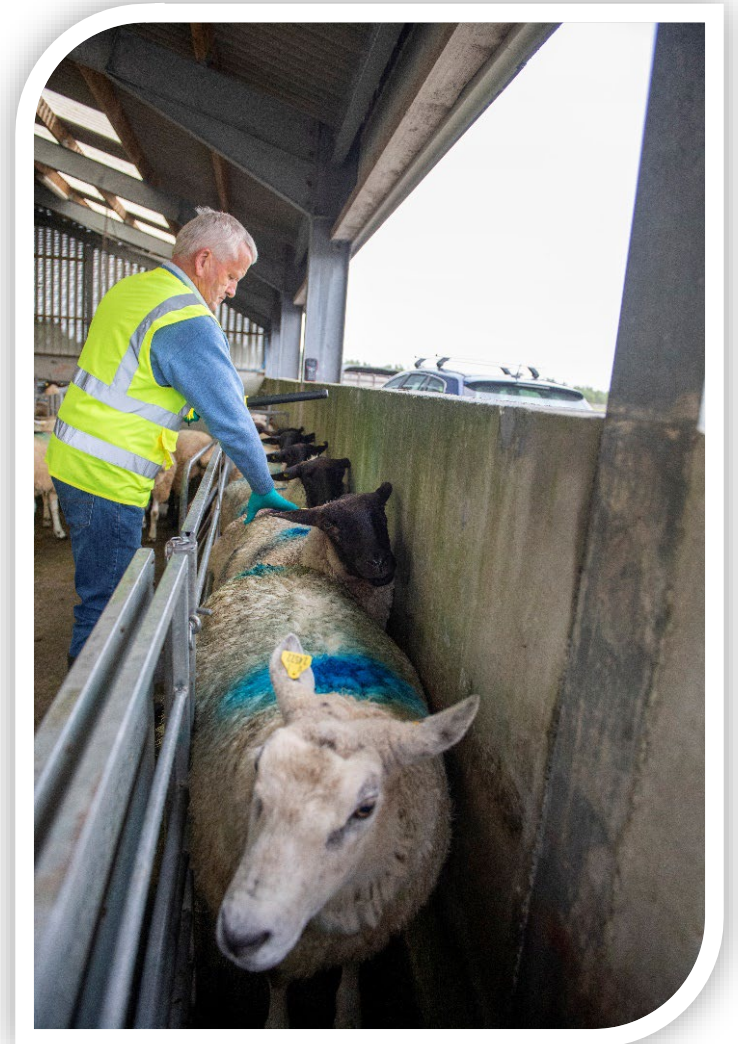
Results

Percentage of Sheep Identified as Persistently Lamé



Results

- Across the three farms selected, BCS did not appear to be effected by lameness status at the time of BCS recording ($P>0.05$)
- Farm was a significant factor in the model ($P<0.05$)
- The flock with the highest proportion of thin ewes ($BCS<3.0$) mating BCS was effected by lameness (Farm C) ($P<0.05$)



Conclusions

- This suggests that farmer management practices surround lameness treatment control and prevention, along with flock nutritional management may influence the effect of lameness on performance within a flock
- Despite initial intervention a selection of sheep may remain lame after initial treatment
- The results of this preliminary analysis show that a proportion of lame sheep will continue to have lameness issues despite initial intervention, therefore highlighting:
 - The importance of follow up treatment for lame sheep
 - Utilisation of lame groups

THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION

ANY QUESTIONS ?

