



## Store Lambs

Store Lambs' margins are always very tight, small changes can be the difference between profit and loss. Because of this the sums need to be well worked out and costs minimalised where possible.

### Purchasing Stores

It is important to select lambs suitable for your system. For example buying lambs that are too forward for a long keep, low input system would be a costly mistake.

It is vital to weigh before you buy, trying to feel condition is also very helpful.

Try to avoid stores with past health issues e.g. worms or pneumonia. Bio-security is important to consider to avoid buying in diseases such as resistant worms or virulent footrot. Isolate for at least 3 weeks, ensure parasite treatments are given for worms (Zolvix), fluke (Fasinex) and scab (Dectomax). Also check for any signs of CLA (caseous lymphadenitis), foot rot or CODD (contagious ovine digital dermatitis). If any lameness is seen, treat aggressively.

### Homebred Stores

Weight and groups the lambs at weaning, generally those under 30kg will need to be kept more than 10 weeks (Long Keeps). Those 30-35kg will require 6-10w to finish (Medium Keeps) and those over 35kg will required less than 6 weeks (Short Keeps).

If entire males are being kept these need to be weaned off the ewes at 20 weeks of age (5 months) and will need to be kept as a separate group.

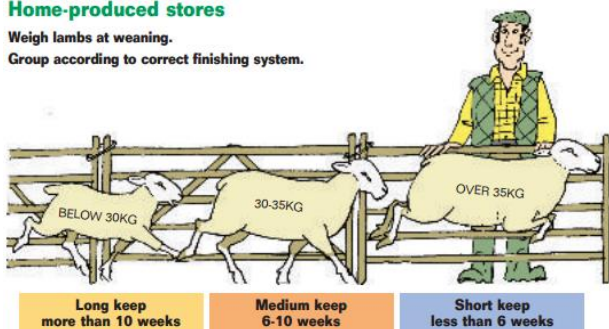
Males also need particular attention to avoid long store periods, allow for a high quality finishing ration. Meat quality will be affected if not finished by 8 months of age.

### Nutrition





Traditionally Short Keep store are kept on grass with

#### Home-produced stores

Weigh lambs at weaning.  
Group according to correct finishing system.



supplements, generally approx. 150g of grain a day, this needs to be introduced carefully. It is important to give enough trough space on this system 300-400mm per lamb is advised. Medium Keeps are feed on Fodder crops such as turnips or sugar beet however protein can often be lacking, ensure 14% crude protein. Longer keep animals are often fed Arable or vegetable by-products to finish.

	For	Against
<b>Stubble (100 day) turnips / forage rape / fodder radish</b> Catch crop <b>Sow:</b> April - August after corn, early potatoes, vining peas or grass. <b>Use:</b> Autumn/early winter.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Relatively cheap.</li> <li>- Fast growing (ready in 12 weeks)</li> <li>- High yield potential.</li> <li>- Suits arable rotation or break between grass reseed.</li> <li>- Good lamb performance with minimal supplementation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unpredictable yields</li> <li>- Utilisation rates depend on weather and/or soil conditions.</li> <li>- Tops can rapidly deteriorate.</li> <li>- Not very frost hardy.</li> </ul>
<b>Kale</b> Whole season crop <b>Sow:</b> April - mid-June <b>Use:</b> Autumn/winter utilisation 20 weeks from sowing.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High yield potential.</li> <li>- Good lamb performance.</li> <li>- Winter hardy providing feed through to spring.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Whole season crop has high opportunity cost.</li> <li>- Digestibility falls as crop ages and Brassica anaemia becomes a risk.</li> </ul>
<b>Swedes / turnips</b> Whole season crop <b>Sow:</b> April - mid-June (Swedes) May - July (Hardy turnips). <b>Use:</b> winter.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Frost hardy, suits wetter, colder farms.</li> <li>- Option to lift and store.</li> <li>- High dry matter yield potential.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Whole season crop has high opportunity cost.</li> <li>- Lie-back essential.</li> <li>- Dirty lambs.</li> <li>- Performance drops when lambs lose milk teeth in late winter.</li> </ul>
<b>Red clover / lucerne</b> Break crops. Well-suited to organic systems.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potential for very high lamb performance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Needs careful introduction to avoid bloat.</li> <li>- Not suitable for breeding ewes around tupping.</li> </ul>

Nutrition can be linked to specific diseases, for example Bloat. To minimise this, introduce lambs gradually to crops and if possible use a grass run-back for the first few days. Brassicas can be linked to anaemias due to iodine deficiency especially in mature crops.

### Health Status

"Store lambs performance depends greatly on health status, time spent on preventative measure pays dividends later" EBLEX

- Internal parasites – Discuss a worming plan with your vet involving routine worm egg counts to decide when worming is needed.
- Blowfly - due to the change in diet, scour is common and this attracts flies.
- Vaccination - Colostrum protection has ended leaving the lambs open to disease. Clostridial protection is particularly important, this can be combined with pasteurilla.

- Feet – regular foot bathing is essential to keeping sound feet, also lambs on forage crops are partially prone to soil balling.
- Trace element deficiencies can be a cause for poor growth rates. Blood sampling can identify this and boluses can be given for supplementation.

## Housing

If keeping store lambs housed, lambs can be finished on either concentrates or quality silage with supplements.

However ventilation is important, as housing should be airy, but draught free. Open yards can be used but only if the bed is free draining and straw is unlimited. Bedding area should be 0.8-0.9m<sup>2</sup>/lamb with a loafing area of 0.6-0.7 m<sup>2</sup> per lamb. The trough space varies according to diet, if supplementing all 400mm per lamb, if restricted forage 175mm/lamb and if ad lib forage 100mm/lamb. Water must be clean and easy to assess.

Shearing can be done before housing as it improves food conversion rates and they take up less space, however check the buyers are happy first, as penalties can be added.



## Know your buyers ...

Have a targeted market and watch sale reports closely as market prices can vary hugely week to week. Try to predict trends so that your chief sales lie on the top of the peak.

However it is also important to give the buyers what they want so you can achieve top prices.

- Weight and fat cover - what range do they prefer? And more importantly what at weights do penalties apply!
- Present clean and even groups, as these are more attractive to auction buyers. To achieve this belly clip before grazing forage crops, provide lie back areas, house overnight to dry

before travel and ensure that they are not too tightly transported.

- Avoid bruises as these will reduce value and are easily acquired. Try to avoid grabbing wool, lambs trampling each other and any sharp objects on hurdles or during transport.

## SO... How do your costs compare?

£/lamb	Short Keep	Medium Keep	Long Keep	Your system
<b>Output:</b>				
Finished lambs	<b>44.00*</b>	<b>47.00**</b>	<b>51.50***</b>	
<b>Variable Costs:</b>				
Conc feed	<b>0.75</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.80</b>	
Vet and med	<b>0.50</b>	<b>0.75</b>	<b>1.50</b>	
Marketing etc.	<b>2.50</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>2.90</b>	
Forage	<b>0.60</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>5.60</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.35</b>	<b>8.00</b>	<b>11.80</b>	
Cost of store lamb	<b>34.00</b>	<b>32.00</b>	<b>30.00</b>	
<b>Gross margin</b>	<b>5.65</b>	<b>7.00</b>	<b>9.70</b>	
Typical fixed costs	<b>3.00</b>	<b>4.50</b>	<b>6.75</b>	
<b>Profit/lamb (£)</b>	<b>2.65</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>2.95</b>	

\*19.5kg x 225p \*\*20kg x 235p \*\*\*21kg x 245p accounting for seasonal price increase.

This table is taken from EBLEX clearly marks the key costs and also gives benchmarking targets to aim for. For more information on getting better returns from your lambs go to,

<http://beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/brp-manual-5-Growing-and-finishing-lambs290714.pdf>

Or type 'Eblex finishing lambs' into google and click on the top result.

All the best!

Will

