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Minister Creed launches new €25m Sheep Welfare Scheme

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Michael Creed T.D., today announced the launch of the new Sheep Welfare Scheme which provides funding of up to €25 million for Irish sheep farmers in 2017. The scheme will be introduced in January as part of Ireland's Rural Development Programme having been agreed with the European Commission.

Speaking at the launch of the scheme in Kenmare Mart today, Minister Creed said *"I am delighted to launch the new Sheep Welfare Scheme today and to be investing €25m into Irish sheep farming next year. This scheme was key commitment in the Programme for Partnership Government and we have worked extremely hard over the last six months to bring it to fruition. This scheme also reflects the commitment of this Government to the sheep sector in Ireland and will make an important contribution to the sustainability of this sector. The sector makes an important contribution to the Agri-Food economy generating an output value of €320 million and exporting in excess of €230 million in 2015. It supports 34,000 farm families directly in addition to providing several thousand jobs indirectly in rural areas."*

On the detail of the scheme, the Minister said: *"this scheme provides support of €10 per ewe to farmers for undertaking actions which make a positive contribution to flock welfare. In designing the scheme I was conscious that this scheme would have take into account the different challenges faced by sheep farmers in lowland and in hill areas and I believe we have successfully struck this balance.. The end result is a reflection of extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders, particularly farm organisations, carried out by my Department over the last few months, in addition to intensive discussions with the European Commission"*

Under the scheme farmers will be required to choose actions which can improve the overall welfare of a flock. These actions will be chosen from a menu from which farmers must choose two actions. based on whether the farmer has a lowland flock or hill flock. These actions must be completed over a 12 month period. In return the farmer will receive a payment of €10 per breeding ewe, depending on the average number of ewes held on their farm in the years 2014 and 2015.

Concluding the Minister said *“We are now moving to the implementation phase of this scheme and my Department will shortly issue an application form and the terms and condition, to all sheep farmers. I would urge all farmers to study this information carefully and to note that the deadline for applying for the scheme will be the 31st January 2017. To assist farmers my Department will be running a series of information meetings around the country in January where they can find out all the necessary information on the scheme”.*

Note for Editors:

- Application forms for this scheme will be posted to registered flockowners from this week by the Department. Closing date for receipt of applications from flockowners is the 31st January 2017.
- The dates and times for the nationwide series of meetings is (all meetings to commence at 8pm)
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Date	Venue	Hotel
10-Jan	Cork - Dunmanway	Parkway Hotel
11-Jan	Kerry – Killarney	Glen Eagle Hotel
12-Jan	Tipperary – Clonmel	Clonmel Park Hotel
16-Jan	Mayo – Castlebar	Breaffy House Hotel
17-Jan	Galway – Maam Cross	Peacocks Hotel
18-Jan	Athlone	Hudson Bay Hotel
19-Jan	Carrick on Shannon	Landmark Hotel
23-Jan	Aughrim	Lawless Hotel
24-Jan	Dundalk	Ballymacscanlon House Hotel
25-Jan	Donegal – Ardara	Nesbitts Hotel

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- Payment is €10 per breeding ewe. The number of allowable ewes for each participant will be calculated as the average number of ewes in their 2014 and 2015 sheep census;
- The farmer is required to maintain the reference number of ewes which will form part of the inspection process
- There is provision for new entrants to join where they do not have 2014/15 ewe numbers on which to base a reference number. A new entrant to this scheme is defined as an applicant who has applied for a new herd number from 1st January 2016 and before the closing date of the scheme in 2017 or an applicant with an existing herd number who has not held or traded in sheep for a two year period up to 31st October preceding the scheme year.

- The actions for the scheme are outlined below. Farmers will either be in the hill or lowland sector and must choose one action from Category A **plus** one action from one Category B.

Lowland Flock	Hill Flock
<u>Category A</u>	<u>Category A</u>
Lameness Control	Mineral Supplementation Ewes post mating
Mineral Supplementation Ewes post mating	Meal feeding lambs post weaning*
<u>Category B</u>	<u>Category B</u>
Parasite Control (Faecal Egg Count)	Parasite Control (Faecal Egg Count)
Scanning	Scanning
Flystrike control	Mineral Supplementation Lambs Pre weaning*

ENDS