

Background

- Improved breeding and management strategies are needed for a better efficiency within sheep flocks
- To inform decisions, efficient systems to record individual animal performances are needed, from farm to slaughter
- No current mechanism in NI to establish the link between carcass data and individual sheep

Ear tag field trial



More than 4,000 lambs were tagged at lowland and hill farms using 5 different types of tags

The proportion of tags lost from weaning onwards was low (1%) regardless of type of tag



Type of tags and their position had significant effects on welfare issues

In particular, tags inserted too close to the head often led to more lesions of the ear than those in the middle part of the ear

Testing of a reading system for EID tags in a commercial abattoir

- More than 5,000 sheep were individually read along the kill line
- On average 3% of all tags were either missing or faulty (non functioning EID device), and all remaining functioning tags were successfully read
- Similar proportion of faulty tags regardless of animal type (lambs or hoggets) and type of tag (wrapped round or button tags)
- However, tags located on the outer part of the ear had a higher proportion of faulty tags (13%) than those in the middle (3%)



Ear tag reader manufactured by Shearwell and used at Linden Foods