

CALF REGISTRATIONS TO SUCKLER COWS DECLINE FOR THIRD YEAR IN A ROW

DURING 2019 there were 223,241 beef sired calves registered to suckler cows in Northern Ireland. This was a decline of 2,191 calves from 2018 levels and is the third consecutive year in which registrations have recorded a decline.

most notable declines were recorded in the first half of the year as outlined in Figure 1. In the period January-June 2019 there were 148,143 calves registered to suckler cows, back five per cent or 7,012 head from the same period in 2018.

While calf registrations to suckler cows have declined overall during 2019 the

However in the second half of 2019 there was some recovery in calf

registrations to suckler cows with 75,098 calves registered. This was an increase of seven per cent or 4,821 head from the same period in 2018. While the Northern Ireland suckler herd remains predominantly spring calving this does indicate some spreading in the calving pattern in the region which will influence the availability of cattle for slaughter further down the line.

Beef-Cross calf registrations

While calf registrations to suckler cows have continued to decline the number of beef sired calves registered to dairy cows has increased. During 2019 there were 124,651 beef cross calves registered in Northern Ireland, an increase of 4,685 head or four per cent from 2018 levels.

These beef cross calves accounted for 36 per cent of all beef sired calves registered in Northern Ireland during 2019. This proportion has been steadily increasing in recent years, up from 23 per cent in 2012.

Dairy male calf registrations

While a proportion of dairy sired male calves are exported out of Northern Ireland for further production they are also an important source of throughput for local beef processors. During 2019 there were 71,403 of these animals registered. This was back from 74,795 head in 2018 and the fourth consecutive year in which they have declined.

The improving effectiveness of sexed semen has reduced the number of cows dairy producers are serving using a dairy sire. This increases the number of dairy cows being covered by beef bulls which produce higher value calves for beef production and provide an additional source of income for the dairy producer.

Figure 1: Monthly beef sired calf registrations to suckler cows in Northern Ireland 2017-2019 Source: APHIS

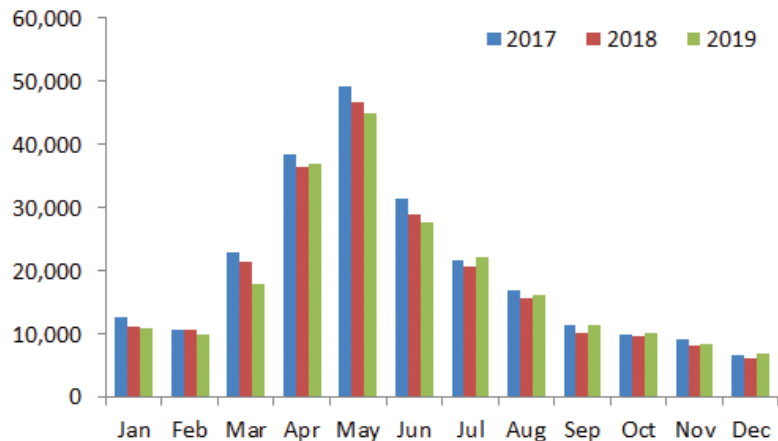
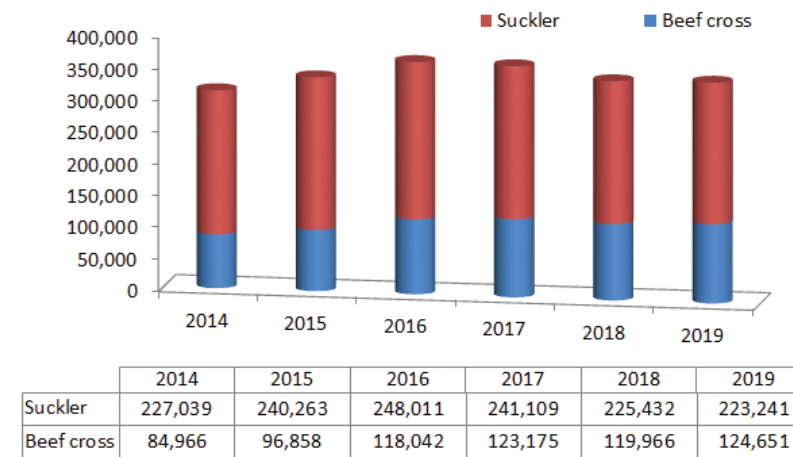


Figure 2: Breakdown of beef sired calf registrations in Northern Ireland by dam type 2014-2019. Source: APHIS



FQAS MART CLINICS JANUARY 2020

LMC's Farm Liaison Officer, Terry White, runs Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (FQAS) mart clinics at a range of Livestock Marts across Northern Ireland. Terry is present to assist members of FQAS with non-conformances, general scheme queries and any issues prior to or following an inspection.



The Liaison Service is in place to assist farmers and to ensure that as many producers as possible can continue to benefit from being a member of the scheme. Producers can use the service for any general enquiries in relation to FQAS membership, to help prepare for an inspection and also to help resolve any non-conformances identified during a farm inspection.

Any farmers who wish to join the

scheme can also do so through their local FQAS mart clinic. Terry will be available at the livestock marts listed in Table 1 below.

For further information call the FQAS Helpline on (028) 9263 3024.

Table 1: FQAS Mart Clinics for January 2020

Mart	Day	Date
Omagh	Monday (Day)	06/01/2020
Saintfield	Wednesday (Day)	08/01/2020
Markethill	Tuesday (Day)	14/01/2020
Enniskillen	Thursday (Day)	16/01/2020
Kilrea	Wednesday (Day)	22/01/2020
Ballymena	Friday (Day)	24/01/2020

NI DEADWEIGHT CATTLE TRADE UPDATE

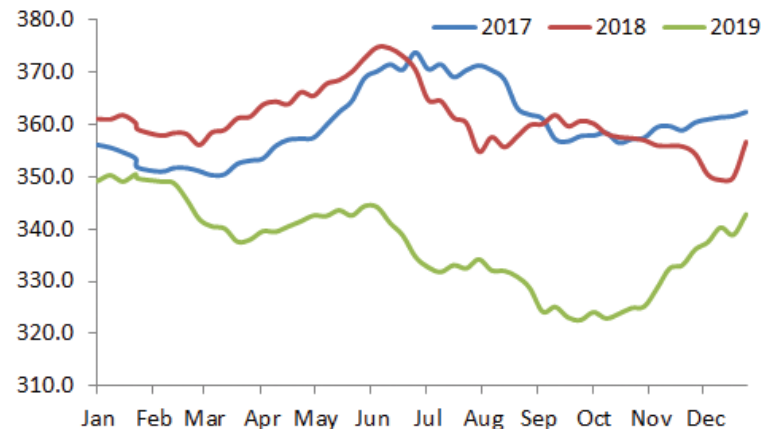
It has been a difficult year for beef producers in Northern Ireland with deadweight prices coming under significant pressure during the first ten months of the year.

The deadweight beef trade did record some improvement in the region towards the end of 2019 however despite this upturn in the trade deadweight cattle prices finished the

year behind the levels recorded in previous years as outlined in Figure 3.

The R3 steer price in Northern Ireland during the week ending 29 December 2019 was 342.8p/kg. This was 13.9p/kg behind the corresponding week in 2018 and 19.6p/kg behind the same week in 2017.

Figure 3: Weekly R3 steer prices in Northern Ireland 2017-2019 Source: LMC Price Reporting



FQAS Helpline

If you have had a recent inspection and need help and advice to rectify any non-conformances, contact the FQAS helpline:
Tel: 028 9263 3024

Answerphone Service

Factory Quotes & Mart Results
Updated 5pm Daily
Tel: 028 9263 3011

Text Service

Free weekly price quotes sent to your mobile phone
Email - bulletin@lmcni.com
Tel: 028 9263 3000

CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 30/12/19	Next Week 06/01/20
Prime		
U-3	324 - 334p	326 - 334p
R-3	318 - 328p	320 - 328p
O+3	312 - 322p	314 - 322p
P+3	264 - 276p	266 - 276p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3 & better	230 - 256p	230 - 250p
Steakers	140 - 170p	140 - 170p
Blues	120 - 130p	120 - 130p

Cow quotes vary depending on weight and grade. Pricing policies vary from plant to plant. Producers are advised to check pricing policies before presenting cattle for slaughter.

REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 28/12/19	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	341.9	344.2	326.4
R3	338.2	340.6	328.5
O+3	330.6	331.1	320.7

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 28/12/19	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	141.6	155.3	165.4	177.1
P2	167.1	186.9	205.3	220.8
P3	-	190.9	225.8	230.1
O3	180.0	230.0	248.6	252.6
O4	-	230.0	253.4	256.4
R3	160.0	-	-	277.1

Deadweight Cattle Trade

Base quotes from the major beef processing plants in NI range from 326-334p/kg for in spec U-3 grading prime cattle this week with similar quotes expected for early next week. The plants have indicated steady supplies of cattle available for slaughter to meet demand for beef.

The cow trade is holding steady with quotes from the local plants ranging from 230-250p/kg for good quality O+3 grading cows. The majority of local processors are quoting in the region of 240-245p/kg with similar quotes expected for early next week.

Due to the Christmas holidays there was a reduced cattle kill last week with 3,707 prime cattle slaughtered. This brings the total prime cattle kill for 2019 to 344,671 head, a 2.3 per cent increase from 2018 levels when 336,991 prime cattle were killed locally. This increase in prime cattle throughput has coincided with an increase in average carcass weights. During 2019 the average prime cattle carcass weight was 343.5kg, up 7.1kg or 2.1 per cent from 2018 levels. The combination of increased prime cattle throughput and higher carcass weights has resulted in 4.4 per cent increase in the volume of beef from prime cattle handled by local processors.

The cow kill in local plants last week was 834 head which takes total throughput for 2019 to 99,321 head. This is a decline of 4,212 head or 4.1 per cent from 2018 levels. There has also been an increase in the average cow carcass weight in NI which has offset this decline in throughput. The average cow carcass weight in NI during 2019 was 307.8kg, up from 300.1kg in 2018. This increase by 7.7kg represents a 2.6 per cent increase year on year.

The deadweight trade for prime cattle continued to firm in NI last week with an R3 steer price of 342.8p/kg, up 3.9p/kg from the previous week. This brings the R3 steer price to its highest recorded level since early June this year and puts it 1.6p/kg higher than the GB average. The R3 heifer price followed a similar trend in NI last week, increasing by 4.1p/kg to 342.5p/kg. There was a small price reported kill of young bulls in NI last week with the R3 price back marginally from the previous week to 328.3p/kg.

The deadweight cow trade has also been holding steady in NI with an O3 cow price last week of 251.5p/kg, up marginally from the previous week. The O3 cow price in NI remains higher than all the GB regions and is 14.2p/kg above the average GB price.

The R3 steer price in ROI last week was the equivalent of 304.9/kg. This is 37.9p/kg behind the equivalent price in NI which puts the differential in the value of a 350kg carcass at £133. The R3 heifer price in ROI last week was the equivalent of 312p/kg which was 30.5p/kg behind the equivalent price in NI. This puts the differential on a 320kg heifer carcass between the two regions at £98.

LAST WEEK'S DEADWEIGHT CATTLE PRICES (UK / ROI)

W/E 28/12/19	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB	
Steers	U3	343.3	314.3	348.2	339.8	342.0	336.8	341.9
	R3	342.8	304.9	351.1	342.6	337.6	333.5	341.2
	R4	342.8	304.2	349.4	347.1	335.1	333.2	342.9
	O3	332.2	291.6	335.9	328.6	316.8	313.7	324.0
	AVG	335.4	-	347.9	338.4	327.4	323.4	334.9
Heifers	U3	344.5	322.3	353.1	344.2	347.8	337.6	346.3
	R3	342.5	312.0	348.3	338.1	336.2	339.5	340.3
	R4	341.2	311.3	349.3	336.0	334.1	335.5	338.7
	O3	336.9	299.3	334.8	325.2	317.9	324.8	325.5
	AVG	337.6	-	348.4	335.8	327.9	329.3	335.5
Young Bulls	U3	326.4	295.2	339.6	340.1	322.3	338.0	333.7
	R3	328.3	280.9	336.6	328.8	327.3	323.0	329.6
	O3	314.1	271.0	303.3	290.8	291.5	318.6	298.4
	AVG	312.6	-	329.7	304.8	315.6	302.5	313.2
Prime Cattle Price Reported	4,737	-	4,452	3,273	3,162	2,122	13,009	
Cows	O3	251.5	227.9	225.2	243.6	240.0	232.1	237.3
	O4	256.0	227.5	231.0	246.7	239.9	229.3	238.2
	P2	207.5	205.3	190.0	194.9	197.3	175.7	190.5
	P3	228.2	216.6	215.0	218.9	215.2	200.8	212.4
	AVG	235.8	-	234.1	230.7	210.9	193.9	213.7

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=85.46p Stg
(ii) Shading indicates a lower price than the previous week.
(iii) AVG is the average of all grades in the category, not just those listed

LATEST LIVELWEIGHT CATTLE MART PRICES NI

W/E 21/12/19	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	201	211	205	170	200	185
Friesians	152	168	160	144	146	145
Heifers	205	215	210	165	198	180
Beef Cows	134	211	146	110	133	122
Dairy Cows	103	134	110	60	99	80
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	210	235	222	175	209	195
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	200	213	208	170	199	185
Bullocks over 500kg	190	202	195	165	189	180
Heifers up to 450kg	200	219	210	165	199	180
Heifers over 450kg	195	214	205	160	194	182
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	320	535	365	200	310	265
Continental Heifers	265	330	290	150	260	200
Friesian Bulls	115	170	150	52	110	75
Holstein Bulls	70	110	85	2	65	35

SHEEP TRADE

NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 30/12/19	Next Week 06/01/20
Lambs up to 22kgs	395-405p	400-405p

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 14/12/19	W/E 21/12/19	W/E 28/12/19
NI L/W Lambs	371.7	368.3	-
NI D/W Lambs	393.3	396.9	396.7
GB D/W Lambs	431.7	429.8	438.0
ROI D/W	397.9	-	-

Deadweight Sheep Trade

The deadweight sheep trade in NI has help fairly steady over the Christmas and New Year holidays. Base quotes from the plants this week for R3 grading hoggets are in the region of 400-405p/kg up to 22kg with similar quotes expected for early next week. This week last year the local plants were quoting 415-430p/kg for R3 grading hoggets up to 22kg.

Lamb throughput in NI last week was back to 2,223 head due to the reduced kill days. This takes the total lamb/hogget kill in NI for 2019 to 415,294 head. This was back marginally from the 420,344 lambs/hoggets killed locally during 2018. The average lamb/hogget carcase weight in NI during 2019 was 22.3kg, an increase from 21.6kg in 2018. This increase in the average carcase weight by 0.7kg from 2018 levels represents a 3.5 per cent increase year on year and has contributed to the two per cent increase in the volume of sheepmeat handled by local processors during 2019.

The average deadweight lamb price in NI last week was 396.7p/kg, almost unchanged from the previous week. In the same week last year the deadweight lamb price was 404.8p/kg.

Only a small number of marts were open this week due to the holiday season with the reported liveweight trade slightly sharper due to the small number of lambs on offer. Normal service will resume across the marts next week.

LMC MARKET INFORMATION

LMC'S Market Information Services are designed to support, examine and inform the NI red meat industry. The service aspires to support producers and processors with their decision making by producing accurate and timely information that creates a better understanding of the trade.

LMC is committed to creating an environment where our stakeholders are well-informed whether this is through our Market Information publications, the provision of basic statistics, further analysis of this data or the delivery of information through public events.

LMC encourages all of its stakeholders to utilise the Market Information section of the LMC website which provides a valuable source of statistics relating to beef and sheep meat production. If you require any further information or analysis please contact us directly via email at bulletin@lmcni.com or via telephone at 028 9263 3000.



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BEEF AND LAMB HIGHLIGHTS OF 2019

2019 was a very busy and interesting year for LMC and there is no doubt that the year ahead will be just as challenging for all those involved in the red meat sector. The services provided by LMC are actively used by our levy payers, FQAS members and wider stakeholder community and LMC will continue to build our reputation and deliver excellent services to the beef and lamb industries as we move into a new decade.

Trade

Last year saw a number of notable successes notched up when it came to securing new export markets for locally produced red meat. Chief among them were the agreements to kick start the sale of beef to both Japan and China. Both developments marked the completion of lengthy negotiation processes.

In the case of China, the coming weeks will see a focus on the final ratification of all outstanding procedures. This means that beef from Northern Ireland will be granted direct access to China for the first time in over 20 years. All of this comes at a time when China's meat import figures for 2020 may well reach record levels across the board. This trend reflects the impact which African Swine Fever is now having on the country's pig population.

Schools

Last year saw the Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) celebrating 20 years of school demonstration. Indeed, this is a service provided by the Commission, which continues to grow from strength to strength.

Since 1999 LMC has been helping to educate approximately 100,000 young people by providing beef and lamb cookery demonstrations to post-primary schools across Northern Ireland. A record-breaking 350 demonstrations

were carried out between September 2018 and March 2019, reaching over 7,000 school pupils.

LMC provided 350 cookery demonstrations during 2018/19, reaching over 7,000 post primary-pupils

The scheme evolved out of a conference hosted for home economics teachers in collaboration with ABP in 1998. It was established to help educate pupils on the importance of consuming beef and lamb as part of a healthy diet and how to cook with them.

Lamb promotion

'Love Lamb Week' was another success for the LMC in 2019. The beginning of September saw local consumers again receiving a strong reminder of just how versatile lamb can be. It is also a meat that can be enjoyed by everyone.

The promotion also acted as a reminder to sheep farmers that the Commission remains fully committed to reflecting their interests within a fast-changing marketplace. Local sheep farmers produce some of the best lamb in the world. It is a meat produced almost completely from grazed grass, making it a consumer's dream.

'Love Lamb Week' provided LMC staff with an ideal opportunity to highlight the unique role played by the sheep industry across Northern Ireland. From a consumer perspective, exquisite taste and quality are always guaranteed, traits that are further backed up by the traceability, welfare and other production guarantees that are enshrined within FQAS.

Beef promotion

'Beef Week 2019' was marked by the

launch of LMC's television advertising campaign, themed: 'Flavour Your Life'. The seven days between Monday, April 1 until Sunday, April 7 saw consumers across Northern Ireland receive a very positive message regarding the benefits of including beef in their diets. LMC hosted live sampling sessions in Asda and Tesco stores.

Beef Week was also used to remind consumers to look out for the NIFQA logo on all beef products when shopping. This came with the confirmatory message of the logo verifying that the beef had been produced to the highest animal welfare

Image 2: LMC's Alex Irvine and Lauren Hyde helping expand LMC's work with schools



standards and with care for the environment. In other words, purchasing beef which carries the NIFQA logo is a guarantee that the meat is of the highest quality and that it has been produced right here in Northern Ireland.

Putting the farmer first

All LMC board members and staff are acutely aware of the financial and other challenges that are impinging on beef and lamb farmers at the present time. They are also mindful that such circumstances can put additional pressure on individual's physical and mental well being.

As a consequence, the entire LMC team is always keen to support initiatives which can help farmers better cope with these pressures. An excellent example of this commitment was the Commission's support for the October 2019 visit of Doug Avery to Northern Ireland.

Known the world over as the 'Resilient Farmer', the New Zealand man has overcome many adversities to become one of his country's most successful farmers. His 'Shift Happens' presentation struck a chord with the many hundreds of local farmers, who turned out to hear what Doug had to say. Let's hope that his uplifting words will leave a lasting legacy in rural areas across Northern Ireland

And finally

LMC has a new Education and Consumer Promotion Manager. The lady in question is Lauren Hyde, from Portadown in Co Armagh. She takes over from Cherrie Kenny, who retired in October of last year. The LMC board members and staff would like to thank Cherrie for the tremendous service she has given the Commission over many years, and to wish Lauren every success in developing LMC's important work in this area.

Image 1: LMC teamed up with Invest NI during 2019 to deliver a seminar for the local industry on growing market opportunities in Japan and China.



A NEW DECADE BECKONS FOR BEEF AND LAMB IN MY OPINION: RICHARD HALLERON

THE year ahead will be a critically important one for Northern Ireland's beef and lamb sectors. Yes, Westminster has agreed a support budget for 2020. But livestock production is a long term business. It takes years for herds and flocks to be built up. And, given this reality, farmers need long-term certainty when it comes to planning their futures.

Steps must be taken over the coming months to ensure that suitable support measures are put in place for beef and lamb that will meet the needs of both sectors up to 2025 – and possibly beyond. And if Northern Ireland needs to go it alone on this issue, relative to the rest of the UK, so be it. It also goes without saying that appropriate funding measures must be put in place to meet the future needs of livestock producers on a wholly comprehensive basis.

Let's not forget that the current single payment support system accounts for between 70% and 80% of the profits generated on local beef and sheep

farmers in a normal year. Maintaining income is one thing; provision must also be made to allow our livestock sectors become more efficient while also meeting the growing challenge of 'farming with the environment'.

Future trade agreements entered into by the UK with the EU-27, and the rest of the world, will also have a critically important impact on the fortunes of beef and sheep sectors. And it's all about standards.

Agriculture and food must be regarded as sensitive subjects as the UK sets out to do new business with the rest of the world. In practical terms this means only allowing in food products that meet the standards which farmers in places like Northern Ireland are already meeting.

A cheap food policy, if pursued by the UK Government, will only lead to adverse pressure on the UK food industry and export our production needs to less sustainable supply bases overseas.

And it's in this context that quality standards such as the Northern Ireland Farm Quality Assurance (NIFQA) will take on even greater relevance than is already the case. In fact, I would strongly argue that there is a greater need than ever to further expand and strengthen the criteria covered by NIFQA.

The one big advantage of leaving the EU is the greater power London will have in determining the future prospects for agriculture throughout the UK. One of the great legacy issues that remains unresolved courtesy of Brexit is that of nailing down the power of supermarkets when it comes to delivering fairer farmgate prices.

To say that greater transparency is required within the farming and food chain would be an understatement of some magnitude. There is already a Grocery Code Adjudicator operating in the UK. Methinks, it's time to up the powers of that office considerably as we look forward to a new decade in a post-Brexit world.



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