



Livestock & Meat Commission

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# FQAS INSPECTIONS TO RESUME FROM JUNE 2020

The Northern Ireland Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (FQAS) Industry Board has agreed to resume inspections from 8th June 2020 conditional on strict adherence to an inspections COVID-19 protocol.

Speaking following the announcement, LMC Chief Executive and FQAS Board Chairman Ian Stevenson said, “The production of safe wholesome food is an essential service and FQAS is a critical part of this. Our beef and lamb supply chains in Northern Ireland have worked tirelessly over the last few months to keep our produce readily available to consumers during this period of lockdown. Safeguarding the people who are central to food production is a critically important issue for everyone involved in the supply chain.

A comprehensive protocol has therefore been produced to allow FQAS farm inspections to be conducted safely outdoors in line with government guidelines and industry best practice, minimising risk to both farmers and inspectors. It is essential that both farmers and inspectors follow this protocol.”

The protocol has been agreed with LMC’s contracted certification body, Northern Ireland Food Chain Certification (NIFCC) and details requirements for both inspectors and farmers before, during and after a farm inspection.

Ian continued; “As we enter the recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic human health remains the top priority. The decision to resume



farm inspections was not taken lightly and is unanimously supported by stakeholders and supply chain partners. Following this protocol allows us to resume inspections safely and therefore maintain the robust quality standards that Northern Ireland beef and lamb producers must adhere to.

“It is fully accepted that there may be some FQAS members who are vulnerable or shielding and therefore in these exceptional circumstances there is an opportunity to avail of an alternative remote assessment that can be completed off farm. Guidance on remote assessments has been produced and is available on the LMC website.

LMC will work with the FQAS Industry Board and NIFCC to regularly review the situation. With these additional and critically important safeguards in place it is extremely positive that independent verification of our world leading quality standards can resume thereby assisting our farmers and processors in placing quality beef and lamb on the shelves as together, we continue to feed the nation.”

**How will an FQAS inspections be different from a pre Covid-19 farm assessment?**

The key differences in how inspections will be conducted now compared with before the pandemic are; strict adherence to social distancing guidelines by farmers and inspectors, no entry to a farmer’s home or farm dwelling house, inspectors must wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at all times when on farm and inspections must only involve the inspector and one representative from the farm business. Scheme documentation can also be forwarded to inspectors in advance of the inspection to avoid having to review this on farm.

# INCREASE IN PRIME CATTLE IMPORTS FROM ROI

With the availability of locally produced prime cattle for processing remaining tight in NI there was a notable increase in the number of prime cattle imported from ROI for direct slaughter last week.

There were 342 prime cattle imported from ROI for processing in local plants last week which was an increase of 131 head from the previous week. This was the highest recorded weekly figure since October 2019.

As outlined in **Figure 1** the level of import of prime cattle for processing from ROI shows significant fluctuation

**Figure 1: Weekly imports of prime cattle for direct slaughter from ROI for processing in NI plants 2019-2020** Source: DAERA

with the level of import tending to be driven by supply and demand of prime cattle locally. While the level of import has increased sharply in the last few weeks the number of prime cattle imported from ROI during 2020 to date has totalled 3,538 head, lower than the 3,929 head imported during the same period in 2019.

As indicated above prime cattle throughput in local plants has been operating at lower levels in recent weeks due to reduced supplies of locally produced prime cattle for slaughter. For the six week period w/e

16 May 2020 34,706 prime cattle were processed locally, back 12 per cent on the corresponding period last year.

Supplies of prime cattle are expected to remain tight in NI until at least the autumn this year. The latest APHIS figures indicated a notable reduction in the number of slaughter age cattle on NI farms at the start of May 2020 when compared to previous years.

With a weak deadweight trade early in 2020 many producers opted not to finish cattle out of the house this spring but instead turn them back out to grass for finishing later in the year. This decision by many beef finishers combined with already lower numbers of slaughter age cattle on NI farms has contributed to the current tightening in availability of cattle for slaughter.

## Cow imports

There were 119 cows imported from ROI for direct slaughter in local plants last week which was the highest level of import recorded since late September 2019.

This takes total cow imports from ROI for direct slaughter during 2020 to date to 1,071 head, just ahead of the 903 cows imported for processing during the corresponding period in 2019.

# INCREASE IN LAMB THROUGHPUT

Lamb throughput in local processing plants has continued to increase in line with normal seasonal trends. From the beginning of this month up to w/e 16 May 2020 11,476 lambs were processed in the NI plants, up 13 per cent on the same period in 2019. Lamb throughput locally is continuing to operate at similar levels to previous years.

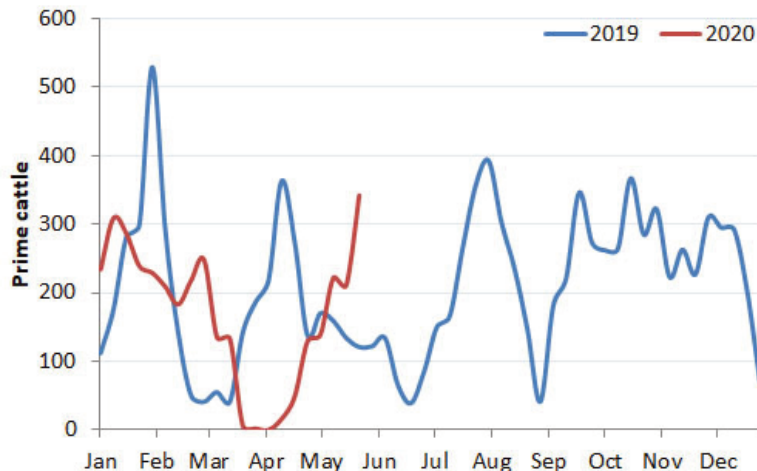
With supplies of lambs for processing increasing in NI there has been some downward pressure on the deadweight trade. Quotes from local plants for R3 grading lambs came back from a high of 520p/kg up to 21kg early this week to 490p/kg up to 21kg towards the end of the week.

**Image 1: Lamb supplies for processing and export for direct slaughter have increased strongly in recent weeks in line with normal seasonal trends.**



Producers are encouraged to present lambs for slaughter that meet current market specifications as these will provide the greatest returns to both the producer and the processor. Current market specifications are for E, U and R grading lambs up to 21kg with a fat class of 2 or 3 and that have FQ status.

There has also been an increase in the number of lambs being exported to ROI for direct slaughter in recent weeks as more lambs become available. Last week 4,784 lambs made the journey to plants in ROI, up from 3,758 head during the previous week.



## 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

# WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

## CATTLE TRADE

### NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 25/05/20	Next Week 01/06/20
<b>Prime</b>		
U-3	336 - 342p	340 - 346p
R-3	330 - 336p	334 - 340p
O+3	324 - 330p	328 - 334p
P+3	274 - 284p	278 - 288p
	Including bonus where applicable	
<b>Cows</b>		
O+3 & better	252 - 275p	260 - 275p
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.

### Deadweight Cattle Trade

Base quotes from the major beef processing plants in NI for in spec U-3 grade prime cattle improved to 338-342p/kg at the end of this week however reports have indicated that higher prices are available than these quotes would suggest. Quotes for next week are expected to increase to 340-346p/kg.

The trade for cows also remained steady this week with quotes for good quality O+3 grade cows ranging from 252-275p/kg with quotes for next week ranging from 260-275p/kg.

Northern Ireland cattle throughput figures for the w/e 23 May 2020 were unavailable at time of publication.

Imports of cattle for direct slaughter from ROI last week increased to include 342 prime cattle and 119 cows. A further 11 prime cattle and 49 cows were imported from GB for direct slaughter last week. Meanwhile exports from NI to ROI for direct slaughter last week comprised of two prime cattle and 28 cows and for the ninth consecutive week reports indicate that no cattle were exported from NI to GB for direct slaughter.

Price reported deadweight figures in NI continued to show strong increases in prices for all types of cattle due to the tightening in the availability of cattle for processing. Last week the average steer price was up by 7.4p/kg to 336.7p/kg with the R3 steer price up by just over 9p/kg to 346p/kg. In the same week last year the R3 steer price was 342.6p/kg. The average heifer price in NI last week was 340.1p/kg, up 7.3p/kg from the previous week, while the R3 heifer price was 346.3p/kg, up just over 6p/kg from the previous week. In the same week in 2019 the R3 heifer price was 344.2p/kg. The average cow price in NI last week increased by just over 11p/kg to 249p/kg with O3 cow price increasing by a similar margin to 269p/kg. This is the highest recorded O3 cow price since September 2018.

In GB last week the deadweight cattle trade also continued to strengthen across all of the regions for all types of cattle when compared to the previous week. The average steer price in GB last week increased by 8p/kg to 337.9p/kg with the average R3 steer price last week up by just over 7p/kg to 343.4p/kg. In the same period last year the R3 steer price in GB was 357.5p/kg. The average heifer price in GB last week was up by 6.7p/kg to 338.2p/kg with the R3 heifer price was increasing by 7.1p/kg to 343.5p/kg. In the same week in 2019 the R3 heifer price in GB was 357.3p/kg. The O3 cow price in GB recorded an increase of 6.7p/kg last week to 261.9p/kg, 7.1p/kg below the same price in NI.

Last week in ROI the deadweight cattle trade continued to firm and this combined with a stronger euro against sterling resulted in notable increases in sterling terms. R3 steer and R3 heifer prices in ROI both increased by the equivalent of 11p/kg to 326.4p/kg and 329.3p/kg respectively. This places the R3 heifer price in ROI 17p/kg lower than the same price in NI. The O3 cow price in ROI reported an increase of 9.7p/kg to 254.3p/kg last week, 14.7p/kg less than the O3 cow price in NI.

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

	W/E 23/05/20	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	345.6	336.8	350.8	342.1	346.1	347.4	347.0
	R3	346.0	326.4	352.1	340.5	341.4	342.9	343.4
	R4	345.6	328.2	355.9	346.6	337.6	342.0	348.3
	O3	334.7	311.8	340.5	319.6	319.3	321.5	321.9
	AVG	336.7	-	350.7	335.5	331.7	333.3	337.9
Heifers	U3	350.6	340.3	361.7	347.5	354.1	353.4	354.8
	R3	346.3	329.3	356.0	338.5	341.5	342.2	343.5
	R4	345.3	328.8	356.9	341.0	340.0	342.2	347.1
	O3	335.6	315.5	335.9	324.6	320.3	321.7	323.4
	AVG	340.1	-	353.3	335.9	329.1	333.0	338.2
Young Bulls	U3	349.2	321.2	351.4	337.0	348.9	346.7	347.5
	R3	340.1	314.2	346.3	328.0	338.1	336.7	338.8
	O3	320.7	294.9	316.5	299.9	304.9	319.8	308.2
	AVG	329.4	-	343.6	322.3	328.7	333.5	332.9
Prime Cattle Price Reported		4,378	-	7,009	6,845	7,461	4,780	26,095
Cows	O3	269.0	254.3	263.0	258.0	263.5	265.1	261.9
	O4	273.0	254.4	266.2	259.0	263.2	257.1	261.2
	P2	232.7	231.8	225.2	221.1	219.2	233.3	224.4
	P3	250.2	247.1	242.5	232.5	231.4	247.7	237.0
	AVG	249.0	-	260.5	245.0	234.8	239.8	241.2

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=89.51p 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

### REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 23/05/20	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	344.8	349.9	345.0
R3	342.9	344.6	338.4
O+3	334.9	337.2	327.7

\*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

### REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 23/05/20	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	160.2	174.9	192.1	198.4
P2	195.1	211.9	233.0	244.5
P3	213.7	229.9	247.3	252.8
O3	230.7	260.0	265.8	269.7
O4	-	240.6	264.6	273.6
R3	-	-	-	289.1

### LATEST LIVEWEIGHT CATTLE MART PRICES NI

W/E 23/05/20	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
<b>Finished Cattle (p/kg)</b>						
Steers	216	227	221	199	215	207
Friesians	157	173	165	130	156	143
Heifers	211	229	220	199	210	204
Beef Cows	170	206	188	120	169	144
Dairy Cows	125	146	135	90	124	107
<b>Store Cattle (p/kg)</b>						
Bullocks up to 400kg	213	256	234	200	212	206
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	210	244	227	195	209	202
Bullocks over 500kg	207	246	226	187	206	196
Heifers up to 450kg	214	227	220	195	213	204
Heifers over 450kg	212	230	221	185	211	198
<b>Dropped Calves (£/head)</b>						
Continental Bulls	415	495	305	190	400	295
Continental Heifers	400	490	445	185	390	287
Friesian Bulls	140	195	165	85	135	110
Holstein Bulls	35	60	45	15	30	25

# SHEEP TRADE

## NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 25/05/20	Next Week 01/06/20
Lambs up to 21kg	490-520p	470-490p

## REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 09/05/20	W/E 16/05/20	W/E 23/05/20
NI L/W Lambs	465.9	489.9	501.3
NI D/W Lambs	481.4	493.1	506.0
GB D/W Lambs	514.6	536.1	545.6
ROI D/W	484.5	496.4	516.3

## Deadweight Sheep Trade

With increasing numbers of lambs coming available for slaughter in NI base quotes for R3 grade lambs came back and ended this week in the region of 490p/kg up to 21kg. Quotes for early next week are expected to range from 470-490p/kg up to 21kg. Exports of lambs to ROI for direct slaughter also increased last week with 4,784 lambs exported to southern processing plants compared to 3,758 lambs exported during the previous week. The average NI deadweight lamb price was up by just under 13p/kg to 506p/kg last week. In the same week in 2019 the NI deadweight lamb price was the equivalent of 516.3p/kg, up by just under 20p/kg from the previous week.

## Liveweight Sheep Trade

The trade across the marts this week was generally back with the number of lambs passing through through the sale rings increasing. In Swatragh last Saturday 500 lambs sold from 435-488p/kg compared to 350 lambs the previous week selling from 454-523p/kg. In Kilrea on Monday 380 lambs sold from 460-494p/kg compared to 250 lambs last week selling from 500-541p/kg. In Saintfield this week 245 lambs sold from 440-500p/kg. On Wednesday in Ballymena 860 lambs sold from 450-500p/kg (avg 465p/kg) compared to 740 lambs last week selling from 480-579p/kg (avg 505p/kg). In Armoy this week 164 lambs sold from 490-508p/kg compared to 274 lambs last week selling from 475-515p/kg. Top prices for cull ewes ranged from £103-143 across the marts.

## LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 23/05/20		Lambs			
To: 28/05/20		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Omagh	392	459	512	-
	Swatragh	500	435	488	-
Monday	Massereene	672	460	531	-
	Kilrea	380	460	494	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	245	440	500	-
	Rathfriland	865	460	500	484
Wednesday	Ballymena	860	450	500	465
	Armoy	164	490	508	-
	Markethill	800	470	491	-

Strict Covid - 19 restrictions are in place across all of the livestock marts

Information supplied by LMC / DAERA/ AHDB/ DAFM

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