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STRONGER PRICES AND LOWER CATTLE THROUGHPUT IN FEBRUARY 2021

Table 1 provides an overview of Northern Ireland beef industry key performance statistics for February 2021 compared with February 2020.

Deadweight Prices

There was a strong increase in deadweight prices for all types of cattle during February 2021. The average prime cattle price in Northern Ireland for February 2021 was 371.5p/kg which is an increase of just under 40p/kg from February 2020. This equates to a 12 per cent increase year on year.

Similarly, the R3 steer price in Northern Ireland has increased by 41.4p/kg from the previous year to average 381.5p/kg during February 2021. This is the equivalent of an additional £145 on a 350kg carcase year on year.

The R3 steer price in the Republic of Ireland remains well below the corresponding price in Northern Ireland, with the average price reported during February 2021 the equivalent of 331.5p/kg. However this has shown a firm increase of almost 21p/kg or 6.7 per cent from the same period in the previous year.

The differential between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland widened to 50p/kg during February 2021 for R3 steers which equates to £175 on a 350kg carcase.

The average price for an R3 steer in Great Britain during February 2021 was marginally above the same price in Northern Ireland at 381.7p/kg. This has increased by 40.5p/kg or almost 12 per cent year on year.

Cattle Throughput

Prime cattle throughput in local plants during February 2021 totalled 27,081 head, a 4.5 per cent decrease from 2020 levels during the same period. Meanwhile cow throughput during February 2021 was back almost five per cent with a total of 7,447 cows processed.

The average carcase weight for prime cattle has increased by 1.7kg to 347.4kg during February 2021 when compared to year previous levels. Meanwhile the average cow carcase weight has declined by 1.3kg to 313.6kg during the same period.

Imports/Exports

Cattle imports for direct slaughter remain during 2021 remain well behind 2020 levels with a total of 1,012 cattle imported to Northern Ireland during February 2021. This is a decline of 600 head or 37.2 per cent from the corresponding period last year. Exports from Northern Ireland also remain below the year previous levels, totalling 171 head during February this year. This is a decrease of 98 head from February 2020.

Cattle Availability

The number of cattle for beef production on Northern Irish farms aged between 12 and 30 months increased by almost seven per cent to total 428,613 head in February 2021. The number of beef sired cattle in this age category increased by 6.6 per cent to total 389,679 head while the number of dairy sired males increased by almost 10 per cent to total 38,934 head.

Calf Registrations

Calf registrations on local farms totalled 30,714 head during February 2021, a 5.7 per cent increase from the 29,052 calves registered in the region during February 2020. Beef sired calf registrations increased by 8.3 per cent while dairy sired male calf registrations were back 3.5 per cent during this period.

Table 1: NI Beef Industry Key Performance Indicators for February 2021 and 2020. Source: LMC/DAERA/DAFM/AHDB

Finished Cattle Prices (p/kg)	**February 2020**	**February 2021**	**% Change**
Average Prime Cattle Price	331.6	371.5	+12.0%
Average Cow Price	239.3	258.3	+7.9%
Average R3 Steer Price (NI)	340.1	381.5	+12.2%
Average R3 Steer Price (ROI)	310.6	331.5	+6.7%
Average R3 Steer Price (GB)	341.2	381.7	+11.9%
NI Throughput			
Total Clean Slaughterings (Head)	28,349	27,081	-4.5%
Total Cow Slaughterings (Head)	7,828	7,447	-4.9%
Average Clean Carcase Weight (kg)	345.7	347.4	+0.5%
Average Cow Carcase Weight (kg)	314.9	313.6	-0.4%
Trade (Head)			
Live Imports for Direct Slaughter	1,612	1,012	-37.2%
Live Exports for Direct Slaughter	269	171	-36.4%
Availability (Head)			
No. Cattle on the Ground*	401,018	428,613	+6.9%
Beef Sired	365,581	389,679	+6.6%
Dairy Sired (Male Only)	35,437	38,934	+9.9%
Calf Births Registrations (Head)			
Calf Births	29,051	30,714	+5.7%
Beef Sired	22,801	24,685	+8.3%
Dairy Sired (Male Only)	6,250	6,029	-3.5%
Euro / Stg Exchange Rate (€ / £)	84.1	87.3	+3.8%

* Aged between 12-30 mths (Beef + Dairy Male Only)

All NI Figures Unless Otherwise Stated

UPDATE ON THE NUMBER OF FARM RESIDENCES

Prime cattle producers in Northern Ireland should aim to produce cattle which meet current market specifications. Beef from cattle that fulfil these market specifications can be used to service the widest range of customer orders from both the retail and food service sectors.

While there are market outlets for beef from cattle which do not meet these requirements, they tend to be more limited and often bring about a lower price.

One of the current market specifications require cattle to have had four or less farm residences at the point of slaughter. This criteria is desired by some customers due to concerns around animal welfare. If cattle have resided on more than four farms, penalties may be applied by local processors and therefore lower the return for the producer.

It is worth noting that this requirement refers to the number of different residences an animal has had in its lifetime and not the number of movements. When establishing the number of residences for a particular animal the number of different herd numbers in the animal's movement history must be identified. This includes the herd in which the animal was born in to.

It is important to note that agricultural shows, marts and meat plants are not included as a farm residency in an animal's movement history however trading premises herds are included. Additionally, if an animal is moved to a mart but does not sell and is taken back to the residency it had previously come from there is no change to the number of farm residences in its movement history.

Producers in Northern Ireland can check the number of residences of their cattle using APHIS on line. APHIS can be used by producers to report births, deaths and movements of cattle. If a cattle producer does not have access to APHIS on line they can retrieve a herd list from their local DVO office which will state the full movement history of all the cattle registered in their herd list at that time.

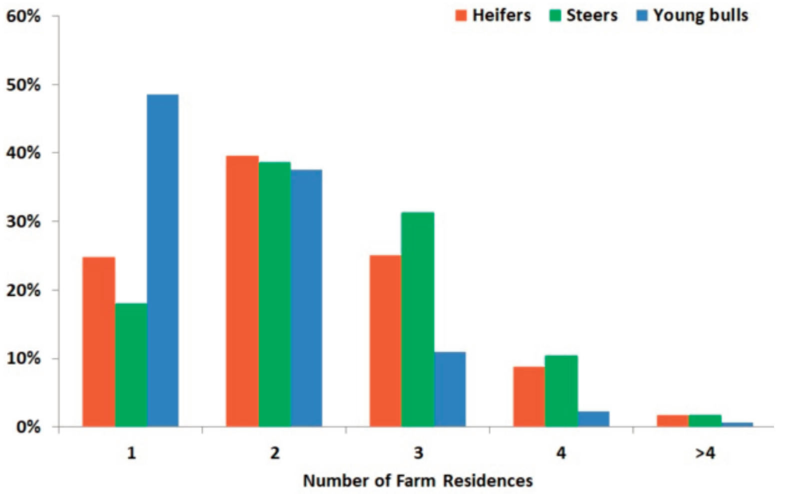
Figure 1 provides an overview of the number of farm residences broken down by price reported prime cattle category in Northern Ireland at point of slaughter during 2020.

During 2020 98 per cent of price reported steers met the specification of residing on four or less farms over the course of their lifetime. This proportion is unchanged from 2019 levels. The average number of farm residences for price reported steers during 2020 was 2.4 residences.

Similarly, 98 per cent of price reported heifers met the residency specification. The average number of residences for heifers over their lifetime during 2020 was 2.2 residences at the point of slaughter.

A slightly greater proportion of price reported young bulls met the residency specification in 2020 with 99 per cent of these cattle residing on four or less farms during their lifetime. The average number of residences for young bulls during this period was 1.7.

Figure 1: Number of farm residences of price reported prime cattle in NI during 2020 broken down by category. Source: LMC Deadweight Cattle Price Reporting



WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

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CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 08/03/21	Next Week 15/03/21
Prime		
U-3	362 - 370p	362 - 370p
R-3	356 - 364p	356 - 364p
O+3	350 - 358p	350 - 358p
P+3	296 - 308p	296 - 308p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3 & better	265 - 280p	265 - 280p
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 06/03/21	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	381.7	384.4	370.4
R3	377.4	377.4	363.6
O+3	367.6	369.8	362.2

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 06/03/21	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	177.9	191.9	196.9	219.5
P2	207.5	222.9	240.7	253.2
P3	199.6	251.4	261.7	266.0
O3	-	266.6	282.9	284.7
O4	240.0	278.0	278.0	283.1
R3	-	-	-	299.3

Deadweight Cattle Trade

Base quotes from the major NI processors for in spec U-3 grade prime cattle ranged from 362-370p/kg this week with the majority of plants quoting at the upper end for steers and heifers. Quotes for good quality O+3 grade cows ranged from 265-280p/kg across the plants this week. Similar quotes are expected for all types of cattle early next week.

Prime cattle throughput in NI plants last week totalled 6,526 head, a decrease of 204 head from the previous week and back 315 head when compared to the 6,841 prime cattle processed in the corresponding week in 2020. Meanwhile cow throughput in NI plants last week decreased by 343 head to 1,659 cows from the previous week. This is 269 head below the 1,928 cows processed in local plants in the same week last year.

Prime cattle imports from ROI for direct slaughter in NI plants last week increased to 298 head, with 75 cows also imported for direct slaughter. In the corresponding week in 2020 there were 135 prime cattle and 66 cows imported from ROI for direct slaughter. Meanwhile no cattle were imported from GB last week for direct slaughter in local plants. Exports from NI to ROI for direct slaughter last week included four prime cattle and 38 cows with no cattle making the journey to GB for direct slaughter.

The average steer price in NI last week increased by 1.5p/kg to 370.8p/kg, with the R3 steer price up by almost 3p/kg to 381.2p/kg when compared to the previous week. The average heifer price in NI last week decreased by 1.8p/kg to 369.5p/kg with the R3 heifer price back just under a penny to 377.9p/kg. The average young bull price in NI last week was 354.9p/kg, up 0.8p/kg from the previous week while the R3 young bull price decreased by 6.2p/kg to 363.4p/kg. The cow trade in NI improved last week with the average cow price up almost 4p/kg to 263.3p/kg and the O3 cow price increasing by 3.5p/kg to 284.5p/kg.

The average steer price in GB last week was up 1.2p/kg to 378p/kg with the average R3 steer price up by 1.8p/kg to 383.8p/kg. The differential last week in R3 steer prices between NI and GB was 2.6p/kg. In the same week last year the differential between the regions was 3.4p/kg. The average heifer price in GB last week increased by 1.3p/kg to 377.3p/kg while the average R3 heifer price increased by 3.3p/kg to 384.2p/kg. This puts the differential in R3 heifer prices last week between NI and GB at 6.3p/kg. In the corresponding week in 2020 the differential between NI and GB was 4.7p/kg. Last week the O3 cow price in GB was up 1.7p/kg to 279.8p/kg ,4.7p/kg lower than O3 grade cows in NI.

In ROI last week the cattle trade showed signs of improvement across the all price reported grades. The R3 steer price was up by the equivalent of 2.7p/kg to 328.3p/kg, almost 53p/kg behind the R3 steer price in NI. The R3 heifer price increased by 2.5p/kg to the equivalent of 332.1p/kg which places it 45.8p/kg behind the corresponding price in NI. The O3 cow price in ROI last week recorded an increase of 3.3p/kg to the equivalent of 260.1p/kg, 24.4p/kg below the same price in NI.

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

W/E 06/03/21		Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	381.3	337.5	385.5	387.0	390.2	390.6	388.1
	R3	381.2	328.3	387.0	386.7	382.5	379.9	383.8
	R4	377.4	329.0	386.7	388.0	382.1	381.4	385.6
	O3	367.0	314.1	375.3	368.4	360.9	358.3	363.9
	AVG	370.8	-	383.5	379.5	374.6	372.3	378.0
Heifers	U3	383.9	342.6	394.1	390.2	397.2	392.7	394.1
	R3	377.9	332.1	387.3	382.5	385.8	379.8	384.2
	R4	375.6	332.0	388.6	385.0	385.6	377.1	385.6
	O3	369.4	319.9	367.4	367.7	360.2	351.9	360.6
	AVG	369.5	-	386.0	378.3	375.3	367.0	377.3
Young Bulls	U3	368.4	321.4	383.4	381.5	387.4	390.0	384.2
	R3	363.4	311.4	373.8	377.2	370.6	369.8	373.2
	O3	352.7	299.4	348.5	393.8	348.6	344.8	357.6
	AVG	354.9	-	361.2	371.6	354.3	338.6	359.2
Prime Cattle Price Reported		5360	-	7117	6755	7693	4671	26236
Cows	O3	284.5	260.1	282.4	282.0	278.9	275.5	279.8
	O4	282.9	259.8	281.2	285.1	279.5	275.3	280.8
	P2	241.7	236.3	239.1	235.3	234.4	239.7	236.2
	P3	263.6	249.0	255.7	251.1	256.5	254.9	255.5
	AVG	263.3	-	275.2	273.0	252.0	251.6	259.6

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=86.38p 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 LIVEWEIGHT CATTLE MART PRICES NI

W/E 06/03/21	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	227	242	230	200	226	213
Friesians	171	178	175	160	168	166
Heifers	218	244	226	200	217	208
Beef Cows	150	192	163	120	149	135
Dairy Cows	125	149	134	100	124	112
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	250	292	270	210	249	230
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	230	280	250	205	229	218
Bullocks over 500kg	215	236	225	185	214	205
Heifers up to 450kg	238	289	255	210	237	220
Heifers over 450kg	215	235	225	185	214	200
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	400	510	430	295	395	340
Continental Heifers	350	450	400	250	345	300
Friesian Bulls	200	280	240	140	195	165
Holstein Bulls	145	260	190	10	140	75

SHEEP TRADE

NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES		
(P/Kg DW)	This Week 08/03/21	Next Week 15/03/21
R3 Hoggets up to 22kg (with one processor paying up to 23kg)	570 - 595p	600p

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES			
(P/KG)	W/E 20/02/21	W/E 27/02/21	W/E 06/03/21
NI L/W Hoggets	529.0	539.9	561.0
NI D/W Hoggets	562.6	572.3	589.7
GB D/W Hoggets	609.1	613.9	615.3
ROI D/W	544.1	567.1	588.7

Deadweight Sheep Trade

Base quotes for R3 grade hoggets continued to strengthen and ended this week ranging from 590-600p/kg up to 22kg with one processor paying up to 23kg. Quotes for early next week are expected to be in the region of 600p/kg. The local processors have reported an increase in the number of hoggets coming forward with throughput last week totalling 7,743 head, up 643 head from the previous week. In the corresponding week in 2020 hogget throughput totalled 5,576 head. Exports of hoggets to ROI for direct slaughter last week decreased by 974 head from the previous week to total 3,878 hoggets. The average deadweight hogget price in NI last week recorded a notable increase of 17.4p/kg to 589.7p/kg with the average deadweight hogget price in ROI increasing by 21.6p/kg to the equivalent of 588.7p/kg.

Liveweight Sheep Trade

The liveweight trade remained firm this week with numbers in the marts generally back when compared to previous weeks. In Omagh last Saturday 257 hoggets sold from 542-603p/kg compared to 430 hoggets the previous week selling from 526-576p/kg. On Monday in Kilrea 320 hoggets sold from 557-626p/kg compared to 290 hoggets last week selling from 542-600p/kg. In Saintfield this week 315 hoggets sold from 540-610p/kg compared to 333 hoggets last week selling from 536-600p/kg. In Ballymena on Wednesday 1,451 hoggets sold to an average of 570p/kg compared to 930 hoggets last week selling to an average of 561p/kg. Top reported prices for first quality fat ewes generally ranged from £136-£195, with a record price of £200 reported in Rathfriland.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)					
From: 06/03/21		Hoggets			
To: 11/03/21		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Omagh	257	542	603	-
	Swatragh	700	493	629	-
Monday	Massereene	658	550	609	-
	Kilrea	320	557	626	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	315	540	610	-
	Rathfriland	411	540	629	571
Wednesday	Ballymena	1451	550	645	570
	Enniskillen	762	572	642	-
	Armoy	373	578	668	-
	Markethill	710	550	636	-

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

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