

# MEETING AGE SPECIFICATIONS FOR BEEF

Prime cattle producers in NI are continuously encouraged to produce cattle which meet market specifications. Current market specifications for most customers require heifers and steers to be under 30 months of age while young bulls should be under 16 months. Although there are still outlets for beef that does not meet current age specifications, these tend to be more limited and often bring about a lower price.

### Steers

During 2020 39 per cent of price reported steers were under 24 months of age. This is a five per cent increase from 2019 and a two per cent increase from 2018.

The proportion of steers in the 24-30 month age category during 2020 totalled 51 per cent. This is a decline from both 2019 and 2018 levels. This brings the proportion of price reported steers meeting the under 30 month age specification in 2020 to 90 per cent. This is up slightly from 2019 however it is a decline from 2016, 2017 and 2018 levels.

The average age of slaughter for steers in Northern Ireland during 2020 was 25 months. This is down slightly from

2019 when the average age of slaughter was 25.4 months.

### Heifers

The proportion of price reported heifers under 24 months during 2020 was 39 per cent, up three per cent from 2019 levels. The proportion of heifers in the 24-30 month age category decreased slightly from the year previous, totalling 48 per cent in 2020. This brings the proportion of heifers killed under 30 months during 2020 to 87 per cent, unchanged from 2019 levels.

The average age of slaughter for heifers during 2020 was 25.3 months, down marginally from 2019 levels. The average age of slaughter for heifers has remained fairly similar over the last five years as outlined in **Table 2**.

### Young Bulls

The proportion of young bulls killed under 16 months of age during 2020 was 79 per cent, unchanged from 2018 and 2019 levels. Similarly, the proportion of young bulls in the 16-24 month age category remains the same from 2018 and 2019, at 20 per cent. While the proportion of young bulls killed at over 24 months remains very small at one per cent.

Due to similar proportions of young bulls in the respective age categories from 2018-2020, the average age of young bulls is unchanged during this time at 15.5 months. This is an increase in average age from 2016 and 2017 as outlined in **Table 3**.

### Current Penalties

Current penalties for overage steers and heifers are in the region of 10p/kg while penalties for young bulls are generally in the range of 10-40p/kg. As penalties for overage animals vary across the NI processing plants, producers are encouraged to contact procurement staff of individual plants for exact figures at time of slaughter.

Customers are becoming ever more focused on the sustainability of their beef supply chains and efficiently getting animals to slaughter weights at younger ages is a key indicator of productivity improvement.

While this analysis focuses on age specification, producers should be encouraged to meet all current market specifications for beef in terms of weight, farm quality assurance status, number of farm residences, days on last farm, grade and UK origin.

**Table 1. Breakdown of steers by age of slaughter 2016-2020.**

Source: LMC Price Reporting

Year	Under 24 months	24-30 months	Over 30 months	Average age (months)
2016	39%	53%	8%	24.9
2017	41%	51%	7%	24.6
2018	37%	54%	9%	25.1
2019	34%	55%	11%	25.4
2020	39%	51%	10%	25.0

**Table 2. Breakdown of heifers by age of slaughter 2016-2020.**

Source: LMC Price Reporting

Year	Under 24 months	24-30 months	Over 30 months	Average age (months)
2016	42%	47%	11%	25.0
2017	43%	47%	11%	24.9
2018	39%	49%	12%	25.3
2019	36%	51%	13%	25.4
2020	39%	48%	13%	25.3

**Table 3. Breakdown of young bulls by age of slaughter 2016-2020.**

Source: LMC Price Reporting

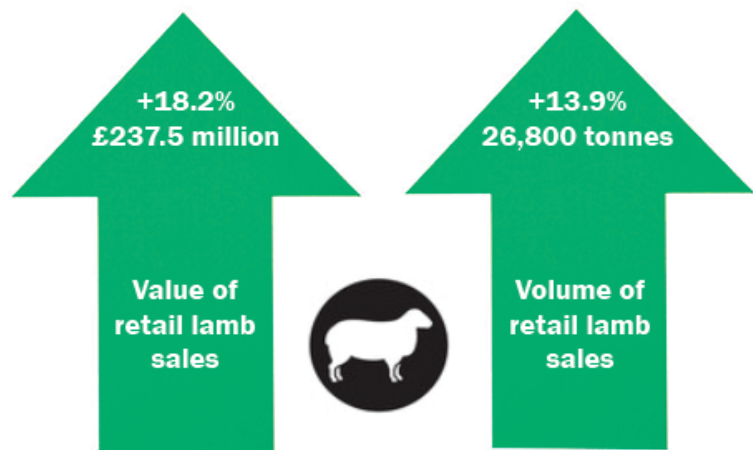
Year	Under 16 months	16-24 months	Over 24 months	Average age (months)
2016	89%	10%	0%	14.8
2017	84%	15%	1%	15.2
2018	79%	20%	1%	15.5
2019	79%	20%	1%	15.5
2020	79%	20%	1%	15.5

# STRONG INCREASE IN GB LAMB RETAIL SALES

In the 12 weeks ending 27 December 2020, total spend on lamb in the GB retail market increased by 18.2 per cent from the same period in 2019, totalling £237.5 million.

Total volume of lamb was up almost 14 per cent, with volume growth across all major lamb cut categories with the exception of stewing lamb which saw a 7.7 per cent reduction year on year. This is according to the latest data

**Figure 1. In the 12 weeks ending 27 December 2020, spend on lamb increased by 18.2 per cent year on year while volume sales increased by 13.9 per cent.**



made available from Kantar Worldpanel, the global leader in continuous consumer panels.

With continued Covid-19 restrictions in place, more people are choosing to cook at home which may have positively impacted the amount of lamb consumed in GB. Alongside this, strong promotional activity by retailers and levy bodies will have contributed to the increase.

While the increase in volume sales will have impacted the total spend on lamb, the increase in average price of lamb will also have contributed to the increase in total spend. The average price of lamb is up 3.9 per cent to £8.87/kg when compared to the price last year during the same 12 week period.

Although most lamb cut categories performed better during the 12 weeks ending 27 December 2020 than during the same period in 2019, roasting joints, mince and chops have shown the greatest increase in terms of volume sales year on year.

Volume sales of the roasting cut category, consisting of leg and shoulder roasting joints, totalled 9,300 tonnes during the 12 weeks ending 27 December 2020. This is an increase of 8.8 per cent year on year. However, although the total volume sales of roasting joints has increased, it should be noted that shoulder roasting joint volume sales declined by 1.1 per cent while leg roasting joint volume sales increased by 11.1 per cent during the 12 week period.

The price of both shoulder and leg roasting joints increased year on year from 2019, with leg roasting joints increasing by a marginal 1.1 per cent and shoulder joints increasing by a more significant 8.9 per cent. The total spend on roasting joints has also increased by 11.4 per cent to £86.5 million which was driven by the increase in average price from last year to £9.35/kg alongside the increase in volume sales.

Volume sales of mince increased by 34.7 per cent during the 12 week period in 2020 compared to the same period last year despite the increase in price. The average price of mince increased by 5.6 per cent to £7.67/kg which boosted total spend in this category. Total spend increased to £16.3 million which is up 42.3 per cent from the same period in 2019.

Spend on lamb chops totalled £25.3 million during the 12 week period of 2020 which amounted to a 21.3 per cent increase from the same period in 2019. In terms of volume purchased, chops increased by 18.4 per cent from 2019 and the average price increased

by 2.5 per cent to £10.34/kg.

Sales of other lamb cut categories have also performed very well in the 12 weeks ending 27 December 2020 compared with last year's figures. However the volumes involved are not as significant as the previously mentioned lamb cut categories.

For example, lamb marinades saw a significant increase in volume sales of over 80 per cent and an even greater proportional increase of 124 per cent in terms of spend year on year. However, the volume of marinades during this 12 week period totalled only 700 tonnes.

Similarly, ready to cook lamb volume sales were up 62.6 per cent in the 12 weeks ending 27 December 2020 from the same period in 2019. This category also saw a positive increase of 59.3 per cent in terms of spend year on year. This is encouraging, however these volumes are less significant than the previously discussed cut categories, with volumes totalling a relatively small 400 tonnes.

## 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@lmconi.com](mailto:bulletin@lmconi.com)  
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# WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS



## CATTLE TRADE

### NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 25/01/21	Next Week 01/02/21
<b>Prime</b>		
U-3	366 - 378p	366 - 378p
R-3	360 - 372p	360 - 372p
O+3	354 - 366p	354 - 366p
P+3	300 - 316p	300 - 316p
	Including bonus where applicable	
<b>Cows</b>		
O+3 & better	260 - 272p	260 - 272p
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 plants this week for in-spec U-3 grade prime cattle remained steady at 366-378p/kg with the majority of plants quoting 370-376p/kg for steers and heifers. With this range in base quotes producers are encouraged to shop around for the best possible deal and to use these base quotes as a starting point for negotiation. Quotes for O+3 grading cows ranged from 260-272p/kg across the plants this week. Similar quotes are expected for all types of cattle early next week.

Prime cattle throughput in NI last week totalled 6,612 head, an increase of 445 prime cattle when compared to the previous week. However this is back 475 head from the 7,087 prime cattle processed in NI plants in the corresponding week in 2020. Cow throughput in NI last week increased by 195 head to 2,147 cows from the previous week.

Cattle imports from ROI for direct slaughter last week increased to 239 prime cattle and 100 cows. This is similar levels when compared to the same week last year when 239 prime cattle and 111 cows were imported from ROI for direct slaughter in local plants. Exports from NI to ROI for direct slaughter last week consisted of two steers and 46 cows.

The deadweight prime cattle trade in NI reported a sharper trade last week across the majority of grades. The average steer price in NI last week was 377p/kg up by 3.5p/kg from the previous week, while the R3 steer price increased by 2.8p/kg to 384.9p/kg. The average NI heifer price and R3 heifer price both increased by 1.6p/kg last week to 377.7p/kg and 385.8p/kg respectively. There was also an improvement in the NI young bull trade with the average young bull price up by 2.8p/kg to 361.6p/kg while the R3 young bull price increased 2.2p/kg to 376.2p/kg. Meanwhile the NI deadweight cow trade strengthened last week with the average cow price up 7.3p/kg to 259.8p/kg and the O3 cow price increasing by 5.7p/kg to 282.7p/kg from the previous week.

The deadweight prime cattle trade in GB generally improved from the previous week. The average steer price in GB last week held steady at 377.9p/kg while the average R3 steer price in GB was up by 1.6p/kg to 383.4p/kg. The R3 steer price reported increases in Scotland (+2.8p/kg), Northern England (+1.1p/kg) and the Midlands and Wales (+1.8p/kg) with a marginal decrease reported in Southern England. The average heifer price in GB last week reported a 2p/kg increase to 378.9p/kg with the R3 heifer price up a penny from the previous week to 382.7p/kg. The R3 heifer price reported increases in Scotland (+4.2p/kg), Northern England (+2.1p/kg) and the Midlands (+0.6p/kg) with a decline reported in Southern England (-1.3p/kg). The cow trade also improved in GB last week with the average cow price up by 3.7p/kg to 249.3p/kg and the O3 cow price increasing by 2.5p/kg to 269.3p/kg.

In ROI last week the deadweight cattle trade strengthened in euro terms from the previous week. The R3 steer price last week was up by the equivalent of 1.8p/kg to 342.3p/kg while the R3 heifer price increased by 1.2p/kg to 346.2p/kg. The cow trade also firmed in ROI last week with the O3 cow price up by 2.5p/kg to the equivalent of 269.6p/kg.

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

W/E 23/01/21	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	386.9	350.1	391.7	385.9	389.2	388.5
	R3	384.9	342.3	391.6	383.6	381.1	383.4
	R4	382.9	342.5	391.7	388.4	381.8	387.5
	O3	374.3	327.8	380.9	372.9	360.8	364.8
	AVG	377.0	-	388.4	379.6	373.1	377.9
Heifers	U3	389.8	358.3	397.6	391.6	393.9	393.6
	R3	385.8	346.2	392.3	382.9	381.7	382.7
	R4	382.7	347.7	391.6	382.9	382.6	385.6
	O3	376.2	335.6	378.0	368.6	363.9	365.5
	AVG	377.7	-	389.2	379.5	374.1	378.9
Young Bulls	U3	379.0	333.3	381.3	370.1	375.5	376.4
	R3	376.2	323.5	380.3	366.8	377.0	373.1
	O3	359.1	313.3	331.4	333.3	346.5	341.0
	AVG	361.6	-	357.0	343.6	356.3	353.1
Prime Cattle Price Reported	5543	-	7217	7037	7915	4958	27127
Cows	O3	282.7	269.6	268.3	273.1	267.7	269.3
	O4	284.0	271.5	271.3	274.7	264.6	268.5
	P2	244.4	247.0	228.2	230.5	224.9	226.6
	P3	263.3	259.9	236.0	248.8	237.3	240.2
	AVG	259.8	-	261.2	262.4	242.1	249.3

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=88.88p 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 23/01/21	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
<b>Finished Cattle (p/kg)</b>						
Steers	220	237	228	200	219	210
Friesians	171	196	180	140	170	155
Heifers	215	248	223	190	214	202
Beef Cows	169	235	185	130	168	145
Dairy Cows	122	141	128	100	121	110
<b>Store Cattle (p/kg)</b>						
Bullocks up to 400kg	240	292	260	200	239	220
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	230	262	245	190	229	210
Bullocks over 500kg	217	243	225	185	216	200
Heifers up to 450kg	230	265	245	210	229	218
Heifers over 450kg	220	232	225	195	219	208
<b>Dropped Calves (£/head)</b>						
Continental Bulls	350	465	400	250	345	300
Continental Heifers	300	455	360	200	320	260
Friesian Bulls	185	235	200	120	180	130
Holstein Bulls	125	200	155	10	120	70

### REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 23/01/21	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	387.1	389.0	379.2
R3	382.3	383.4	375.9
O+3	375.0	375.5	363.7

\*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

### REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 23/01/21	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	176.0	185.8	197.4	209.7
P2	192.9	219.6	245.2	253.4
P3	218.0	231.3	258.5	266.5
O3	213.0	258.0	276.9	283.3
O4	223.4	-	269.0	285.5
R3	-	-	298.0	299.9

# SHEEP TRADE

## NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 25/01/21	Next Week 01/02/21
R3 Hoggets up to 22kg (with one processor paying up to 23kg)	500 - 530p	500 - 530p

## REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 09/01/21	W/E 16/01/21	W/E 23/01/21
NI L/W Hoggets	481.7	521.8	490.6
NI D/W Hoggets	493.6	541.1	552.6
GB D/W Hoggets	518.6	568.8	574.3
ROI D/W	506.8	531.7	534.6

## Deadweight Sheep Trade

Quotes from the plants for R3 grading hoggets have come under pressure this week ranging from 500-530p/kg up to 22kg with one processor paying up to 23kg. Similar quotes are expected for Monday. There has been an increase in the throughput of hoggets with 8,113 processed last week up 303 head from the 7,810 hoggets processed the previous week. This is a similar throughput when compared to the 8,086 hoggets processed in the same week in 2020. Exports to ROI for direct slaughter last week totalled 5,240 hoggets, a decrease of 1,221 hoggets from the previous week. The average deadweight hogget price in NI last week was 552.6p/kg, up 11.5p/kg with the ROI deadweight hogget price up by almost 3p/kg to the equivalent of 534.6p/kg.

## Liveweight Sheep Trade

Poor weather conditions early this week contributed to smaller numbers of hoggets passing through many of the marts. On Monday in Kilrea 300 hoggets sold from 475-504p/kg compared to 540 hoggets last week selling from 493-540p/kg. In Saintfield this week 227 hoggets sold from 460-534p/kg compared to 430 hoggets last week selling from 454-520p/kg. On Wednesday in Ballymena a smaller sale of 1,201 hoggets sold from 475-533p/kg (avg 483p/kg) compared to 2,606 hoggets last week selling from 470-530p/kg (avg 482p/kg). In Markethill this week 510 hoggets sold from 480-517p/kg compared to 1,230 hoggets last week selling from 470-527p/kg. Top reported prices for good quality cull ewes ranged from £116-£196.

## LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 23/01/21		Hoggets			
To: 28/01/21		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Omagh	139	488	517	-
	Swatragh	500	485	510	-
Monday	Massereene	510	480	505	-
	Kilrea	300	475	504	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	227	460	534	-
	Rathfriland	183	455	508	485
Wednesday	Ballymena	1201	475	533	483
	Enniskillen	637	486	540	-
	Armoy	470	470	535	-
	Markethill	510	480	517	-

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

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Contact us

T: 028 9263 3000  
E: bulletin@lmcni.com  
W: www.lmcni.com

