

NI PLACES SECOND IN EU AND UK LEAGUE TABLE OF R3 HEIFER PRICES

The EU and UK league table is published each week by LMC using deadweight cattle price reporting information sourced from the European Commission, AHDB and LMC.

Table 1 provides a useful overview of R3 heifer prices in euro terms across a number of EU countries and compares the change in price from the previous month. Although the United Kingdom is no longer part of the European Union, Northern Ireland and Great Britain R3 heifer prices are included in the table for comparative purposes.

In the week ending 24 January 2021 the R3 heifer price in Northern Ireland was the equivalent of 431.5c/kg, up 16.8c/kg from the week ending 27 December 2020. This placed it second in the league table of deadweight cattle prices.

During the week ending 24 January 2021 the average R3

heifer price in the EU was 374.7c/kg, up 3.4c/kg from the previous month. Northern Ireland was 56.8c/kg above the EU average price which is the equivalent of €187 on a 330kg carcass.

The weakening in the value of the euro has also contributed to an improvement in R3 heifer prices in Great Britain in euro terms. The R3 heifer price was the equivalent of 428c/kg, up 16.8c/kg from the week ending 27 December 2020. This moved it up one position to third place on the league table in the week ending 24 January 2021.

Republic of Ireland placed seventh on the EU league table last week, unchanged from the month before. The R3 heifer price increased from 381.1c/kg to 387.1c/kg in the week ending 24 January 2021.

The differential between Northern Ireland and Republic of

Ireland was 44.4c/kg which equates to €147 on a 330kg carcass.

The most significant change in price in the week ending 24 January 2021 was reported in Romania where the price increased by 77.7c/kg to 350.6c/kg. This moved it up seven positions to tenth place on the EU league table. Notable increases were also reported in Lithuania (+25.3c/kg), and Portugal (+21.9c/kg).

Meanwhile, deadweight prices came under pressure in other regions during the week ending 24 January 2021. In the Netherlands the R3 heifer price was 277c/kg, back 35c/kg from the week ending 27 December 2020. This placed the Netherlands in eighteenth position on the EU league table. Notable declines were also recorded in Denmark (-25.7c/kg) and Italy (-9.6c/kg) during the week ending 24 January 2021.

Table 1. EU & UK Deadweight Cattle Prices Table - R3 Heifers Equivalent (€ Cents) week 03/2021
Source: EU Commission, AHDB and LMC

Position last Month	Position this Month	Country	Price last Month (w/e 27.12.20)	Price this Month (w/e 24.01.21)	Change on Month (cents)
1	1	Sweden	451.9	454.0	+2.1
2	2	Northern Ireland	414.7	431.5	+16.8
4	3	Great Britain	411.2	428.0	+16.8
5	4	France	409.0	406.0	-3.0
3	5	Italy	412.4	402.8	-9.6
6	6	Luxembourg	386.2	397.3	+11.1
7	7	Ireland	381.1	387.1	+6.0
8	8	Portugal	360.0	381.9	+21.9
9	9	Spain	357.1	372.8	+15.7
17	10	Romania	272.9	350.6	+77.7
11	11	Austria	341.1	343.3	+2.2
12	12	Germany	334.9	343.0	+8.1
10	13	Denmark	341.6	315.9	-25.7
13	14	Poland	312.8	314.6	+1.8
14	15	Belgium	312.0	311.5	-0.5
16	16	Slovenia	305.3	305.4	+0.1
18	17	Lithuania	263.2	288.5	+25.3
14	18	Netherlands	312.0	277.0	-35.0
19	19	Czech Republic	249.4	259.2	+9.8
EU Average			371.3	374.7	+3.4
Euro (€1=)			90.8	88.9	-1.9

STRONG NI DEADWEIGHT HOGGET TRADE

The deadweight hogget trade in Northern Ireland is well ahead of this time last year with local processors quoting 500-530p/kg this week for R3 grading carcasses up to 22kg with one processor quoting up to 23kg.

This brings the deadweight trade well ahead of this time in 2020 and 2019 when processors were quoting in the range of 430-445p/kg and 435-445p/kg respectively for R3 grading hoggets up to 22kg.

Quotes for R3 grading hoggets have been strong from the start of the year with the highest quote

range of 530-560p/kg up to 22kg with one processor quoting up to 23kg recorded during the week ending 23 January 2021.

Hogget throughput in NI plants totalled 5,618 head last week, bringing the total throughput for the first four weeks of 2021 to 29,560. This is a decline of eight per cent from the same period last year.

Last week export of hoggets for direct slaughter to ROI totalled 4,787 head which was down 453 head from the previous week. This brought the total exports of hoggets to ROI for direct

slaughter in the first four weeks of the year to 22,750 head which is back 24 per cent from last year's figures.

There has been a reduction in weight of hoggets being presented for slaughter compared to this time last year. The average carcass weight last week was 22.6kg compared to 22.9kg in the same week last year.

Producers are most likely presenting hoggets for slaughter at lighter carcass weights due to the strong deadweight prices being offered by local processors.

CATTLE ON THE GROUND UPDATE JANUARY 2021

Table 2 outlines the number of cattle on local farms at the end of January 2021 compared to the same period in 2020 and 2019. The figures include all beef sired cattle and dairy sired males.

At the end of January 2021 there were 196,154 cattle in the 18-24 month age category on local farms. This is an increase of almost six per cent from January 2020 levels. These cattle will provide the bulk of prime cattle throughput during the next six months.

In the 24-30 month age category there were 70,655 cattle at the end of January 2021. This is a 1.9 per cent decline from January 2020 levels and a more significant 6.5 per cent decline from 2019 levels.

This brings the total number of cattle between 18-

30 months to 266,809 head. This is an increase of 3.7 per cent or 9,534 head from January 2020 levels.

Figures suggest that cattle availability for slaughter will be stronger in the second half of 2021 with the number of cattle between 0-18 months up by five per cent in January 2021 from the same period in 2020. The number of cattle in the 12-18 month category has shown a strong increase of 9.2 per cent from January 2020 levels and a similar increase from January 2019 levels.

The number of cattle in both the 6-12 month and 0-6 month age category have increased from January 2020, totalling 247,352 head and 122,055 head respectively. This increase has been driven by the increase in calf registrations during 2020.

Figure 1. NI deadweight hogget prices during w/e 30 January 2021 and corresponding weeks in 2020 and 2019. Source: DAERA



Table 2. Cattle on local farms for beef production by age category at the end of January 2021, 2020 and 2019. Source: APHIS/DAERA

Age (months)	2019	2020	2021	2020/2021	2019/2021
0-6	112,339	117,272	122,055	+4.1%	+8.6%
6-12	237,592	240,598	247,352	+2.8%	+4.1%
12-18	131,512	131,367	143,438	+9.2%	+9.1%
18-24	197,174	185,279	196,154	+5.9%	-0.5%
24-30	75,565	71,996	70,655	-1.9%	-6.5%
30+	317,275	300,333	299,005	-0.4%	-5.8%

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WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS



CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 01/02/21	Next Week 08/02/21
Prime		
U-3	366 - 378p	364 - 374p
R-3	360 - 372p	358 - 368p
O+3	354 - 366p	352 - 362p
P+3	300 - 316p	298 - 312p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3 & better	260 - 272p	260 - 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.

Deadweight Cattle Trade

Base quotes for in spec U-3 grade prime cattle ended this week ranging from 364-378p/kg with the majority of plants quoting at the upper end for steers and heifers. Quotes for Monday are expected to range from 364-374p/kg. With the range in quotes available producers should use these quotes as a starting point for negotiation with higher prices available. Quotes from the plants for good quality O+3 grading cows this week ranged from 260-272p/kg with quotes for early next week expected to range from 260-280p/kg.

Prime cattle throughput in local plants totalled 6,834 head last week an increase of 222 prime cattle from the previous week. However this is back 242 head when compared to the same week in 2020 when 7,076 prime cattle were processed locally. Cow throughput in local plants decreased by 184 head from the previous week to 1,963 cows last week. In the same week last year 2,014 cows were processed locally.

Cattle imports for direct slaughter from ROI last week consisted of 135 prime cattle and 73 cows with no cattle imported from GB for direct slaughter locally. Meanwhile exports out of NI to ROI for direct slaughter last week consisted of three heifers and 72 cows with no cattle exported to plants in GB.

The average steer price in NI last week decreased by a penny to 376p/kg however the R3 steer price was up by 1.2p/kg to 386.1p/kg. The average heifer price reported a slight increase last week to 377.9p/kg with the R3 heifer price up by 2p/kg to 387.8p/kg. The average young bull price in NI was 363.4p/kg, up 1.8p/kg while the R3 young bull price was back by 1.8p/kg to 374.4p/kg. The average cow price in NI last week decreased by 0.4p/kg to 259.4p/kg with the O3 cow price back just over a penny to 281.6p/kg.

In GB last week the average steer price and R3 steer price both marginally increased to 378.1p/kg and 383.6p/kg respectively. However variations in the R3 steer price were reported across the regions last week with increases in Scotland (+1.1p/kg), Southern England (+0.5p/kg) and the Midlands (+0.8p/kg) while a marginal decrease was reported in Northern England (-0.2p/kg). Last week the average heifer price in GB decreased by 1.2p/kg to 377.7p/kg with the R3 heifer price up 0.3p/kg to 383p/kg. The R3 heifer price came back in all regions except in the Midlands and Wales where it was up 1.2p/kg to 382.9p/kg. Meanwhile in GB last week the cow trade slightly firmed from the previous week with the average O3 cow price increasing by 1.3p/kg to 270.6p/kg which was 11p/kg behind the O3 cow price in NI.

In ROI last week the R3 steer price was back by the equivalent of 1.2p/kg to 341.1p/kg with the R3 heifer price up half a penny to 346.7p/kg. This puts the R3 steer price in ROI at 45p/kg below the equivalent NI price with the ROI R3 heifer price at 41p/kg below the same price in NI. The O3 cow price in ROI increased by 1.8p/kg last week to the equivalent of 271.4p/kg.

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

W/E 30/01/21	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB	
Steers	U3	388.0	349.8	389.9	383.0	388.6	384.7	387.0
	R3	386.1	341.1	392.7	383.4	381.9	378.9	383.6
	R4	382.8	342.7	391.5	389.2	380.1	376.6	387.1
	O3	373.3	328.7	380.0	370.6	362.2	358.3	366.0
AVG	376.0	-	388.2	379.0	373.2	369.9	378.1	
Heifers	U3	392.5	356.9	397.9	390.8	393.8	388.6	393.2
	R3	387.8	346.7	391.5	382.3	382.9	377.4	383.0
	R4	383.2	347.5	391.3	382.9	381.6	378.2	385.4
	O3	377.5	335.5	376.6	369.1	362.1	360.3	365.2
AVG	377.9	-	388.5	377.5	373.6	368.2	377.7	
Young Bulls	U3	379.3	334.0	385.0	370.6	379.1	366.4	378.0
	R3	374.4	324.3	377.2	367.2	374.4	345.1	371.4
	O3	356.2	313.8	345.0	342.4	345.6	339.6	344.1
AVG	363.4	-	365.0	347.0	361.4	328.9	355.9	
Prime Cattle Price Reported	5829	-	7237	7006	7721	4930	26894	
Cows	O3	281.6	271.4	269.8	272.3	270.0	268.9	270.6
	O4	283.1	271.8	275.8	276.2	268.1	263.9	270.5
	P2	241.1	250.9	224.0	231.6	224.1	228.0	226.5
	P3	263.5	261.8	236.0	247.9	241.8	239.5	241.9
	AVG	259.4	-	269.7	260.7	244.7	242.0	250.8

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=88.58p 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 30/01/21	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	224	235	228	200	223	212
Friesians	170	188	180	145	168	159
Heifers	218	240	230	200	217	206
Beef Cows	165	229	178	124	164	144
Dairy Cows	120	147	125	100	119	110
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	244	294	265	200	243	222
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	235	274	250	200	234	215
Bullocks over 500kg	215	240	225	180	214	200
Heifers up to 450kg	233	273	250	200	232	215
Heifers over 450kg	220	250	230	190	219	205
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	360	475	405	255	355	305
Continental Heifers	300	450	370	200	295	260
Friesian Bulls	190	255	215	120	185	140
Holstein Bulls	145	220	170	20	140	80

REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 30/01/21	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	387.7	392.4	379.4
R3	384.2	387.1	374.0
O+3	375.8	380.5	362.9

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 30/01/21	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	179.5	191.8	201.7	209.6
P2	197.9	218.2	239.4	257.2
P3	198.4	242.8	254.7	267.3
O3	-	260.0	283.7	281.5
O4	-	258.1	260.2	283.8
R3	-	-	-	299.6

SHEEP TRADE

NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 01/02/21	Next Week 08/02/21
R3 Hoggets up to 22kg (with one processor paying up to 23kg)	500 - 530p	530 - 535p

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 16/01/21	W/E 23/01/21	W/E 30/01/21
NI L/W Hoggets	521.8	490.6	485.5
NI D/W Hoggets	541.1	552.6	530.0
GB D/W Hoggets	568.8	574.3	558.4
ROI D/W	531.7	534.6	513.9

Deadweight Sheep Trade

Quotes from the major processors for R3 grading hoggets this week remained steady at 500-530p/kg up to 22kg with one processor continuing to quote up to 23kg. A decline in the supply of hoggets for slaughter has been reported with 5,618 hoggets processed in NI last week. This is back almost 2,500 hoggets from the previous week and also back from the 7,174 hoggets processed locally in the same week last year. Exports of hoggets from NI to ROI for direct slaughter consisted of 4,787 hoggets, back 453 head from the previous week. This is also back 1,742 head when compared to the same week in 2020 when 6,529 hoggets were exported to the region. The deadweight hogget price in NI last week was 530p/kg, back 22.6p/kg from the previous week. In the same week last year the NI deadweight hogget price was 435p/kg.

Liveweight Sheep Trade

The liveweight trade has generally reported a firmer trade this week with steady numbers of hoggets passing through the sale rings. In Omagh last Saturday 446 hoggets sold from 479-519p/kg. In Massereene this week a similar trade to last week was reported with 561 hoggets selling from 480-505p/kg. On Tuesday in Rathfriland 352 hoggets sold from 480-524p/kg (avg 493p/kg) compared to 183 hoggets last week selling from 455-508p/kg (avg 485p/kg). Meanwhile in Enniskillen 718 hoggets sold from 479-547p/kg compared to last week when 637 hoggets sold from 486-540p/kg. Good numbers of ewes passed through the marts this week with top reported prices ranging from £118-£178.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 30/01/21		Hoggets			
To: 04/02/21		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Omagh	446	479	519	-
	Swatragh	1,050	462	537	-
Monday	Massereene	561	480	505	-
	Kilrea	300	487	525	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	333	470	520	-
	Rathfriland	352	480	524	493
Wednesday	Ballymena	1150	481	539	497
	Enniskillen	718	479	547	-
	Armoy	544	487	541	-
	Markethill	750	490	528	-

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

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LMC TO PRIORITISE THE 'CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY OF SUSTAINABILITY' IN 2021

Working to improve the sustainability of the beef and sheep sectors will be a priority for the Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland throughout 2021. But what does the term sustainability really mean?

According to LMC Chief Executive Ian Stevenson, this is an issue that gets to the very heart of what livestock production is all about: from the farmer right through to the final consumer. He said: "Many people think of sustainability in an environmental context only. And, yes, this is important. But it is only one of the many dimensions within which sustainability must be considered.

"All roads must lead to the development of productive and profitable farming systems that deliver a viable and long term future for the producers involved.

There is also a very strong requirement to communicate effectively with consumers about the tremendous work that is already underway in delivering a sustainable future for cattle and sheep production in NI."

He added: "As an industry, we must make it totally clear that ruminant production should not be singled out as a key part of the problem, where

global warming is concerned: rather it is part of the solution. "It is wrong that beef and lamb consumption is being linked in the public eye with the excessive production of greenhouse gases when, in reality, grassland farming is one of the main forms of agricultural land use that actively sequesters carbon."

Ian Stevenson firmly believes that NI's beef and lamb sectors can play an active part in getting the UK to a Net Zero Carbon position by 2050.

He continued: "But full recognition must be taken of the land use options that are available to local farmers. "Grassland accounts for 95 per cent of the area farmed in NI. Making best use of this resource will require a continuous reliance on cattle and sheep production systems.

"Driving efficiency within both sectors will be vitally important as we look to the future. A tremendous amount of work has already been done in this regard. Initial research work has led to the roll out of improved management systems that are already delivering improved efficiency levels and a reduced carbon footprint at farm level.

"A case in point is the development of low emission slurry spreading systems. The use of dribble bar and trailing shoe systems are allowing livestock farmers to make better use of slurry as a fertiliser, while at the same time reducing the volumes of greenhouse gases and ammonia emitted to the atmosphere.

The year ahead will see LMC focussing on three specific aspects of sustainability, where beef and sheep production are concerned: improving animal health and productivity; quantifying the use of grazed grass in livestock diets and actively communicating the steps that both sectors are taking to deliver improved sustainability.

"LMC will be playing a central role in communicating the tremendous job that beef and sheep supply chains across NI are doing to make the attainment of more sustainable farming and food systems a reality for the benefit of everyone."

Animal Health

LMC's Industry Development Manager Colin Smith views the attainment of improved animal health standards on NI's farms as a win: win scenario from

numerous points of view. He said: "Healthier animals mean that farmers can generate more output from their businesses. Increasing turnovers should also improve farm business profitability. "Healthier animals will also lead to the lower usage of antibiotics and other veterinary medicines. In turn, this will help to reduce the incidence of antimicrobial resistance here in NI.

The LMC representative is also quick to confirm that improved animal health standards will improve the economy beyond the farm gate. He explained: "Mortality on local farms is denying the processing sector a significant level of throughput. This is an area where real change can be made if we wish to improve the sustainability of our beef and sheep sectors."

Colin singled out Bovine Viral Diarrhoea for specific comment. He said: "The good news, where BVD is concerned, is that we can eradicate the disease from NI. The benefits of eradication include decreased costs of production - a combination of reduced costs in tackling the disease and fewer losses - a reduced need for the use of antimicrobials plus an increased resilience to other diseases and improved cattle welfare."



Colin added: "LMC continues to play a key role in helping to eradicate BVD. These include the stipulation that the retention of Persistently Infected calves will invalidate farmers' membership of the NI Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme."

For its part, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has recently announced that unannounced inspections to check that BVD positive animals are being isolated will commence over the coming weeks. Herd owners who have not isolated BVD positive animals may be prosecuted, and if convicted may be fined up to £5,000.

Colin Smith noted this development, adding: "The tremendous benefits that can be accrued by all farmers through the eradication of this disease are within touching distance. All farmers must play their part in consigning BVD to the history books.

GRASS IS OUR GREATEST ASSET

LMC is heading up a group of stakeholder bodies that have been charged with the responsibility of determining NI's inclusion in the recent request made by the Dublin government for the EU to register Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status for Irish grass fed beef.

The NI Beef Sustainability Project Steering Group is chaired by Colin Smith, LMC's Industry Development Manager and project delivery will be taken forward by LMC's Sustainability Projects Manager Josh Thompson.

"Grass is our greatest asset," Josh Thompson pointed out. "Given our reliance on grass based production systems here in NI it's not a question of verifying our beef industry's reliance on grass but rather one of assessing how much grass is consumed by an individual animal. "This was the premise on which Ireland's PGI submission was based. So we in NI must follow similar verification procedures as to those already established within the submission made by Dublin". The 'working group' established to address these matters comprises representatives from LMC, UFU, NIMEA, DAERA, AFBI and CAFRE.

Josh Thompson added: "Making greater use of APHIS and BovIS records will be important aspects of the work that is undertaken over the coming months.

The PGI application stipulates that qualifying cattle spend at least 220 days at grass during each year of their lifetimes and derive at least 90 per cent of their feed intake from grazed grass and conserved grass. Getting us to that level of detail will require individual on-farm assessments, where actual grass production and utilisation are concerned. These could be included as part of beef producers' farm quality assurance inspections.

He continued: "The good news is that the results of this work can be put to a number of beneficial uses. For example, they can be used to help verify the sustainability of NI's beef industry to customers in export markets around the world."

Image 1. LMC has established a steering group to work on a verification system for grass fed beef produced in Northern Ireland



JOINING UP THE DOTS

Ian Stevenson believes that future farm support policies in NI will facilitate the development of a more sustainable beef and sheep industry - in every sense of the term.

He said: "DAERA minister Edwin Poots MLA has made no secret of the fact that he wants to see our production base economically active while also allowing agriculture to meet its environmental and conservation-related commitments. I see no reason why these objectives cannot be met in full. But there is also a need for farming in NI to communicate clearly the tremendous steps it has taken over the last decade in putting improved sustainability at the heart of everything it does."

The LMC Chief Executive referenced the work of NI's Greenhouse Gas Implementation Partnership. He said: "The period 2011 to 2016 allowed the partnership to communicate the scale of greenhouse gas production and mitigation potential within local agriculture, and to commission research to fill important gaps in knowledge such as quantifying the carbon sequestration potential of our grass based farming systems.

"I chair the red meat sub group of the partnership and the joined up Government and Industry approach to this issue was clearly set out in the agreed strategy of Efficient Farming Cuts Greenhouse Gases.

Many of the action points contained within the strategy are now being widely implemented on livestock farms across NI. "These include the use of low emission slurry spreading systems and the work of business development groups, formed specifically to encourage the utilisation of more efficient production systems on our farms.

Ian concluded: "This November will see Glasgow host COP 26, the next United Nations' climate change conference. The event will be marked by key presentations on climate change and the steps being taken, globally, to counter it. In a similar vein, there are lots of good things happening on the ground right now to deliver a more sustainable future for NI's beef and sheep sectors. Telling this story and communicating its significance to the public at large will be a priority for LMC in 2021."



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