

# HOW MANY PRIME CATTLE ARE MEETING WEIGHT SPECIFICATION?

Prime cattle producers in Northern Ireland are continually being encouraged to produce cattle that meet current market specifications. Beef from cattle that fulfil these requirements can be used to service the widest range of customer orders from both the retail and food service sectors. Current market specifications require beef carcass weights within the range of 280-380kg. While there are market outlets for beef from carcasses outside the current weight specifications, they tend to be more limited.

During the six weeks ending 20 February 2021 the average carcass weight of prime cattle was 347.6kg. This is up slightly from the corresponding period in 2020 and 2019 when the average prime carcass weights were 346.8kg and 342.1kg respectively.

While the average prime carcass weight has increased, not all categories of prime cattle recorded an increase in average carcass weight during the six week period when compared to the same period

in 2020. However all categories of prime carcass weights have increased when compared to the corresponding six week period in 2019 as outlined in **Table 1**.

### Weight Ranges

Deadweight cattle price reporting data has indicated that 61 per cent of steers in Northern Ireland met the desired weight specification of 280-380kg during the six weeks ending 20 February 2021. A small proportion of steers produced carcasses below 280kg during this period as outlined in **Figure 1**. Meanwhile 15 per cent of steers produced carcasses between 380-400kg, a further 18 per cent of carcasses were between 400-450kg and a small three per cent were above 450kg.

A greater proportion of heifers met current weight specifications during the six week period ending 20 February 2021, with 77 per cent producing carcasses within the weight range of 280-380kg. A further 11 per cent of heifers were over 380kg while 13 per cent were below 280kg.

During the same six week period 55

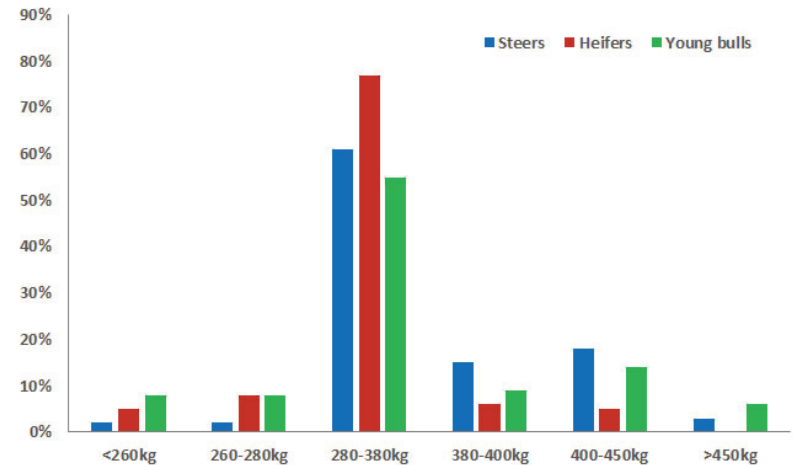
per cent of young bulls produced carcasses within the 280-380kg weight range. A further 16 per cent of young bulls produced carcasses below 280kg during this period. Meanwhile nine per cent of young bulls produced carcasses between 380-400kg. A further 14 per cent of carcasses were between 400-450kg and six per cent were above 450kg.

### Penalties

While the desired weight limit is 280-380kg the majority of the major processing plants in NI will accept carcasses in the region of 400-420kg before applying weight penalties. Quoted penalties from the local processing plants are in the region of 10p/kg for carcasses in the range of 400-420kg and this will generally increase as the carcass weight increases.

However the application of these penalties can be variable and so producers considering finishing cattle outside this desired weight range should consult with the procurement staff of the individual plants before presenting cattle for slaughter.

**Figure 1: Breakdown of price reported prime cattle kill by weight range during the six w/e 20 February 2021. Source: LMC Deadweight Cattle Price Reporting**



**Table 1: Average carcass weights of prime cattle during the six w/e 20 February 2021 and the corresponding period in 2020 and 2019.**

	Weight (kg)			
	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls	Average
2019	359.9	323.5	338.6	342.1
2020	364.2	328.1	342.4	346.8
2021	363.4	327.1	348.4	347.6

# COW TRADE UPDATE

Quotes from the major processors for cows have held relatively steady in Northern Ireland in recent weeks with quotes this week ranging from 265-280p/kg for good quality O+3 grading cows. The majority of local plants are quoting in the region of 265-272p/kg.

With quotes for O+3 cows holding steady the prices paid for O3 grading cows have also held relatively steady. The O3 cow price in Northern Ireland last week was 282.2p/kg, up marginally from the previous week. During the corresponding period in

2020 and 2019 the O3 cow price was 260.4p/kg and 235p/kg respectively. This puts the price of a 300kg O3 grading carcass £66 above the same price in the corresponding week in 2020 and a more significant £142 above the same price in 2019 as outlined in **Figure 2**.

The cow trade in Great Britain has shown improvement over recent weeks however remains behind the current prices in Northern Ireland. The average O3 cow price in Great Britain last week was 273.2p/kg

which is 9p/kg behind the price in Northern Ireland and equates to a £27 differential on a 300kg O3 grading carcass.

Meanwhile the cow trade in the Republic of Ireland has come under pressure in recent weeks and remains well behind the price paid in Northern Ireland. Last week the equivalent O3 cow price in Ireland was 257.8p/kg which is 24.4p/kg less than the price paid in Northern Ireland. This equates to a £73 differential on a 300kg O3 grading cow.

**Figure 2: O3 grading cow prices during the w/e 20 February 2021 and the corresponding weeks in 2020 and 2019.**  
**Source: LMC Deadweight Cattle Price Reporting**



# CALF REGISTRATIONS

## DECREASE IN JANUARY 2021

Calf registrations in Northern Ireland during January 2021 totalled 40,231 head. This is a decline of 2,242 head from January 2020 levels which equates to a 5.3 per cent decrease year on year.

### Beef Sired Calf Registrations

During January 2021 beef sired calf registrations on local farms totalled 24,016 head. This is a decline in 414 head or 1.7 per cent from January 2020.

Beef calves registered to dairy cows accounted for 57 per cent of all beef sired calf registrations with the remaining 43 per cent of beef calves registered to suckler cows. These proportions have changed slightly from January 2020 when 53 per cent of beef sired calves were registered to dairy cows and the remaining 47 per cent were registered to suckler cows.

Although the number of beef sired calves registered in Northern Ireland has decreased during January 2021, the number of beef sired calves registered to dairy cows has increased year on year. The number of beef sired calves

registered to dairy cows during January 2021 increased by almost six per cent when compared to January 2020. Meanwhile the number of beef sired calves registered to suckler cows declined by 10 per cent year on year.

Aberdeen Angus continues to be the most popular beef sire, accounting for 32 per cent of the total beef sired calf registrations.

### Dairy Sired Calf Registrations

The number of dairy sired calf registrations have also declined during January 2021 when compared to the corresponding period in 2020. During the first month of 2021 dairy sired calf registrations totalled 16,215 head which is a 10 per cent decline from January 2020 levels.

The proportion of dairy sired calf registrations which are male is 36 per cent during January 2021. This is a slight decline from the year previous when dairy sired male calf registrations accounted for 38 per cent.

## 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 22/02/21	Next Week 01/03/21
<b>Prime</b>		
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	
<b>Cows</b>		
O+3 & better	265 - 280p	264 - 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 from the plants this week for in-spec U-3 grading prime cattle ranged from 362-370p/kg with similar quotes expected for both steers and heifers early next week. Quotes for good quality O+3 grading cows generally remained steady at 264-280p/kg. With such a range in quotes for all types of cattle producers are encouraged to shop around for the best deal and to use these base quotes as a starting point for negotiation.

Prime cattle throughput in local plants last week totalled 6,547 head a decrease of 292 head from the previous week and back 8.3 per cent when compared to the 7,143 prime cattle killed in the same week last year. Cow throughput last week reported similar levels to the previous week at 1,908 head. This is also similar to the 1,896 cows processed in local plants in the same week in 2020.

Imports of cattle from ROI for direct slaughter in NI consisted of 123 prime cattle and 71 cows last week with no cattle imported from GB for direct slaughter in local plants. Cattle exports from NI for direct slaughter in ROI and GB remain at low levels. Last week two steers and 16 cows were exported out of NI to ROI for direct slaughter with no cattle making the journey from NI to GB for direct slaughter to date in 2021.

The deadweight prime cattle trade in NI came under pressure last week with the majority of prices back from the previous week. The average steer price in NI last week was back 2.7p/kg to 370.7p/kg with the R3 steer price back by 3.2p/kg to 379.3p/kg. In the same week last year the R3 steer price was 339.4p/kg. The average NI heifer price last week came back by 2.7p/kg to 370.1p/kg while the R3 heifer price was back 3.6p/kg to 378.4p/kg. In the same week in 2020 the R3 heifer price was 341.8p/kg. The average young bull price in NI last week was back 3.4p/kg to 356.9p/kg with the R3 young bull price increasing by 4.2p/kg to 368.6p/kg. Meanwhile the NI cow trade improved last week from the previous week with the average NI cow price paid up almost 2p/kg to 258.5p/kg with the O3 cow price up just over a penny to 282.2p/kg.

In GB last week the average steer price was back 0.8p/kg to 374.3p/kg with the R3 steer price up half a penny to 381.1p/kg from the previous week. This places the R3 steer price in GB at 1.8p/kg above the equivalent price in NI. Last week the average heifer price in GB decreased by just under a penny to 374.1p/kg with the R3 heifer price marginally up 0.3p/kg to 381.7p/kg. This places the R3 heifer price in GB at 3.3p/kg above the same price in NI. The average cow price and O3 cow price in GB both increased by 0.3p/kg last week to 253.3p/kg and 273.2p/kg respectively. This puts the O3 cow price in GB at 9p/kg below the same price in NI.

The deadweight trade for prime cattle in ROI continued to come under pressure last week with all of the reported prices back from the previous week. The R3 steer price in ROI last week was the equivalent of 327.9p/kg, back 6.3p/kg from the previous week. This puts the R3 steer price in ROI at 51.4p/kg behind the same price in NI. Meanwhile the R3 heifer price decreased by 7p/kg to the equivalent of 331p/kg, 47.4p/kg below the corresponding price in NI.

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

	W/E 20/02/21	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	381.2	337.0	387.9	381.7	385.1	383.9	384.9
	R3	379.3	327.9	387.3	382.8	378.3	377.2	381.1
	R4	375.7	328.9	386.2	381.7	376.5	376.4	382.0
	O3	368.7	313.1	367.9	367.3	357.1	354.6	360.5
	AVG	370.7	-	382.9	375.8	369.7	367.3	374.3
Heifers	U3	384.4	345.5	394.5	386.9	391.5	385.1	390.2
	R3	378.4	331.0	387.7	384.6	380.0	375.0	381.7
	R4	376.6	332.5	387.7	383.7	377.8	372.6	382.6
	O3	369.5	318.2	373.0	369.1	352.9	353.7	360.3
	AVG	370.1	-	385.8	375.8	368.1	362.2	374.1
Young Bulls	U3	370.2	321.4	382.4	365.6	379.6	371.2	377.9
	R3	368.6	309.8	369.6	371.5	370.9	370.8	370.8
	O3	353.1	297.6	340.3	349.7	342.4	322.2	342.5
	AVG	356.9	-	356.8	355.4	352.8	334.1	352.9
Prime Cattle Price Reported	5607	-	7154	6760	7595	4900	26409	
Cows	O3	282.2	257.8	272.3	274.5	271.8	274.1	273.2
	O4	283.9	255.9	273.9	278.9	273.7	271.8	274.8
	P2	242.8	228.0	235.3	233.4	230.0	228.6	230.4
	P3	262.6	244.6	241.8	247.8	248.3	246.4	247.4
	AVG	258.5	-	271.6	263.7	246.7	244.9	253.3

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=86.91p 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 20/02/21	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	380.4	384.1	370.8
R3	377.0	377.6	368.1
O+3	368.8	368.2	359.9

\*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

### REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 20/02/21	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	178.9	190.3	202.2	208.9
P2	191.3	223.0	240.8	258.8
P3	210.9	237.2	254.2	266.5
O3	-	-	278.5	282.4
O4	-	-	278.6	284.0
R3	-	-	-	302.2

### LATEST LIVEWEIGHT CATTLE MART PRICES NI

	W/E 20/02/21	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
		From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
<b>Finished Cattle (p/kg)</b>							
Steers		227	239	230	200	226	214
Friesians		171	187	180	140	169	155
Heifers		220	245	226	200	219	210
Beef Cows		169	214	180	128	168	145
Dairy Cows		120	150	126	100	119	110
<b>Store Cattle (p/kg)</b>							
Bullocks up to 400kg		240	278	260	210	239	225
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg		230	269	250	205	229	218
Bullocks over 500kg		214	227	220	180	213	200
Heifers up to 450kg		230	270	247	200	229	215
Heifers over 450kg		220	248	234	190	219	205
<b>Dropped Calves (£/head)</b>							
Continental Bulls		400	590	425	300	395	340
Continental Heifers		340	460	390	235	335	285
Friesian Bulls		200	270	230	135	195	165
Holstein Bulls		125	225	175	25	120	75

# SHEEP TRADE

## NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 22/02/21	Next Week 01/03/21
R3 Hoggets up to 22kg (with one processor paying up to 23kg)	555 - 570p	565 - 580p

## REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 06/02/21	W/E 13/02/21	W/E 20/02/21
NI L/W Hoggets	495.1	510.8	529.0
NI D/W Hoggets	530.8	543.9	562.6
GB D/W Hoggets	580.6	593.3	609.1
ROI D/W	530.8	538.8	544.1

## Deadweight Sheep Trade

Quotes this week for R3 grading hoggets continued to improve and ended this week ranging from 565-570p/kg up to 22kg with one processor paying up to 23kg with quotes of 565-580p/kg expected for early next week. Throughput of hoggets last week decreased by nine per cent from the previous week to total 6,744 head. In the corresponding week last year 6,667 hoggets were killed in NI plants. Exports to ROI for direct slaughter last week consisted of 4,357 hoggets and 751 ewes an increase from the previous week when 3,657 hoggets and 428 ewes were exported for direct slaughter. The average deadweight hogget price in NI last week reported an increase of 18.7p/kg to 562.6p/kg from the previous week. In the same week in 2020 the deadweight hogget price in NI was 467p/kg.

## Liveweight Sheep Trade

Good numbers of hoggets passed through the sale rings this week with a further strengthening of liveweight prices reported across the marts. Last Saturday in Omagh 430 hoggets sold from 520-577p/kg while in Swatragh a good entry of 750 hoggets sold from 517-567p/kg. On Monday in Kilrea 600 hoggets sold from 503-585p/kg compared to 360 hoggets last week selling from 530-605p/kg. In Ballymena on Wednesday 1,330 hoggets sold from 500-590p/kg (avg 536p/kg) compared to 1,803 hoggets last week selling from 500-604p/kg (avg 525p/kg). This week in Markethill 600 hoggets sold from 530-578p/kg compared to 750 hoggets last week selling from 520-557p/kg. A strong trade was reported for cull ewes across the marts this week with top reported prices ranging from £118-196.

## LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 20/02/21		Hoggets			
To: 25/02/21		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Omagh	430	520	577	-
	Swatragh	750	517	567	-
Monday	Massereene	506	540	600	-
	Kilrea	600	503	585	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	308	520	571	-
	Rathfriland	417	510	595	537
Wednesday	Ballymena	1330	500	590	536
	Enniskillen	582	508	578	-
	Armoy	412	550	595	-
	Markethill	600	530	578	-

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

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