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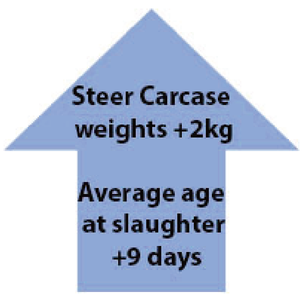
HEAVIER STEER AND HEIFER CARCASE WEIGHTS DURING 2022 TO DATE

The average carcase weight of prime cattle processed in Northern Ireland to date 2022 was 347.3kg. This is up 1.2kg from the corresponding period during 2021 when the average carcase weight of prime cattle in NI was 346.1kg. Steers and heifers have recorded an increase in average carcase weights year on year, while young bull carcase weights have recorded a decrease as outlined in **Table 1.**

Steers

Steers accounted for 49.5 per cent of the prime cattle kill in NI to the week ending 11 June 2022 with an average carcase weight of 364.5kg. This average carcase weight was up 2kg from year earlier levels when the average steer carcase weight was 362.5kg at the w/e 12 June 2021, and 3.6kg ahead of 2020 levels.

This increase in average carcase weight has occurred in correspondence with an increase in the average age at slaughter. During 2022 to w/e 11 June, the average age of steers at slaughter was 24.6 months, up slightly from 24.3 months during 2021. There was no change to the origin of steers killed locally year on year with 52.8 per cent of steers processed during 2022 originating from the suckler herd.



Current specifications from major retailers and food services require beef from carcases in the 280-380kg weight range. To the week ending 11 June 2022 57.1 per cent of price reported steer carcases met this requirement. However carcases that are too heavy to meet current market specifications continue to be presented with 23.6 per cent of price reported steers producing carcases of over 400kg during 2022, an increase from 20.8 per cent of steers which were overweight during the same period of 2021.

Heifers

Heifers accounted for 40.5 per cent of prime cattle throughput in NI to w/e 11 June 2022 with an average carcase weight of 328.3kg. This was an increased average carcase weight of 1.7kg from year earlier levels. To w/e 11 June 2022 74.2 per cent of heifer carcases fulfilled the 280-380kg carcase weight range requirement, a decline from 76.1 per cent of heifer carcases meeting the target weight range 2021. An increase in the heifer carcase weight occurred despite the age of heifers at slaughter being unchanged from 2021, remaining at 24.8 months old. There was no change in the proportion of the heifer kill sourced from the suckler herd year-on-year with 58.3 per cent of price reported heifers slaughtered this year of suckler origin.

Young Bulls

Young bulls accounted for 10.2 per cent of prime cattle throughput in NI to w/e 11 June 2022, up from 9.6 per cent in the corresponding 2021 period.

Table 1: Average prime cattle carcase weights by category and age at slaughter up to w/e 11 June 2022, and the corresponding weeks of 2021 and 2020. Source: DAERA and LMC deadweight price reporting

Average carcase weight (kgs)	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
2022	364.5	328.4	341.4
2021	362.5	326.6	344.1
2020	360.9	325.9	336.8
Age at slaughter (months)	**Steers**	**Heifers**	**Young Bulls**
2022	24.6	24.8	15.9
2021	24.3	24.8	15.7
2020	24.7	25.0	15.5

During 2022 the average carcase weight of young bulls killed in NI was 341.4kg, back by 2.7kg from the 344.1kg recorded in to w/e 12 June 2021. Compared to the corresponding period in 2020, the average carcase weight of young bulls is up by 4.6kg during 2022.

During 2022 there has been a marginal increase of six days in the average age at slaughter of young bulls bringing the average age to 15.9 months. There has been a reduction in the proportion of suckler origin young bulls in the slaughter mix. During 2022 to w/e 11 June, suckler origin bulls accounted for 41.3 per cent of all price reported young bulls in NI compared to 45 per cent in 2021.

Producers are encouraged to produce prime cattle carcases within the 280-380kg weight range as weight above this range incurs price penalties to the producer. It is important that processors give producers the correct market signals to produce these in-spec animals. Producers should liaise with the procurement staff of the individual plants prior to finishing cattle to ensure there is a market outlet for the type of cattle being produced.

PUTTING LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION AT THE HEART OF THE 'REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE' DEBATE

Anyone following the international debate on regenerative agriculture might be excused for thinking that the subject area has been exclusively driven by the crops' sector up to this point. And this would be true. The principles espoused courtesy of the concepts identified up to this point have been very much driven by matters such as soil erosion. Linked to this is the very obvious need to use alternative crop establishment mehods that help improve sustainable food production systems.

But there is another way of looking at this entire issue. And it's this: why aren't livestock farmers in regions such as Northern Ireland being fully recognised for the key role they already play in maintaining the health and wellbeing of their grassland soils? This was a matter discussed in detail at a recent meeting of the European Roundtable for Beef Sustainability (ERBS). The backdrop to the event was the recent commitment expressed by the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI) Platform – the parent body of ERBS – to put regenerative agriculture high up on its list of priorities. To this end, the organisation has recently appointed Nick Betts to the position of Regenerative Agriculture Director.

Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) Chief Executive Ian Stevenson is an ERBS board member. He commented: "Nick Betts joined the recent meeting with ERBS and provided an update on SAI's ongoing commitment to regenerative agriculture. "The opportunity was taken by ERBS representatives to highlight the invaluable work that beef farmers are already carrying out in maintaining the health and vitality of their soils. "Moreover, this continuing investment in soil health and nutrient management must be fully recognised at all points along the farming and food chain.

Ian continued: "Nick fully took on board the points that we made to the extent that ERBS will now have an active role in helping to shape SAI's future global approach, where regenerative agriculture is concerned.

"My priority in the run-up to the meeting was that of ensuring SAI awareness of the fact that so many livestock farmers are already living and breathing regenerative agriculture every day of the week. "It's imperative that as SAI starts to create a common understanding around regenerative agriculture and an aligned approach to measuring, reporting and communication of outcomes that livestock and arable farmers in places like Northern Ireland and other regions around the world fully buy into the principles associated with regenerative agriculture."

SAI Platform is to formally launch its Regenerative Agriculture Programme in 2023. It has been designed to offer flexibility of application to fit the diversity of farms globally. It will also enable value chains to communicate and report on regenerative outcomes through existing systems.

Image 1: The concept of regenerative agriculture focuses on restoring the health and diversity of the soil microbiome to restore a low input high output farming practice and environmental health.

Regenerative agriculture can improve farmer livelihoods, allow farming to adapt to climate change, enhance resilient eco-systems, and enable agriculture to achieve environmental, social, and corporate governance goals." The good news is that a lot of this work is already taking place on the ground here in Northern Ireland. "A case in point was confirmation that the roll-out of Northern Ireland's Soil Nutrient Health Scheme will commence later in the autumn.

"This initiative constitutes the most comprehensive nutrient analysis of our local soils and estimates of carbon stocks in soils and above ground biomass ever undertaken. "The results emanating from this work will have a beneficial impact on every farm in Northern Ireland."

Ian concluded: "I thought it was important that ERBS board representatives and the members of the SAI management team should be fully informed on these important developments. "And I keep coming back to the fundamental point: grassland farmers should be fully recognised for the tremendous role they already perform in maintaining and adding to the health of their soils."

WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

LMC Livestock & Meat Commission

CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 13/06/22	Next Week 20/06/22
Prime		
U-3	422 - 432p	422 - 432p
R-3	416 - 426p	416 - 426p
O+3	410 - 420p	410 - 420p
P+3	354 - 364p	354 - 364p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3	280 - 360p	280 - 376p

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 11/06/22	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	451.3	452.2	443.3
R3	444.9	446.3	436.2
O+3	436.1	439.5	427.1

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 11/06/22	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	276.5	286.8	302.3	319.8
P2	292.0	316.1	336.7	354.3
P3	310.1	322.7	362.1	362.1
O3	-	370.0	384.5	384.3
O4	-	-	380.7	385.9
R3	-	-	-	405.1

Deadweight Cattle Trade

Quotes from the major processing plants for in-spec U-3 grade prime cattle remained steady this week with a range from 422-432p/kg for steers and heifers. With firm demand for prime cattle producers are encouraged to shop around and negotiate when selling cattle to get the best possible deal. Quotes for good quality O+3 grade cows ranged from 280-360p/kg across the plants this week. Early next week improved quotes of 280-376p/kg are expected for O+3 grade cows.

Prime cattle throughput last week totalled 6,990 head, up 47 head from the previous week when 6,943 prime cattle were killed locally. This is also up by 489 head from the 6,501 prime cattle killed in NI plants during the same week last year. Last week cow throughput in NI totalled 1,965 head, up by 232 head from the previous week, and an increase of 260 cows compared to the 1,705 cows killed locally during the same week in 2021.

Imports from ROI for direct slaughter in NI plants last week consisted of 146 prime cattle and 69 cows. Meanwhile exports from NI for direct slaughter in ROI plants last week consisted of nine prime cattle, 116 cows and four bulls, while no cattle made the journey from NI to GB for direct slaughter last week.

Last week the deadweight trade for prime cattle has continued to strengthen in NI across all the grades. In NI the average steer price was up by 4.2p/kg to 435.5p/kg last week. The R3 steer price last week was 445.4p/kg, up 2.3p/kg from the previous week and is 57.1p/kg ahead of the R3 steer price during the same week in 2021. The average heifer price in NI last week was up 0.9p/kg to 437.7p/kg while the R3 heifer price was up by 1.3p/kg to 446.1p/kg. The cow trade remained strong in NI last week with the average cow price up by 4p/kg to 355.7p/kg and the O3 cow price increasing by 5.8p/kg to 383.9p/kg the O3 cow price in NI is 85.8p/kg ahead in comparison to the same week during 2021.

The deadweight trade for prime cattle in GB reported a mixed trade across the regions last week. The average steer price in GB was up by 1.4p/kg to 441.6p/kg while the average R3 steer price was up by 0.6p/kg to 447.1p/kg. The differential in R3 steer prices between GB and NI was 1.7p/kg last week or £5.95 on a 350kg carcase. The average heifer price in GB last week was back by a marginal 0.3p/kg to 441.1p/kg while the R3 heifer price reported an increase of 0.4p/kg to 447.5p/kg. Last week the differential between NI and GB R3 heifer price was 1.4p/kg or £4.50 on a 320kg carcase.

The deadweight trade remained strong overall in ROI last week with the R3 steer price up by the equivalent of 1.1p/kg to 457.6p/kg. This places the R3 steer price in ROI at 12.2p/kg above the same price in NI. Last week the ROI R3 heifer price increased by 1.3p/kg to the equivalent of 459.2p/kg this puts the ROI price 13.1p/kg ahead of the NI R3 heifer price. The O3 cow price in ROI was up 0.6p/kg to 406.2p/kg. This was 22.3p/kg higher than the equivalent price in NI, equating to an additional £62 on a 280kg carcase.

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

W/E 11/06/22		Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	451.2	464.4	449.3	450.3	451.5	451.5	450.5
	R3	445.4	457.6	449.7	449.4	446.5	443.4	447.1
	R4	443.8	460.1	450.8	453.3	445.2	451.3	450.8
	O3	432.1	448.3	436.0	437.0	427.2	422.0	429.7
	AVG	435.5	-	447.1	444.9	438.5	434.4	441.6
Heifers	U3	450.6	470.3	457.6	456.3	455.9	456.9	456.6
	R3	446.1	459.2	451.7	449.8	447.0	443.5	447.5
	R4	443.6	462.9	453.0	449.9	448.0	445.4	450.2
	O3	433.0	454.5	432.5	430.3	423.7	418.9	425.2
	AVG	437.7	-	449.8	443.3	436.8	433.6	441.1
Young Bulls	U3	443.3	455.5	447.5	450.0	447.1	448.6	448.2
	R3	436.9	448.0	441.0	440.0	441.1	440.7	440.8
	O3	418.7	428.1	418.7	405.8	413.0	414.4	412.8
	AVG	424.9	-	441.4	436.2	430.8	436.9	435.5
Prime Cattle Price Reported		5,809	-	5,932	6,854	7,100	4,595	24,481
Cows	O3	383.9	406.2	388.1	384.0	379.3	383.1	382.4
	O4	385.7	406.8	389.1	383.7	382.1	382.1	383.4
	P2	336.5	383.1	332.3	338.8	342.9	340.6	340.9
	P3	359.2	399.3	361.5	357.4	359.7	359.0	359.2
	AVG	355.7	-	380.7	365.8	356.3	354.7	360.6

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=85.41p 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 11/06/22	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	270	295	280	225	269	247
Friesians	205	229	212	137	202	170
Heifers	255	293	270	220	254	230
Beef Cows	240	280	247	200	239	210
Dairy Cows	160	201	176	100	159	136
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	260	326	285	210	259	230
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	250	326	265	200	249	225
Bullocks over 500kg	240	306	262	234	239	236
Heifers up to 450kg	245	309	260	215	259	235
Heifers over 450kg	234	262	247	196	232	220
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	350	450	400	245	345	295
Continental Heifers	300	400	350	200	295	250
Friesian Bulls	165	250	200	90	160	125
Holstein Bulls	135	235	165	2	130	65

SHEEP TRADE

NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 13/06/22	Next Week 20/06/22
R3 Lambs up to 21kg	660p	655-675p

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 28/05/22	W/E 04/06/22	W/E 11/06/22
NI L/W Lambs	607.8	614.8	620.5
NI D/W Lambs	623.7	629.1	639.4
GB D/W Lambs	661.5	684.7	692.9
ROI D/W	658.4	666.4	673.6

Deadweight Sheep Trade

Base quotes from the major processors for R3 grade lambs ended this week ranging from 655-675p/kg up to 21kg with similar quotes expected for early next week. Throughput in the local plants last week increased to 8,220 lambs which was 706 head behind the 8,926 lambs killed locally during the same week last year. Exports of lambs to ROI for direct slaughter last week remained at similar levels to the previous week, totalling 4,081 head. The average deadweight lamb price reported in NI last week was 639.4p/kg, up 10.3p/kg from the previous week. The sheep trade in ROI continues to strengthen with last weeks deadweight lamb price up by 7.2p/kg to the equivalent of 673.6p/kg.

Liveweight Sheep Trade

Number of lambs passing through local sale rings increased this week with prices similar to last week. In Omagh last Saturday 453 lambs sold from 596-641p/kg compared 415 lambs the previous week selling from 584-623p/kg. In Massereene on Monday 538 lambs sold from 615-668p/kg compared to 393 lambs selling from 600-631p/kg last week. In Saintfield this week 740 lambs sold from 635-700p/kg compared to an entry of 555 lambs last week selling from 615-650p/kg. On Wednesday in Enniskillen 502 lambs sold from 580-645p/kg compared to last week when 384 lambs sold from 602-661p/kg. The trade for cull ewes continues to remain strong with top reported prices for well fleshed ewes ranging from £146-279 across the marts this week.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 11/06/22		Lambs			
To: 16/06/22		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Swatragh	880	560	710	-
	Omagh	453	596	641	-
Monday	Kilrea	420	624	651	-
	Massereene	538	615	668	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	740	635	700	-
	Rathfriland	428	620	670	636
Wednesday	Ballymena	1080	610	676	644
	Enniskillen	502	580	645	-
	Armoy	375	600	665	-
	Markethill	940	620	654	-

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