

## LMC GIVES EVIDENCE TO WESTMINSTER'S NORTHERN IRELAND AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE

Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) chief executive Ian Stevenson recently joined forces with Ulster Farmers' Union President Victor Chestnutt and Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association Executive Director Michael Bell to give evidence to the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee at Westminster. The issue under scrutiny was the potential impact of the recently signed trade deals agreed by the UK with Australia and New Zealand on local farming and food. "A number of MPs from Northern Ireland sit on the committee, which is chaired by Simon Hoare," Ian confirmed. "Our evidence was requested to help inform the Committee on the potential impact of the recent trade deals agreed with the UK and Australia."

He continued: "The government will be interested in the committee's findings on these important reserved matters. But I am also mindful of the fact that Parliament has yet to finally ratify both agreements. So there remains some scope to raise issues of concern and approach which may help the cause of the farming and food sectors here in Northern Ireland in the longer term." But the LMC's chief executive is very aware of the fact that London has conceded on the defensive needs of the UK's indigenous farming and food sectors in order to secure offensive export opportunities for the country's manufacturing and service industries. "It really is that clear cut," he stressed. "The likelihood of Northern Ireland's farming and food sectors ever wanting to export significant volumes of produce to either Australia or New Zealand is extremely remote. We would never be able to compete within these markets on a cost basis."

"And the same principle holds for farming and food across the rest of the UK. In total contrast however, both New Zealand and Australia would view the UK as a potentially lucrative market for

their food exports into the future." Ian Stevenson does not believe that the UK is about to be swamped with food imports from the Antipodes. Rather, the impact of the recent trade deals will be much longer term in nature.

He said: "Currently, New Zealand and Australia are receiving good prices for the beef and lamb exports they supply to China, other Asian nations and North America." But should any of these markets falter, for any reason, then the UK would move more centre stage in terms of their thinking. Ian also pointed to the fact that in year 16 after the agreements reached with New Zealand and Australia come into effect they will take on a fully liberalised nature. Production agriculture is a major driver of both the Australian and New Zealand economies. Australia alone produces 2.3 m tonnes of carcass beef annually. This is equivalent to the output of some 7m cattle. "We here in Northern Ireland could never compete with an industry with this scale of operation," the LMC's chief executive confirmed.

Image1: LMC Chief Executive Ian Stevenson



"Australia exports 60% of its total beef output with Japan and USA the main export destinations currently. In comparison the UK imports about 360 k tonnes of beef annually. The vast bulk of this product comes from the Republic of Ireland. "Given the scope of the Australian beef industry, there is little doubt that the country could make real inroads within the British beef market, if it chose to do so at some future stage." According to Ian Stevenson Australia could, almost certainly, target the UK's food service and manufacturing sectors with a mix of frozen and chilled beef products.

He continued: "Australia is an export focussed nation and would no doubt be able to meet UK import requirements. The problem is that these import requirements are often below the norms of standards that we tend to operate to within the UK to service retail and food service customers. "It's highly unlikely that British food retailers would ever stock chilled Australian or New Zealand beef to any significant extent. They will continue to espouse the values that relate to all of the farm quality assurance schemes throughout the UK. "However, if large quantities of beef were coming into the manufacturing or catering sectors from the southern hemisphere, this could act to significantly reduce the value of the red meat sector as a whole. "And within such a scenario, it is the primary producer who would carry the cost for this." The LMC chief executive confirmed that the exposure of livestock farmers in Northern Ireland to the threat of red meat imports from Australia and New Zealand was communicated in the strongest possible terms to the members of the select committee.

Reference was also made to the recommendations of the UK's Committee on Climate Change, which focussed on the benefits of eating higher quality beef and lamb within a

scenario of consumers reducing the overall amounts of dietary red meat that they consume. Ian Stevenson again: "Given these developments, it makes no sense at all to grant New Zealand and Australia, essentially, unlimited access to the British market for beef and lamb. "Another factor which must be taken fully into consideration is the enhanced carbon footprint of all foods imported into the UK from the southern hemisphere. "Again, this makes no sense at all, given the pressure that is about to come on local farmers and processors to slash the carbon footprint values of their own businesses over the coming years." Ian added: "Another issue that must be taken into account is the fact that farmers in Northern Ireland will remain within the influence of both the UK and the European Union where food production standards are concerned."

"During the period ahead our livestock producers and processors will continue to operate to the highest denomination of standards to ensure unfettered access to both UK and EU markets." "Implementing enhanced farm production standards will come at a cost, and the supply chain will have to absorb these and seek their recovery from the marketplace." Ian concluded: "Recent analysis carried out by the UK's Department for International Trade has identified ten overall benefits that will be accrued by the various sectors of British economy, following-on from the recent trade deals agreed with New Zealand and Australia. "Significantly, the UK's indigenous farming and food sectors do not feature at all within this ranking. "This very clearly crystallises the challenges that will be created for livestock farmers here in the wake of significantly increased red meat imports coming into the UK from the southern hemisphere. "And again, this point was made in the strongest possible terms to Simon Hoare and his committee members."

# SCIENCE MATTERS!

In a week that has seen Stormont, essentially, voting to disregard the advice of the UK's top scientists when it comes to agreeing climate change legislation for Northern Ireland, LMC chief executive Ian Stevenson has asked the following question: whatever happened to the appliance of science?

He explained: "For many generations new science, new thinking and new technologies have driven progress within the farming and food industries.

"The use of improved genetics, the identification of improved environmental standards, the implementation of improved animal welfare systems plus the setting of enhanced health and safety standards are examples that all farmers will relate to in this regard."

Ian continued: "And the principle of developing

new science and letting this impact and shape our entire way of life has been evident across society as a whole for generations.

"Once Covid hit, for example, it was so obvious that science was driving the response of the government to the pandemic. "During the first lock down the prime minister and other political leaders were joined by the Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Scientific Officer at nightly press conferences. "Science truly took the lead when it came to the development of the Covid vaccines and the other pandemic resolution measures."

According to the LMC representative, the best available science must be used to frame Northern Ireland's climate change legislation. "This is the issue that will determine the fundamental profitability and sustainability of every local farming and food supply chain business into the future," he stressed

Previously, the UK's Committee on Climate Change, chaired by Lord Deben had proposed that agriculture in Northern Ireland's contribution to climate change could be most feasibly secured courtesy of the region achieving an 82% reduction in emissions by 2050 within an overall UK Net Zero approach.

This contrasts totally with the 100% net emissions' reduction target by 2045 contained within the original private member's bill on climate change, tabled by Green Party MLA Clare Bailey. This week's Assembly vote, however, saw politicians vote on a net emissions' reduction target of 100% within Northern Ireland by 2050.

Ian Stevenson again: "But it is a decision that flies in the face of the available science. Lord Deben has previously indicated that it would be morally wrong to introduce climate change targets that are neither feasible nor attainable.

"Courtesy of last Tuesday's vote, it appears that a fundamental principle of good policy making being based upon the best available evidence was set aside when it comes to climate change."

**Image 2: Northern Ireland's Agri-Food Industry will continue to take necessary steps in the tackle against climate change.**



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# WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS



## CATTLE TRADE

### NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 31/01/22	Next Week 07/02/22
<b>Prime</b>		
U-3	388 - 396p	390 - 398p
R-3	382 - 390p	384 - 392p
O+3	376 - 384p	378 - 386p
P+3	320 - 334p	324 - 336p
Including bonus where applicable		
<b>Cows</b>		
O+3	260 - 294p	280 - 300p

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 steers and heifers improved this week ranging from 388-396p/kg with quotes of 390-398p/kg expected early next week. In the corresponding week in 2021 the major processors were quoting 366-378p/kg for U-3 grade steers and heifers. Quotes for O+3 grading cows improved this week ranging from 260-294, with quotes of 280-300p/kg expected early next week.

Throughput of prime cattle in NI plants last week totalled 7,474, up 234 head from the previous week. In the corresponding week last year prime cattle throughput totalled 6,834. Meanwhile cow throughput in NI last week decreased by 88 head to 2,321 head from the previous week. However, this is an increase of 358 cows from the same week last year when 1,963 cows were processed locally.

Imports of prime cattle from ROI for direct slaughter in NI last week increased to 218 and 105 cows also imported. There were no cattle imported from GB for direct slaughter in local plants last week. Exports of cattle out of NI for direct slaughter last week continued to run at low levels with 14 prime cattle and 40 cows exported to ROI and no cattle exported to GB.

The average steer price in NI last week was back 0.5p/kg to 396.5p/kg while the R3 steer price was back by a penny to 404.8p/kg. The average NI heifer price last week decreased by 1.3p/kg to 397.8p/kg while the R3 heifer price decreased by 0.2p/kg to 405.6p/kg. The average young bull price increased by 0.8p/kg to 376.8p/kg while the R3 young bull price decreased by 0.1p/kg to 388.2p/kg. Meanwhile the cow trade in NI last week firmed with the majority of price reported grades up from the previous week. The average cow price increased by 1.8p/kg to 277.1p/kg while the O3 cow price decreased by 0.4p/kg to 303.6p/kg.

In GB last week the average steer price decreased by a penny to 407p/kg while the R3 steer price decreased by 0.2p/kg to 414p/kg. The average heifer price in GB last week decreased by 0.6p/kg to 405.9p/kg while the R3 heifer price decreased by 0.1p/kg to 414.3p/kg. This brings the differential between the GB and NI R3 heifer price to 8.7p/kg. The average young bull price in GB last week increased by 0.6p/kg to 388.4p/kg while the R3 young bull price increased by 1.5p/kg to 405.9p/kg. The cow trade in GB last week remained firm with the average cow price up 1.1p/kg to 274.7p/kg. The O3 cow price in GB increased by 0.8p/kg to 293.7p/kg, 10.1p/kg behind current NI levels.

In ROI last week the deadweight cattle trade sharpened across the majority of grades from the previous week. The R3 steer price in ROI last week increased by 1.2p/kg to the equivalent of 363.6p/kg. The R3 heifer price in ROI last week increased by a penny to the equivalent of 367p/kg 38.6p/kg below the same price in NI. Meanwhile the O3 cow price in ROI last week increased by marginally to the equivalent of 301.2p/kg. This puts the O3 cow price at 2.4p/kg below the same price in NI.

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

	W/E 29/01/22	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	408.1	371.7	405.4	416.8	422.0	421.7	414.5
	R3	404.8	363.6	408.7	418.7	414.5	412.9	414.0
	R4	403.1	365.1	410.4	419.5	414.5	417.8	414.7
	O3	393.2	352.8	396.2	400.6	395.5	394.4	396.8
	AVG	396.5	-	406.1	411.2	405.5	403.8	407.0
Heifers	U3	411.4	377.7	414.1	419.1	427.9	423.6	421.2
	R3	405.6	367.0	409.3	415.6	415.5	414.0	414.3
	R4	404.1	369.9	412.0	417.3	416.4	414.3	414.6
	O3	393.4	360.2	389.9	405.9	389.9	390.4	393.9
	AVG	397.8	-	407.8	410.6	403.7	400.3	405.9
Young Bulls	U3	391.3	354.4	403.6	410.8	415.0	404.8	408.6
	R3	388.2	346.9	400.1	406.1	409.8	383.6	405.9
	O3	375.2	336.9	367.6	361.0	386.9	-	374.2
	AVG	376.8	-	384.4	376.6	396.0	378.7	388.4
	Prime Cattle Price Reported	6,175	-	6,384	6,441	6,912	4,383	24,120
Cows	O3	303.6	301.2	293.1	291.2	294.7	295.2	293.7
	O4	305.7	300.9	294.4	295.0	296.7	294.4	295.5
	P2	265.2	276.1	243.0	250.2	255.0	257.9	254.2
	P3	282.9	289.4	266.6	267.8	272.1	275.2	272.1
	AVG	277.1	-	289.3	277.6	272.9	267.0	274.7

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=83.50p 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 29/01/22	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
		From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
<b>Finished Cattle (p/kg)</b>							
Steers		238	258	246	200	237	218
Friesians		178	194	186	140	177	160
Heifers		228	262	238	185	227	206
Beef Cows		186	228	200	145	185	165
Dairy Cows		129	143	136	100	128	114
<b>Store Cattle (p/kg)</b>							
Bullocks up to 400kg		260	327	290	220	259	235
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg		250	302	260	215	249	232
Bullocks over 500kg		220	246	230	185	219	202
Heifers up to 450kg		250	309	265	200	249	225
Heifers over 450kg		230	259	242	180	229	205
<b>Dropped Calves (£/head)</b>							
Continental Bulls up to 3 months		400	600	450	300	395	350
Continental Heifers up to 1 month		335	435	375	210	330	270
Friesian Bulls		150	260	180	50	145	90
Holstein Bulls		100	210	130	2	95	50

## REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 29/01/22	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	408.6	410.5	391.0
R3	402.8	404.7	390.8
O+3	394.2	394.9	386.1

\*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

## REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 29/01/22	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	200.4	213.7	221.0	234.0
P2	214.0	239.5	262.2	275.9
P3	234.5	258.7	279.9	285.8
O3	-	271.7	299.0	304.0
O4	-	310.0	282.0	305.8
R3	-	-	315.0	321.7

# SHEEP TRADE

## NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 31/01/22	Next Week 07/02/22
R3 Hoggets up to 22kg	535 - 540p/kg	555 - 560p/kg

## REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 15/01/22	W/E 22/01/22	W/E 29/01/22
NI L/W Hoggets	503.0	496.5	505.4
NI D/W Hoggets	550.1	535.2	529.5
GB D/W Hoggets	601.1	585.5	577.6
ROI D/W	578.7	559.9	545.2

## Deadweight Sheep Trade

Quotes from the local processors for R3 grade lambs began to firm mid-week ranging from 550-560p/kg up to 22kg with quotes of 555-560p/kg expected for Monday. Hogget throughput in NI plants last week totalled 7,210, an increase of 226 head from the previous week. In the same week in 2021 hogget throughput in local plants totalled 5,618 head. A further 4,753 hoggets were exported to ROI last week, up 29 head from the previous week. The deadweight hogget price in NI last week decreased by 5.7p/kg to 529.5p/kg. Meanwhile in ROI the deadweight hogget price decreased by 14.7p/kg to the equivalent of 545.2p/kg.

## Liveweight Sheep Trade

The marts have continued to report smaller numbers of hoggets passing through the sale rings this week with trade generally up from last week. In Swatragh on Saturday 1035 hoggets sold from 460-529p/kg compared to 780 hoggets sold from 446-513p/kg last week. In Kilrea on Monday 400 hoggets sold from 520-566p/kg compared to 380 hoggets sold from 502-528p/kg the previous week. On Tuesday in Rathfriland 307 hoggets sold from 510-595p/kg (avg 532) compared to 245 hoggets sold from 490-540p/kg (avg 510p/kg). This week in Markethill 950 hoggets sold from 520-555p/kg compared to 600 hoggets sold from 510-539p/kg. Top reported prices for culled ewes remained firm this week with prices ranging from £148-£223 across the marts.

## LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 29/01/22		Hoggets			
To: 03/02/22		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Omagh	392	496	535	-
	Swatragh	1035	460	529	-
Monday	Kilrea	400	520	566	-
	Massereene	297	509	548	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	390	500	555	-
	Rathfriland	307	510	595	532
Wednesday	Ballymena	2113	468	553	502
	Enniskillen	502	500	547	-
	Armoy	344	465	525	-
	Markethill	950	520	555	-

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