

HOLD ON TO YOUR HATS: 2022 LOOKS SET TO BE ANOTHER ROLLERCOASTER RIDE FOR BEEF AND LAMB IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The year ahead is shaping up to be a more than interesting one for Northern Ireland's beef and sheep sectors. Obviously, many of the issues that took centre stage in 2021 will remain in play throughout the 12 months ahead and beyond. The impact of climate change and the need for the red meat industry to generate a sustainable response to this challenge is a case in point. However, adding to these matters is a host of new priorities that will serve to frame the development of the ruminant sectors throughout Northern Ireland well into the future. Earlier this week Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) chief executive Ian Stevenson took stock of the many issues that will interface with livestock farmers and all other red meat stakeholders over the year ahead. It was a process that allowed him to come up with his 'A' list of priorities.

Agricultural policy

According to the LMC representative, the recent opening of a public consultation aimed at formulating a post-Brexit series of support proposals for agriculture in Northern Ireland represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to put the industry on a truly sustainable footing for the future. He said: "LMC will be participating in the consultation exercise and it is critically important that all those with an interest in the future of our sector take the time to study and consider the proposals." "It seems that many of the future policy proposals for beef and sheep chime with the ideas and suggestions contained within a way forward policy options paper, produced by the Andersons Centre last year for the Northern Ireland red meat industry. He added: "That work was sponsored by the LMC and had the full input of other industry stakeholder bodies, including the Ulster Farmers Union and the Northern Ireland Meat Exporters' Association. "Brexit has provided agriculture in Northern Ireland with a unique opportunity to look towards shaping its own future. "And it is important that we make decisions over the coming weeks and months to ensure that flexible policy decisions are taken that will deliver sustainable livelihoods for Northern Ireland's beef and lamb producers well into the future."

Agriculture and Food Strategy

Ian Stevenson believes that the independent over-arching review of Northern Ireland's farming and food sectors, carried out by former National Farmers' Union president Sir Peter Kendall, will act to deliver fundamental change within the local economy's largest private sector. He explained: "The findings of the independent strategic review will be an important report for informing industry direction and local policy decisions." It is understood that the review team's final report is currently with the two sponsoring ministers: agriculture minister Edwin Poots and economy minister Gordon Lyons. As a result, the report could be officially published within weeks. Ian Stevenson again: "The outworking of the report should have a major influence on all aspects of farming and food in Northern Ireland,

including primary production. "It should also deal with a number of issues that were left unaddressed in the wake of the 2013 Agri Food Strategy Report.

"The need for further investment at both farm and food processing level here in Northern Ireland is obvious. "Fundamental issues relating to the future of food sustainability and marketing may well be addressed, courtesy of the report." He continued: "LMC liaised closely with Sir Peter Kendall and his team, as well as preparing a detailed submission in writing on all those matters that have a direct bearing on the operation of the beef and lamb sectors here."

Access to markets

The UK will remain the largest and most important market for beef produced in Northern Ireland. In the case of locally produced lamb, the need to maintain unfettered access to the rest of the UK and the EU are priorities of equal stature for the sector moving forward. "We export the vast majority of the beef and lamb that we produce locally," Ian Stevenson explained. "Wider market access beyond the EU, where our beef and lamb are concerned, will also provide a better carcass balance for our processors. Developments of this nature will have very beneficial implications in terms of the prices that can be offered to farmers. "LMC works very closely with the UK Export Certification Partnership in helping to make new third country market access happen." One extremely encouraging development in this regard has been the opening up of the US market to accept sheep meat imports from the UK. "A decision in principle has been reached on this matter," Ian Stevenson confirmed. "It will take a few months to sort out the details of the export certificates and plant approvals that will be required to make this trading opportunity a reality. He continued: "But it's not beyond the realms of possibility that lamb from Northern Ireland will be making its way to the United States at some stage during 2022. "Currently the American market accounts for 135,000t of lamb imports on an annual basis, with 70% of domestic demand serviced by imported product."

Animal Health

Improving the animal health status of Northern Ireland's cattle herds and sheep flocks will help to deliver significantly improved sustainability levels across the ruminant sectors. In this context, Ian Stevenson points to the need for further measures to be taken where bTB and BVD are concerned. "We have too many bovine animals being removed from herds on the back of a confirmed bTB infection," he stressed. "We know that there is a reservoir of infection in both our deer and badger populations and possibly other species. "It makes sense to tackle the disease challenge that exists in domestic cattle and in wildlife so that we can have healthy populations of both." Ian continued: "Farm minister Edwin Poots has already made it clear that he is willing to address these matters head on. So, hopefully,

the coming weeks will see significant decisions taken in this regard. The Commission's chief executive expressed disappointment at the recent confirmation of the ongoing BVD eradication campaign losing momentum over recent months. He commented: "It makes no sense for farmers to keep Persistently Infected (PI) cattle within their herds. The only option is to have these euthanized and disposed of. They represent a significant threat of disease spread and must be removed from the system. "The plants will no longer slaughter PI cattle and those farmers deciding to keep these cattle will be suspended from membership of the Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme until the matter is rectified. "However, if it turns out that voluntary measures do not resolve the PI-related issue then I see no reason why statutory instruments cannot be introduced to deal with the problem."

Image 1: LMC Chief Executive, Ian Stevenson



Accountability

In light of the significant climate challenge now confronting the farming and food sectors, Ian Stevenson believes that robust accountability measures must be put in place to assess the real progress being made by farmers and processors in meeting their future sustainability targets. He commented: "Irrespective of what climate change legislation is agreed for Northern Ireland there are already a number of key staging posts put in place for the UK as a whole if a net Carbon Zero scenario is to be reached over the coming decades. "The first of these staging posts is 2030. Not alone does it represent the date set by COP 26 to secure a 30% reduction in global methane emissions but it also constitutes the first major milestone in securing the UK's over arching climate change commitments." He added: "The need to enact realistic climate change legislation here in Northern Ireland remains a priority. "Many aspects of the private members climate change bill (which has just been recently considered by the AERA Committee) are not grounded in science. This bill does not represent a sustainable way forward as it would inevitably lead to the implementation of

legislation that would result in a significant reduction in the scale of Northern Ireland's livestock farming sectors."

Antimicrobial resistance

The campaign to reduce the various livestock sectors' reliance on antimicrobials will continue apace in 2022. "Significant progress has been made in this regard throughout the UK," Ian Stevenson confirmed. "But a lot more work has yet to be done. In the case of LMC we have changed the relevant criteria within the Farm Quality Assurance Scheme. "Specifically, members are now required to undertake mandatory training on the responsible use of antimicrobials."

Awareness

The second half of 2021 saw the UK government agreeing trade deals with both Australia and New Zealand. Both these developments, in the view of Ian Stevenson, could have significant consequences for Northern Ireland's farming and food sectors over the coming years. He added: "The current Conservative Government at Westminster seems to be wedded to a cheap food policy. From what I can see there is little, or nothing at all, of what could be considered a good news story coming out of these developments for farming and food across the UK." Given developments of this nature, the need to develop political awareness regarding the needs of farming and food here in Northern Ireland is now a priority. "Here in Northern Ireland climate change will be the main focus. However, where London is concerned reserved matters relating to trade policy must be debated in a context that also includes the needs of Northern Ireland in full.

Adding value

Ian Stevenson confirmed that LMC will continue to deliver considerable value for money when it comes to making best use of levy payers' income. "The Commission levy has not been raised since 2003, but a full suite of Market Information, Industry Development and Marketing and Communication Services continue to be provided and enhanced for the benefit of our stakeholders by the team at LMC" he said. "The Farm Quality Assurance fees were amended in line with the greater scope of the scheme a year or so ago. "Perhaps one of the most important developments over the last number of years has been a significantly enhanced level of co-operation being achieved by all the stakeholder groups working within the red meat sector. Ian concluded: "This 'working together' attitude will, almost certainly, gain further momentum during the period ahead. "An excellent example of this was the commissioning of the report on future options for supporting the Suckler Beef and Sheep Sectors in Northern Ireland, which was published last year. "No doubt, further collaborations of this nature will follow during the period ahead. This is a prime example of how real value can be added to the LMC levies paid by beef and sheep producers and processors throughout Northern Ireland.

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 base quotes & mart results
Updated 5pm Daily
Tel: 028 9263 3011

Text Service

Free weekly base quotes sent to your mobile phone
Email: bulletin@lmconi.com
Tel: 028 9263 3000

WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS



CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 03/01/22	Next Week 10/01/22
Prime		
U-3	388 - 394p	388 - 394p
R-3	382 - 388p	382 - 388p
O+3	376 - 382p	376 - 382p
P+3	320 - 332p	320 - 332p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3	260 - 290p	260 - 290p

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 processors remained steady this week ranging from 388-394p/kg for in spec U-3 grade prime cattle, with similar quotes expected early next week for both steers and heifers. This week last year the major processors were quoting 360-368p/kg for in spec U-3 grading steers and heifers. Quotes for O+3 grade cows are ranging from 260-290p/kg with the majority of plants quoting at the upper end of the scale.

Imports from ROI for direct slaughter in local plants last week consisted of 15 prime cattle and 45 cows. This brings prime cattle imports from ROI to NI to 14,582 head during the 2021 year. There were no cattle imported from GB for direct slaughter last week. Exports from NI to ROI consisted of 17 cows with no cattle exported from NI to GB for direct slaughter.

Last week in NI the average steer price decreased by 0.3p/kg to 396.4p/kg from the previous week with the R3 steer price back 1.2p/kg to 405.5p/kg. This was up 25.5p/kg from the corresponding week last year when the R3 steer price in NI was 380p/kg. The average heifer price in NI last week increased by 1.3p/kg to 397.5p/kg while the R3 heifer price was up marginally from the previous week to 405.3p/kg. In the corresponding week in 2021 the R3 heifer price was 378.5p/kg, 26.8p/kg behind current levels which equates to £88 on a 330kg carcass. The average young bull price in NI last week increased by 1.2p/kg to 381p/kg while the R3 young bull price decreased by 3.1p/kg to 390p/kg. Meanwhile the cow trade in NI firmed last week with the average cow price up 5.9p/kg from the previous week to 278.2p/kg. The O3 cow price in NI was up by 2p/kg to 299.8p/kg. This is 23.2p/kg higher than the 276.6p/kg reported in the same week last year.

The deadweight trade for prime cattle in GB firmed last week compared to the previous week. The average steer price reported an increase of 1.8p/kg to 409.1p/kg while the average R3 steer price increased by 2.5p/kg to 415.7p/kg. The R3 steer price reported increases across all of the GB regions last week with the strongest incline reported in Southern England of 6.8p/kg to 414.7p/kg. The average heifer price in GB last week was 409.3p/kg, up 2.1p/kg from the previous week while the R3 heifer price increased by 1.6p/kg to 414.5p/kg. This puts the GB R3 heifer price 9.2p/kg higher than the equivalent price in NI last week. The GB cow trade strengthened last week with the average cow price up 9.1p/kg to 265.5p/kg and the O3 cow price up 4.2p/kg to 286.9p/kg.

Last week in ROI the deadweight trade for prime cattle came under pressure with all the reported prices back from the previous week. The R3 steer price was the equivalent of 364.5p/kg, back 2.4p/kg from the previous week. This brings the differential between the ROI and NI R3 steer price to 41p/kg. The R3 heifer price was back by a penny to the equivalent of 368.1p/kg, 37.2p/kg below the corresponding price in NI. Meanwhile the cow trade in ROI showed signs of improvement last week with the O3 cow price up 1.9p/kg to the equivalent of 299.7p/kg.

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

W/E 01/01/22	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	408.6	372.3	410.4	421.9	421.6	417.5
	R3	405.5	364.5	413.7	419.6	414.7	415.7
	R4	403.5	367.0	413.6	423.9	413.0	411.6
	O3	392.3	352.3	403.4	400.7	393.3	397.7
AVG	396.4	-	411.0	413.5	405.4	404.6	409.1
Heifers	U3	410.2	378.1	415.1	423.8	425.7	421.5
	R3	405.3	368.1	414.8	414.8	413.9	414.5
	R4	401.9	369.5	415.1	422.3	416.2	409.8
	O3	395.0	361.5	408.9	401.3	384.6	393.3
AVG	397.5	-	413.0	414.7	404.0	403.0	409.3
Young Bulls	U3	389.7	354.6	402.6	410.4	412.1	406.0
	R3	390.0	346.6	399.0	405.1	408.0	393.1
	O3	372.1	337.8	372.6	371.6	396.0	360.0
	AVG	381.0	-	393.4	379.3	392.6	383.9
Prime Cattle Price Reported	3,458	-	4,189	4,529	4,133	2,920	15,771
Cows	O3	299.8	299.7	289.8	284.6	288.6	286.9
	O4	300.3	299.9	292.5	291.5	290.7	289.7
	P2	253.7	272.7	237.3	238.7	240.5	238.8
	P3	277.7	287.0	265.3	263.0	264.1	261.8
AVG	278.2	-	295.1	273.0	260.5	256.3	265.5

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=84.13p 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 01/01/22	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	408.9	409.7	392.5
R3	401.9	403.9	391.0
O+3	393.6	389.8	388.4

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 01/01/22	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	195.8	208.9	216.3	236.5
P2	214.3	235.9	252.3	266.7
P3	216.5	266.0	274.1	279.7
O3	-	-	286.8	300.8
O4	-	-	290.0	300.6
R3	-	-	315.0	317.4

LATEST LIVEWEIGHT CATTLE MART PRICES NI

W/E 25/12/21	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	230	244	235	192	227	223
Friesians	-	-	-	-	-	-
Heifers	222	252	235	182	221	207
Beef Cows	176	206	194	140	175	158
Dairy Cows	124	128	126	85	123	112
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	227	246	235	187	226	209
Bullocks over 500kg	217	259	225	170	216	195
Heifers up to 450kg	-	-	-	-	-	-
Heifers over 450kg	225	255	240	175	224	200
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	No Sale					
Continental Heifers						
Friesian Bulls						
Holstein Bulls						

SHEEP TRADE

NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 03/01/22	Next Week 10/01/22
R3 Hoggets up to 22kg	560p/kg	560 - 570p/kg

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 18/12/21	W/E 25/12/21	W/E 01/01/22
NI L/W Lambs	520.1	524.8	525.6
NI D/W Lambs	555.8	549.9	545.2
GB D/W Lambs	620.4	608.3	616.5
ROI D/W	603.4	593.4	N/A

Deadweight Sheep Trade

Quotes for R3 grading hoggets remained firm this week ranging from 560-570p/kg up to 22kg with similar quotes expected for early next week. In the corresponding week last year, the local plants were quoting 475-490p/kg for R3 grading hoggets up to 22kg. The deadweight hogget price in NI last week was 545.2p/kg, back 4.7p/kg from the previous week. In the corresponding week last year, the average deadweight hogget price in NI was 473.7p/kg, 71.5p/kg behind current levels. The average deadweight hogget price in GB increased by 8.2p/kg to 616.5p/kg.

Liveweight Sheep Trade

In Masereene on Monday 559 hoggets sold from 500-532p/kg with Kilrea reporting 580 hoggets selling from 516-549p/kg. On Tuesday in Rathfriland 350 hoggets sold from 500-572p/kg with an average price of 518p/kg with Saintfield reporting 390 hoggets selling from 505-563p/kg. In Ballymena on Wednesday a large sale of 1504 hoggets sold ranging from 510-581p/kg with an average price of 528p/kg. On Thursday in Markethill 850 hoggets sold from 520-560p/kg with Armoy reporting 557 hoggets selling from 505-561p/kg. The ewe trade remained firm this week with the marts reporting top prices ranging from £140-£219.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 01/01/22		Hoggets			
To: 06/01/22		No	From	To	Avg
Monday	Kilrea	580	516	549	-
	Massereene	559	500	532	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	390	505	563	-
	Rathfriland	350	500	572	518
Wednesday	Ballymena	1504	510	581	528
	Enniskillen	392	498	522	-
	Armoy	557	505	561	-
	Markethill	850	520	560	-

Information supplied by LMC / DAERA/ AHDB/ DAFM

LMC does not guarantee the accuracy or completeness of any third party information provided in or included with this publication.

LMC hereby disclaims any responsibility for error, omission or inaccuracy in the information, misinterpretation or any other loss, disappointment, negligence or damage caused by reliance on third party information.

Not for further publication or distribution without prior permission from LMC

Contact us

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

