

## TIGHTER SUPPLIES INFLUENCING THE DEADWEIGHT SHEEP TRADE

Increasing numbers of spring lambs are being processed in NI meat plants week on week. Last week in Northern Ireland spring lambs accounted for 47.3 per cent of price reported sheep with 2,493 spring lambs processed, back from 3,257 head or 52.3 per cent of the price reported kill in the same week last year. The slow spring this year compared to last year has impacted lamb performance and has resulted in a decrease in the availability of spring lambs for slaughter.

However, there have been more hoggets available for slaughter in recent weeks compared to the same period last year despite recording a decrease in recent weeks. The overlap between hoggets and spring lambs has been prolonged this year owing to slower rates of finishing last year and more sheep on NI farms following a good lambing season in 2022. Overall lamb/hogget throughput in Northern Ireland last week totalled 5,661 head and was back 17.2 per cent from the previous week.

### Trade

A depressed start was seen in the demand for spring lambs this spring with initial quotes of 635-640p/kg received mid April which dropped to 620-625p/kg at the end of April. This is not unusual however as there is often uncertainty evident in the trade during the period shortly before procurement agents switch from sourcing hoggets to spring lambs. There was a similar wobble in the trade around the same time in 2022 with spring lamb prices coming under pressure at the close of April, before stabilising in early May. The trade so far this year has been strong in comparison to previous years.

This week base quotes for R3 grading spring lambs from the three major lamb processing plants in NI were 670p/kg up to 21kg, and similar quotes are expected early next week. The average price paid for an R3 grading spring lamb in NI last week was 658.4p/kg. This price is well ahead of the 595.3p/kg paid in the corresponding week last year and ahead of the same week 2021 when the

average R3 spring lamb price in NI was 623.5p/kg. The deadweight R3 spring lamb price in NI in last week was at the highest recorded level since 2021.

The deadweight hogget trade in Northern Ireland also continued to improve this week with base quotes for R3 grading hoggets ranging from 620-630p/kg up to 22kg with a similar trade expected early next week. As mentioned tighter supplies of hoggets/lambs for slaughter has contributed to this improvement in base quotes as outlined in **Figure 1**.

### GB & ROI Trade

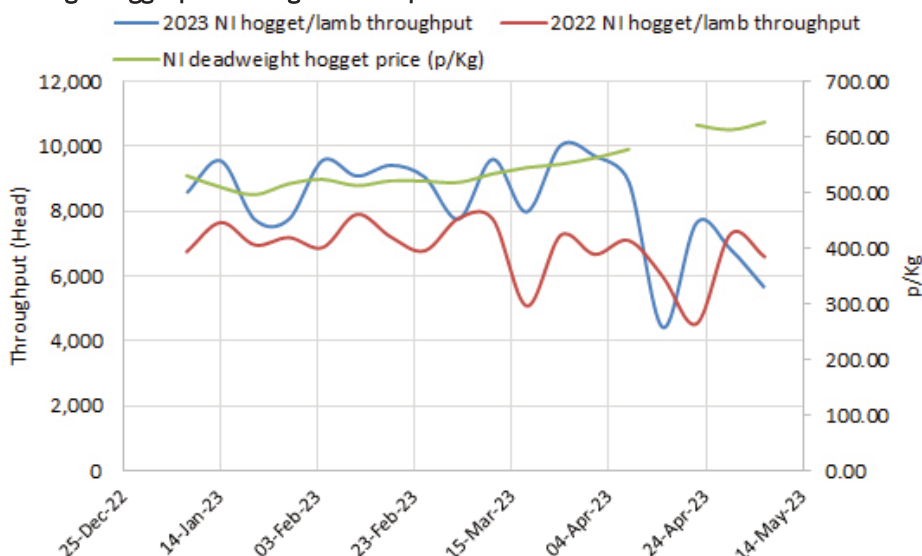
The deadweight hogget trade also remained strong in GB last week with an average deadweight hogget price of 669.3p/kg, a notable increase of 14.4p/kg when compared to the previous week. Small numbers of spring lambs were reported at an average deadweight price of 720.5p/kg which is also well ahead of the same week last year when the average deadweight price was 659.4p/kg.

In ROI last week the combined lamb/hogget price reported a slight decrease in sterling terms by the equivalent of 0.5p/kg to 646.4p/kg. However in euro terms the sheep trade in ROI during 2023 to date has been well behind previous years as a result of strong domestic hogget supplies and availability in key export markets combined with a reduced consumer demand for lamb. Bord Bia report ROI lamb/hogget throughput last week totalled 47,907 head bringing throughput during the year to date to 976,695 head. Compared to the same period last year this is an increase of around 30,000 head or three per cent year on year.

### Exports to ROI

Last week there were 4,130 hoggets/lambs exported to ROI for direct slaughter, accounting for 42 per cent of total output from the Northern Ireland sheep flock. Despite the strong supplies of sheep in ROI this year exports from NI to ROI for direct slaughter are running ahead of last years

**Figure 1: NI lamb/hogget throughput during the year to date (w/e 06 May 2023) and the NI deadweight hogget price during the same period. Source: DAERA.**



**Table 1: Ewes and female sheep intended for breeding in NI recorded in the June census 2017 - 2022. Source: DAERA.**

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	% Change 2021/22
Ewes which lambed	829,636	813,964	800,656	812,864	840,000	+3.3%
Others for breeding	126,912	124,493	145,398	155,436	157,227	+1.2%
Total	956,548	938,457	946,054	968,300	997,227	+3.0%

levels by 5,194 head or 5.6 per cent.

### Market Specification

Producing spring lambs is a costly enterprise and with a slow spring this year the relatively strong deadweight prices in recent weeks will have been welcomed by local producers to help cover the high costs of production.

Producers are reminded of current market specifications when producing lambs for slaughter. NI processors prefer farm quality assured lambs that will produce an 18-21kg carcass with a fat cover of 2 or 3. These lambs can be used to service the widest range of customers. Meeting specification for carcass weight is important for producers as they will not be paid beyond 21kg. During the four week period ending 06 May 2023 the average carcass weight of price reported spring lambs in NI was 21.5kg.

### Census figures

The preliminary results for the Northern Ireland Agricultural Census for June 2022 have indicated a three per cent increase in breeding ewe numbers from year earlier levels to 840,000 head outlined in **Table 1**. Breeding ewe numbers have shown some volatility in recent years however have reached a five year high in 2022. In addition the number of ewe lambs on Northern Ireland farms last June intended for breeding were also at the highest levels in almost 20 years with 2004 being the last time similar numbers (157,400 head) of ewe lambs for breeding were recorded on NI farms. The good spring and early summer weather in 2022 helped increase lamb survival rates and boost lamb numbers on the ground. Importantly however, the 2023 lambing season has been reported as well behind previous years and therefore there may not be more lambs available this year despite the increased ewe numbers recorded.

## NI SHEEP SECTOR SUMMARY APRIL 2023

Table 2: Northern Ireland Sheep sector overview April 2023 (weeks 1-4) Source: DAERA/DAFM/AHDB.	April 2022	April 2023	% Change
<b>Sheep Prices (p/kg)</b>			
Average Deadweight Price NI	566.7	604.4	+6.6%
Average Liveweight Price NI	508.1	528.0	+3.9%
Average Weekly Price GB (D/W)	598.0	645.9	+8.0%
Average Weekly Price ROI (D/W)	612.2	628.2	+2.6%
<b>NI Throughput (head)</b>			
Total Hoggets & Lambs Processed (Head)	24,990	27,872	+11.5%
Total Ewes & Rams Processed (Head)	1,963	1,784	-9.1%
Average Hogget & Lambs Carcass Weight (kg)	23.3	22.2	-4.7%
Average Ewe & Rams Carcass Weight (kg)	28.6	27.6	-3.3%
<b>Trade (Head)</b>			
Live Imports for Direct Slaughter	-	-	-
Live Exports for Direct Slaughter	25,907	24,044	-7.2%
<b>Euro / Stg Exchange Rate (€ / £)</b>			
All NI Figures Unless Otherwise Stated	83.7	88.1	+5.3%

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# WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

## CATTLE TRADE

### NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 08/05/23	Next Week 15/05/23
<b>Prime</b>		
U-3	460 - 482p	460 - 482p
R-3	454 - 476p	454 - 476p
O+3	448 - 470p	448 - 470p
P+3	392 - 414p	392 - 414p
	Including bonus where applicable	
<b>Cows</b>		
O+3	370 - 386p	370 - 386p

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 remained steady from the previous week at 460-482p/kg. Producers should use these quotes as a starting point for negotiation with higher prices available, particularly for cattle that meet current market specifications. The deadweight cow trade also remained steady this week with quotes ranging from 370-386p/kg for good quality O+3 grading cows with quotes for all cattle next week expected to be similar.

Reports from the plants last week indicate further tightening in the levels of both prime cattle and cows coming forward for slaughter. Prime cattle throughput in NI last week totalled 7,237 head. This was a decline of 272 head from the 7,509 prime cattle killed locally during the previous week. Cow throughput in NI last week totalled 1,939 head, a decline of 140 head from the 2,079 cows killed during the previous week.

Imports of prime cattle from ROI for direct slaughter in NI last week totalled 396 head with 133 cows also imported. No cattle were imported from GB for direct slaughter in local plants last week. Last week a total of 24 cows were exported out of NI to ROI for direct slaughter locally with no cattle exported from NI to GB for direct slaughter.

The R3 steer price in NI last week was up 0.7p/kg from the previous week to 495p/kg. The overall average steer price was up by 1.6p/kg to 486.3p/kg. The R3 heifer price in NI last week recorded a decline of 0.8p/kg to 494.9p/kg. The overall average heifer price was back by a marginal 0.1p/kg to 485.6p/kg. The young bull trade also reported a decline with an overall average price of 469.8p/kg last week, back 0.7p/kg from the previous week. The NI O3 cow price increased last week by 2.6p/kg from the previous week to 400.8p/kg, while the overall average cow price was up by a penny to 369.5p/kg.

The deadweight trade for prime cattle reported a mixed trade in GB with the average R3 steer price up by 1.1p/kg to 499.2p/kg. The deadweight heifer trade came under pressure across the majority of grades in all regions. The average R3 heifer price in GB last week was 498.2p/kg, back 0.3p/kg from the previous week. While the overall average heifer price declined by the same margin to 490.4p/kg.

In ROI deadweight prices declined across the majority of prime grades from the previous week in sterling terms. Last week the R3 steer price was the equivalent of 466.2p/kg, back by the equivalent of 3.3p/kg from the previous week. This puts the ROI price 28.8p/kg below the NI R3 steer price. The R3 heifer price in ROI last week was the equivalent of 470.3p/kg, back 2.5p/kg from the previous week. This puts the ROI price 24.6p/kg behind the NI R3 heifer price. The average price paid for an O3 cow price in ROI last week was back by the equivalent of 2.6p/kg to 398.7p/kg, 2.1p/kg below the same price in NI.

### Deadweight Sheep Trade

Base quotes from the plants for spring lambs this week were 670p/kg with plants paying up to 21kg. The hogget season is coming to an end with the plants quoting 620-630p/kg this week for the small numbers coming forward for slaughter. The total lamb/hogget throughput in NI plants last week totalled 5,661 head, back 1,180 head on the previous week. This is also back 956 head when compared to same week last year when 6,617 lambs/hoggets were processed locally. The deadweight spring lamb price in NI last week increased by 10p/kg from the previous week to 648.8p/kg, with the deadweight hogget price increasing by 13.5p/kg to 626.8p/kg.

### Liveweight Sheep Trade

This week across the marts the number of lambs are continuing to increase along with a firm trade reported. On Saturday in Swatragh 350 lambs sold from 574-640p/kg compared to the previous Saturday when 135 lambs sold from 576-632p/kg. In Markethill on Monday 425 lambs sold from 620-687p/kg compared to 410 lambs selling from 610-634p/kg last week. In Rathfriland this week 470 lambs sold from 590-630p/kg (avg 624p/kg) compared to 200 lambs last week selling from 600-640p/kg (avg 625p/kg). On Wednesday in Ballymena a good entry of 522 lambs sold from 625-677p/kg (avg 648p/kg) compared to 449 lambs last week selling from 630-697p/kg (avg 655p/kg). Top reported prices for cull ewes ranged from £148-276 across the marts.

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

W/E 06/05/23	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	498.9	474.4	508.4	506.6	505.7	506.8
	R3	495.0	466.2	506.3	498.2	496.6	499.2
	R4	494.7	468.9	507.4	501.8	494.2	502.3
	O3	482.8	458.6	491.6	478.2	479.7	476.8
	AVG	486.3	-	503.8	493.1	487.0	488.1
Heifers	U3	500.7	483.0	513.5	508.3	510.2	507.9
	R3	494.9	470.3	506.0	496.1	498.3	495.7
	R4	491.8	473.1	506.0	499.8	495.0	494.6
	O3	482.1	460.9	486.1	479.2	475.8	467.9
	AVG	485.6	-	503.8	490.0	486.6	482.6
Young Bulls	U3	492.9	466.9	500.0	497.2	502.9	500.8
	R3	481.4	455.0	499.3	490.1	490.5	494.0
	O3	468.0	437.0	473.4	458.4	458.5	463.8
	AVG	469.8	-	492.7	485.0	481.0	493.4
Prime Cattle Price Reported	6,074	-	5,264	6,244	6,992	4,711	23,211
Cows	O3	400.8	398.7	422.3	409.6	412.0	412.5
	O4	403.3	398.1	424.2	412.9	412.5	404.5
	P2	358.5	356.3	375.0	368.9	365.5	367.6
	P3	380.0	383.6	392.7	394.5	387.8	389.4
	AVG	369.5	-	415.5	387.8	376.2	373.6

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=87.88p 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 06/05/23	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
<b>Finished Cattle (p/kg)</b>						
Steers	290	338	305	215	289	250
Friesians	217	252	230	182	216	200
Heifers	280	330	295	225	279	250
Beef Cows	250	293	261	205	249	225
Dairy Cows	160	191	175	70	159	115
<b>Store Cattle (p/kg)</b>						
Bullocks up to 400kg	324	443	355	220	323	272
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	270	355	295	200	269	235
Bullocks over 500kg	248	302	266	180	247	215
Heifers up to 450kg	300	443	340	200	299	250
Heifers over 450kg	250	339	276	175	249	212
<b>Dropped Calves (£/head)</b>						
Continental Bulls	400	580	475	250	395	320
Continental Heifers	350	525	410	230	345	290
Friesian Bulls	150	270	185	75	145	105
Holstein Bulls	120	200	140	10	115	65

### REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 06/05/23	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	499.0	500.7	493.5
R3	493.8	494.9	480.4
O+3	487.6	487.0	472.4

\*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

### REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 06/05/23	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	289.9	309.3	320.3	337.1
P2	310.2	341.0	357.9	374.8
P3	320.6	349.3	382.5	382.9
O3	-	406.8	396.7	400.8
O4	-	410.0	386.5	403.7
R3	-	-	-	415.5

## SHEEP TRADE

### NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 08/05/23	Next Week 15/05/23
R3 Hoggets up to 22kg	620 - 630p	620 - 630p
R3 Spring Lambs up to 22kg	670p	670p

### REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 22/04/23	W/E 29/04/23	W/E 06/05/23
NI L/W Hoggets	530.6	536.4	553.4
NI L/W Spring Lambs	602.1	615.9	635.4
NI D/W Hoggets	621.7	613.3	626.8
NI D/W Spring Lambs	644.0	638.8	648.8
GB D/W Hoggets	687.0	654.9	669.3
GB D/W Spring Lambs	726.9	-	720.5
ROI D/W	645.9	646.9	646.4

### LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 06/05/23		Hoggets				Spring Lambs			
To: 11/05/23		No	From	To	Avg	No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Swatragh	430	456	572	-	350	574	640	-
	Omagh	228	564	591	-	56	604	681	-
Monday	Kilrea	200	530	559	-	250	610	652	-
	Markethill	300	530	582	-	425	620	687	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	135	520	565	-	340	610	660	-
	Rathfriland	-	-	-	-	470	590	630	624
Wednesday	Ballymena	487	525	629	550	522	625	677	648
	Enniskillen	140	500	570	-	150	600	688	-
	Armoyle	135	550	605	-	120	620	677	-

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