

CATTLE TRADE SOFTENS AS SUMMER BEGINS BUT CONTINUES TO OUTPERFORM LAST YEAR

Despite the deadweight cattle trade in Northern Ireland coming under some pressure in recent weeks, the current performance of the NI beef market remains well ahead of last year as shown in **Table 1**.

Prime Cattle Trade

Quotes for in spec U-3 grading prime cattle during the four week period ending 27 May 2023 ranged from 460-476p/kg. This is well ahead of last year when quotes from local processors during the same four week period were in the range of 392-432p/kg. The stronger quotes were reflected in the paid prices of prime cattle with the average R3 steer price peaking at 495.6p/kg during the w/e 20 May 2023, the highest price ever paid for R3 steers in NI. This was 40.6p/kg ahead of the highest price recorded during 2022 (455p/kg) which equates to £142.10 on a 350kg steer carcass.

Similar to trends in NI, in recent weeks softening deadweight prime cattle prices have also been observed in GB and ROI. Also as is the case in NI, record deadweight cattle prices have been reported in these regions in 2023. As can be seen in **Table 1** deadweight cattle prices in GB have remained well ahead of 2022 levels. During the four w/e 27 May 2023 the average R3 steer price in GB was 500p/kg, up 55p/kg or 12.4 per cent ahead of the price recorded during the corresponding period in 2022.

A similar trend can be observed in ROI. During the last four week period the average R3 steer price was 460.4p/kg compared to 436.2p/kg in the 2022

Table 1: NI beef industry key statistics during four weeks ending 27 May 2023 and the corresponding period during 2022, and the year on year change.
Source: LMC, DAERA, AHDB & DAFM.

	Four weeks ending 28 May 2022	Four weeks ending 27 May 2023	% Change
Average R3 Steer Price (P/Kg)			
Northern Ireland	436.5	494.7	+13.3%
Republic of Ireland	436.2	460.4	+5.5%
Great Britain	445.0	500.0	+12.4%
NI Cattle Throughput (Head)			
Clean Slaughtering	31,181	28,739	-7.8%
Total Cow Slaughtering (Head)	8,333	7,909	-5.1%
Average Carcase Weight (Kg)			
Average Clean Carcase Weight (kg)	344.2	339.7	-1.3%
Average Cow Carcase Weight (kg)	305.3	303.4	-0.6%
Imports for Direct Slaughter			
Republic of Ireland	1,257	2,030	+61.5%
Great Britain	0	0	0

period. This was an increase of 24.2p/kg or 5.5 per cent year on year.

Cow Trade

The deadweight cow trade has also come under some pressure in recent weeks with base quotes for good quality O+3 grading cows this week ranging from 370-378p/kg. However, like the prime cattle trade, the trade for cows in NI is also at record levels and well ahead of 2022 levels. Base quotes for good quality O+3 grading cows during the last four weeks ranged from 370-386p/kg. In comparison to the corresponding four week period in 2022 when quotes from the local plants ranged from 280-360p/kg. The

average cow price during the last four weeks in NI was 369.6p/kg which is 31.7p/kg or 9.4 per cent ahead of the 337.9p/kg average cow price reported during the corresponding period last year and equates to a difference of £95.10 on a 300kg carcass.

Comparatively, in GB the average cow price during the last four weeks was also ahead of 2022 levels by 26.8p/kg or £80.00 on a 300kg carcass.

In ROI the cow trade recorded a significant decline last week with the average reported O3 cow price falling 8.1p/kg from the previous week to 378.8p/kg.

Throughput

The number of prime cattle passing through local processing plants during the four w/e 27 May 2023 totalled 28,739 head. This is a 7.8 per cent or 2,442 head decrease from 2022 levels during the same period. This brings the total prime cattle throughput during the year to date to 147,899 head. This is back by 8,791 head or 5.6 per cent, when compared to the 156,690 prime cattle killed during the same period last year.

Cow throughput in local plants during the last four weeks totalled 7,909 head, a decline of 424 head or 5.1 per cent from the same period in 2022 when 8,333 cows were slaughtered in NI plants. This brings the total cow kill during the year to date to 44,141 head, 1,186 head or 2.6 per cent behind the 45,327 cows slaughtered during the

same period of 2022.

Carcase Weights

In addition to a decrease in cattle throughput during the last four weeks, year on year in local plants there has also been a decrease in average carcass weights.

The average prime cattle carcass weight during the four w/e 27 May 2023 was 339.7kg, a 4kg decrease from the relative period of 2022. This brings the average prime cattle carcass weight during the year to date to 340.5kg, 7.3kg less than during the same period of 2022.

The average carcass weight of cows slaughtered in local processing plants during the last four weeks was 303.4kg, a 2kg decrease from the same period last year when the average carcass weight was 305.3kg. During the year to date the average carcass weight of cows slaughtered in NI was 300.8kg, a decrease of 7kg compared to the corresponding period of 2022 when the average cow carcass weight was 307.8kg. This decrease in cow carcass weight can be explained by the increased numbers of dairy cows passing through local slaughter plants year on year, with dairy producers continuing to benefit from high culling

prices.

Imports for Direct Slaughter

The reduction in the availability of slaughter cattle domestically has resulted in an increase in the number of cattle imported to Northern Ireland for direct slaughter in recent weeks.

Cattle imports from ROI for direct slaughter in local plants during the four w/e 27 May 2023 totalled 2,030 head which is an increase of 773 head or over 60 per cent from the corresponding period in 2022. This is also an extra 541 cattle imported from the previous four week period of 2023.

During the four week period ending 27 May 2023, 1,521 animals imported for direct slaughter from ROI were prime cattle. These animals accounted for just over five per cent of total NI prime cattle throughput during the four week period. Overall, during the year to date prime cattle imports from ROI for direct slaughter have totalled 4,794 head and accounted for just over three per cent of the total NI prime cattle throughput during year to date. During the corresponding period in 2022 prime cattle imports from ROI accounted for 2.5 per cent of the local kill.

FQAS MART CLINICS JUNE 2023

LMC Farm Liaison Officer, Terry White, runs Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (FQAS) mart clinics at a range of Livestock Marts across Northern Ireland. Terry is present to assist members of FQAS with non-conformances, general scheme queries and any issues prior to or following an inspection.

Any farmers who wish to join the scheme can also do so through their local FQAS mart clinic. Terry will be available at the livestock marts listed in the table below.

For further information call (028) 9263 3024.



Mart	Day	Date
Omagh	Monday (Day)	12/06/2023
Ballymena	Friday (Day)	16/06/2023
Markethill	Tuesday (Day)	20/06/2023

FQAS Helpline

If you have had a recent inspection and need help and advice to rectify any non-conformances. Contact the FQAS helpline: 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@lmcni.com Tel: 028 9263 3000

WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 29/05/23	Next Week 05/06/23
Prime		
U-3	460 - 472p	460 - 468p
R-3	454 - 466p	454 - 462p
O+3	448 - 460p	448 - 456p
P+3	392 - 404p	392 - 400p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3	370 - 378p	365 - 374p

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 were back early this week to range from 460-472p/kg for in-spec U-3 grade in spec steers and heifers. The deadweight trade for good quality O+3 grade cows also came under pressure early this week with quotes back to 360-378p/kg. Early next week a further softening in the trade is expected with five of the major plants providing LMC with quotes of 460-468p/kg for U-3 prime cattle and 365-374p/kg for cows on Monday.

Prime cattle slaughterings in local plants last week totalled 6,970 head which brings prime cattle throughput for the last six weeks to 43,938 head. This is a decrease of 1,535 head from the corresponding period in 2022 when prime cattle throughput totalled 45,473 head. Cow slaughterings in NI last week totalled 1,911 head which brings cow throughput for the last six weeks to 12,213 head, 262 head less than the 12,475 cows killed during the corresponding period of 2022.

Cattle imports from ROI last week for direct slaughter consisted of 445 prime cattle and 153 cows with no cattle imported from GB. Meanwhile exports from NI for direct slaughter in ROI consisted of three prime cattle 23 cows and one bull, and for a fourth consecutive week no cattle made the journey to GB for direct slaughter.

The deadweight trade for prime cattle in NI came under further pressure last week. The average steer price was 483.4p/kg, back 2.1p/kg from the previous week while the R3 steer price was back by 2.9p/kg to 492.7p/kg. Meanwhile the average heifer price in NI last week was back by 3.4p/kg to 483.3p/kg with the R3 heifer price back 4.6p/kg to 492.2p/kg. The average young bull price in NI last week decreased by 2.2p/kg to 470.3p/kg with the R3 young bull price back 0.3p/kg from the previous week to 480.2p/kg. The deadweight cow trade came under pressure across some grades last week however the average cow price in NI reported an overall increase of 1.4p/kg to 368.8p/kg while O3 cow price was back by 0.8p/kg to 397p/kg.

In GB prices reported a downward movement in the deadweight trade across all regions last week. The average steer price reported a slight decrease of 0.2p/kg to 493.7p/kg last week while the R3 steer price declined 1.8p/kg to 499.7p/kg. The R3 steer price declined in the Midlands and Wales (-3.4p/kg), Southern England (-2.2p/kg) and Northern England (-1.1p/kg) while the average R3 steer price in Scotland decreased by a penny. The average heifer price in GB last week was back marginally to 491p/kg while the R3 heifer price reported a decline of 0.3p/kg to 499.6p/kg from the previous week. The R3 heifer prices reported decreases in the Midlands and Wales (-2.5p/kg) and Southern England (-1.4p/kg) with increases reported in Scotland (+1.8p/kg) and Northern England (+0.7p/kg).

In ROI last week the deadweight trade for prime cattle also came under pressure from the previous week. The R3 steer price in ROI was the equivalent 456.3p/kg, back 1.8p/kg while the R3 heifer price decreased 1.4p/kg to 459.5p/kg.

Deadweight Sheep Trade

Base quotes from the major processors for R3 grading lambs remained steady this week with all plants quoting in the region of 650-660p/kg. Base quotes around 640p/kg are expected for spring lambs early next week with all plants paying up to 21kg. Hpgget quotes early next week will be in the region of 590-600p/kg. Lamb throughput in local plants last week totalled 9,226 head which is 2,115 head above the same week last year when 7,111 lambs were killed locally. The deadweight lamb price in NI last week was back 4.8p/kg from the previous week to 655.4p/kg. During the same week last year the deadweight lamb price in NI was 623.7p/kg. In ROI last week the deadweight lamb price was the equivalent of 653.9p/kg, up by the equivalent of 3p/kg from the previous week.

Liveweight Sheep Trade

Increasing numbers of lambs passed through the sale rings this week with the trade relatively steady on last week. In Swatragh last Saturday 620 lambs sold from 590-675p/kg compared to 431 lambs selling from 548-641p/kg the previous week. In Markethill on Monday 600 lambs sold from 600-633p/kg compared to 570 lambs selling from 610-655p/kg last week. In Rathfriland on Tuesday 300 lambs sold from 600-634p/kg with an average price of 621p/kg. In Ballymena on Wednesday 902 lambs sold from 610-682p/kg with an average price of 628p/kg. An improved trade from last week when 1,010 lambs sold from 610-676p/kg with an average price of 620p/kg. Top reported prices for cull ewes this week ranged from £155-278.

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

W/E 27/05/23	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB	
Steers	U3	498.3	466.6	515.8	504.7	506.2	503.8	508.2
	R3	492.7	456.3	510.3	499.2	496.4	495.3	499.7
	R4	492.2	458.7	509.9	503.4	495.9	495.6	503.8
	O3	480.1	445.7	498.7	483.3	477.5	476.0	480.6
	AVG	483.4	-	508.9	494.1	487.1	485.4	493.7
Heifers	U3	498.8	472.1	517.2	505.1	511.6	505.4	510.5
	R3	492.2	459.5	506.9	499.8	499.0	494.5	499.6
	R4	489.8	460.2	509.4	503.0	496.0	494.5	503.0
	O3	480.5	451.6	493.6	480.4	476.6	470.2	477.3
	AVG	483.3	-	508.0	492.9	486.9	473.5	491.0
Young Bulls	U3	485.2	457.2	507.5	500.1	498.1	497.7	502.2
	R3	480.2	443.4	501.6	495.8	492.3	492.4	495.5
	O3	465.2	428.0	483.1	462.1	467.5	442.4	467.5
	AVG	470.3	-	500.6	485.2	478.7	473.8	484.6
Prime Cattle Price Reported	5,620	-	5,868	7,307	7,388	4,961	25,524	
Cows	O3	397.0	378.8	418.6	413.9	417.5	416.2	416.1
	O4	399.2	378.8	423.8	414.6	419.1	410.4	416.6
	P2	359.2	348.1	374.0	374.5	373.1	370.2	372.4
	P3	378.1	367.5	395.6	392.5	388.8	390.2	390.1
	AVG	368.8	-	414.0	394.6	386.7	379.3	389.9

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=86.89p 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 27/05/23	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	290	324	299	215	289	252
Friesians	211	239	227	150	210	193
Heifers	285	345	295	230	284	257
Beef Cows	241	290	254	200	240	220
Dairy Cows	155	200	172	90	154	120
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	300	411	350	200	299	250
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	260	356	285	190	259	220
Bullocks over 500kg	270	311	285	185	269	225
Heifers up to 450kg	280	341	305	190	279	230
Heifers over 450kg	240	291	265	170	239	210
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	420	570	485	300	415	355
Continental Heifers	375	530	430	250	370	310
Friesian Bulls	165	235	200	50	150	100
Holstein Bulls	100	205	150	1	95	50

REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 27/05/23	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	498.1	497.9	482.3
R3	492.1	491.1	480.6
O+3	484.6	485.3	470.4

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 27/05/23	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	280.8	302.2	312.4	321.2
P2	310.6	337.3	357.7	375.3
P3	273.9	361.1	372.2	381.8
O3	-	381.8	393.6	397.6
O4	300.0	354.0	393.1	400.5
R3	-	-	-	415.7

SHEEP TRADE

NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 29/05/23	Next Week 05/06/23
R3 Lambs up to 21kg	650 - 660p	640p

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 13/05/23	W/E 20/05/23	W/E 27/05/23
NI L/W Lambs	627.9	615.6	623.0
NI D/W Lambs	659.4	660.2	655.4
GB D/W Lambs	728.5	742.9	732.9
ROI D/W	652.9	650.9	653.9

LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 27/05/23		Lambs			
To: 01/06/23		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Omagh	240	597	672	-
	Swatragh	620	590	675	-
Monday	Kilrea	300	620	650	-
	Markethill	600	600	633	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	535	595	640	-
	Rathfriland	300	600	634	621
Wednesday	Ballymena	908	610	682	628
	Enniskillen	302	590	630	-
	Armoyle	370	575	632	-

Information supplied by LMC / DAERA/ AHDB/ DAFM

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REFLECTIONS ON ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL BALMORAL SHOW FOR LMC

Balmoral Show represents an almost universal meeting place for those involved in the local farming and food sectors. This theme is amplified still further when one considers the event's growing footprint in drawing visitors from across the island of Ireland and throughout the rest of the UK. Adding to all of this is the tremendous interest shown by members of the general public in Balmoral Show. All those who attend the event come to enjoy a well-deserved day out. But super imposed on this very obvious driver is a growing demand, across all sections of society, for accurate information on how our food is produced.

Balmoral Show is a must-attend event for the Livestock and Meat Commission. This is reflected on the commitment of the organisation to have a presence there which meets the requirements of industry stakeholders and consumers in equal measure. "Balmoral is the one event in the year, which is attended by all board members and staff of the organisation," Commission Chief Executive Ian Stevenson explained. "It provides a tremendous opportunity for LMC representatives to meet levy payers and industry stakeholders on a face-to-face basis in surroundings that provide the scope for meaningful conversation in a relaxed setting." Not that the LMC team had much time to relax at Balmoral Show 2023. Day one of the event kicked off with the launch of the new Northern Ireland Carbon Steering Group (CSG).

This industry wide group will work in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to create a programme which will help all farm businesses understand where they are on their carbon journey. As part of this and to inform the work programme with DAERA, the CSG intends to test the concept of whole farm data collection with 100 farms in the next few weeks. Information required to test this concept will be collected following scheduled NI Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (FQAS) inspections and during the same farm visit. "The first fifty farmers have been contacted for the purposes of this development," Ian Stevenson explained. "All have agreed to participate. Their FQAS inspections will take place during June. "A number of the participating farmers called on to the Commission stand at Balmoral, simply to find out a little bit more about the project and their role in it. All expressed a strong willingness to get involved with carbon data collection.

Image 1: LMC Chief Executive Ian Stevenson enjoyed conversing with farming families and industry representatives



Image 2: FQAS Manager Gillian Davis helping to distribute some of the tasty LMC recipes



Ian continued, "The second group of 50 farms will receive their FQAS inspections during August." The LMC representative stressed that none of the initial farms involved have been specifically chosen. "It was simply a case of working through the order of the pre-determined FQAS inspection dates that were already in the system," he explained. "The rationale for using the FQAS resource to deliver the information required for carbon measurement centres on the fact that a significant percentage of Northern Ireland's beef and sheep farmers also operate other enterprises.

"So, by taking this whole farm approach, it will be possible to get high quality data across all of Northern Ireland's farming sectors." Delivering a strong message on sustainability was one of six main themes profiled by LMC at Balmoral 2023. Meeting and greeting visitors on the stand provided ample discussion opportunities on the current state of beef and lamb prices. It also gave individual farmers the chance to highlight the ongoing impact of extremely challenging input costs on their individual businesses.

Image 3: The team of LMC cookery demonstrators were extremely engaging offering tips and advise for cooking with NI beef and lamb.



The role of marketing FQAS beef and lamb is at the very heart of the work undertaken by LMC. And there is no better way of doing this than letting the general public taste these wonderful meats across a wide range of culinary options. It will come as no surprise then to learn that the beef and lamb cookery demonstrations hosted on the Commission's Balmoral stand were tremendously popular across the four days of the event. "Beef and lamb were profiled in equal measure," Ian commented. "We have developed a number of new FQAS beef and lamb recipe books over recent years. It was obvious that quite a number of visitors to the Balmoral stand had come specifically to secure a copy of one or more of these recipe compilations.

"LMC promotional materials were also extremely popular with visitors to the stand. We found it hard to keep up with the demand for our natural jute bags. Made for life, they feature the FQAS logo. "And, of course FQAS beanie hats are always popular with farmers of all ages."

Image 4: Children enjoying the interactive aspects of the LMC stand at the show.



LMC had a very strong presence out in the Balmoral show rings this year, courtesy of it sponsoring four major livestock competitions. Ian Stevenson drew particular attention to LMC's association with the sheep young handlers' championship. "This is an event that combines the enthusiasm of youth and the pivotal role of improved genetics within our livestock sectors.

Image 5: Overall sheep young handler champion Sarah Wilson (left) and reserve champion Isabella Taylor (right) pictured with LMC board member Joe Stewart and Judge Rachel Megarrell.



"Both themes totally complement each other. It is crucially important that we encourage the next generation of farmers into the industry. Young people represent the future of our industry. "Delivering on the need to deliver improved efficiency and sustainability is at the heart of the challenge now confronting the industry. "And driving all of this will be the role of improved genetics across all the livestock sectors."

Balmoral Show provides a unique opportunity for LMC board members and staff to meet with representatives of other farming and food focussed stakeholder groups. "The scope of the events hosted at Balmoral by other organisations, operating within and outside the scope of the agri-food sector is immense," Ian Stevenson confirmed. "These are tremendous opportunities to gauge the views of others on a wide range of issues that have a bearing on livestock production and farming in general. "For example, leading representatives from McDonald's attended Balmoral 2023. They made it very clear that they want to continue offering livestock-based protein options to consumers. "However, they also recognise that the way in which red meat is produced will have to be done in line with the

evolving sustainability agenda." He continued: "This was just one example of the very encouraging themes struck by numerous organisations attending Balmoral Show this year. The Commission's chief executive is extremely aware of the need to communicate a very strong and proactive personal health and wellbeing message to all farm families in Northern Ireland. Moreover, the services needed to make this a reality must be delivered and fully maintained.

It is for these reasons that LMC is fully supporting the work of the Agri Rural Health Forum. Co-ordinated by Rural Support, the grouping brings together key decision makers in agriculture plus the public and voluntary sectors, government and related commercial organisations. Its core aim is to help influence public opinion and ensure the appropriate incorporation of mental and physical health needs in rural communities - particularly for farming families - into strategy and policy development.

The forum held its inaugural stakeholder event at this year's Balmoral Show. The event was used to confirm the high risk of heart attacks and stroke within rural communities and the accompanying need for farmers to have their blood pressure checked on a regular basis. Ian Stevenson attended the lunchtime event. He commented: "All the speakers taking part outlined the risks of high blood pressure. If left undiagnosed, this condition increases risks of serious problems such as heart disease, strokes and kidney disease. "High blood pressure rarely has noticeable symptoms and it was highlighted at the event that an estimated 20% of the population in Northern Ireland could have the condition, with many people undiagnosed."

But it was the issue of sustainability that provided the focal point for much of the discussion that characterised Balmoral Show 2023. Ian Stevenson concluded: "This was very evident from the conversations held on our Balmoral Show stand over the entire four days of the event. "Farmers want to know what all of this means for them as they look to the future. But, importantly, they are addressing these issues in a very positive frame of mind.

"Our Balmoral stand reflected the very positive climate change related activity on farms already associated with or world class beef and sheep production."

Image 6: LMC board member Joe Stewart presenting the Connolly family with the beef interbreed champion of champions sash and rosette.



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