LMC
Livestock & Meat Commission

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PRIME CATTLE AGE AT SLAUGHTER UPDATE

To the close of September 2022, the average age of prime cattle slaughtered in NI reported a mixed performance.

Steers

Table 1 displays, the average age of price reported steers killed during 2022 to the close of September, was 25.2 months (766.7 days). This was up 3.1 days from the same period in 2021 when the average age of steers killed in NI was 763.5 days. This increase in the average age at slaughter year on year will have had a direct influence on production costs at farm level. It should also be noted that the average carcase weight of price reported steers declined by 0.7kg to 360.8kg in the 2022 period despite the longer production period. Average carcase weights are displayed in **Figure 1.**

Table 1: Average age at slaughter of price reported prime cattle killed in NI during January to September 2022 in days, and the same period in 2021.
Source: LMC deadweight price reporting.

		2021	Change (Days)
Steers	766.7	763.5	+3.1
Heifers	775.9	778.4	-2.5
Young Bulls	493.6	487.5	+6.1

There has also been an increase in the proportion of steers slaughtered at over 30 months of age year on year. In the 2021 period from January to the close of September, 11 per cent of steers were over 30 months old at point of slaughter and this increased to 13 per cent in the 2022 period. However, 2022 saw the proportion of steers slaughtered at under 24 months slightly decrease from 2021 levels to 41 per cent.

Heifers

The average age at slaughter of price reported heifers during the nine months to September 2021 was 25.6 months or 778.4 days. This decreased to 775.9 days in the same period in 2022. While heifers were younger at point of slaughter, by 2.5 days on average, the average carcase weight of price reported heifers decreased by 1.6kg to 324.8kg in the 2022 period.

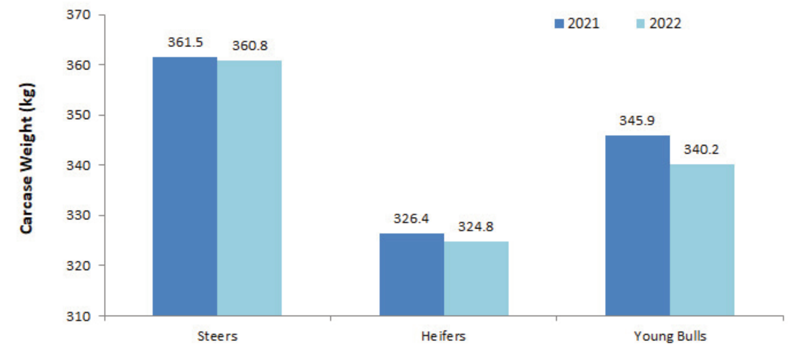
The decrease in age saw the proportion of heifers slaughtered during 2022 under 24 months slightly increase from last year to 41 per cent of the price reported heifer kill. Meanwhile, the proportion of heifers killed aged between 24 and 30 months decreased to 44 per cent of the price reported kill during 2022.

To the close of September, the proportion of heifers killed at over thirty months of age increased from 2021 levels to account for 15 per cent of the total price reported NI heifer kill. Looking forward to 2024 farmers should be aware that under new agricultural policy proposals for beef sustainability payments, clean beef animals slaughtered over 30 months of age will not be eligible.

Young Bulls

The average age at slaughter of young bulls during January to September 2022 was 16.2 months (493.6 days). This is an increase of 6.1 days from the same period in 2021 when the average age at slaughter was 487.5 days.

Figure 1: Average carcase weights of the price reported prime cattle kill in NI during January to September 2022 and the same period in 2021.
Source: LMC deadweight price reporting.



During the 2022 period, 74 per cent of price reported young bulls were slaughtered under 16 months old. This was back from the corresponding period in 2021 when 77 per cent of young bulls met this requirement.

Furthermore, the average carcase weight of young bulls slaughtered in NI during the first nine months of 2022 was 340.2kg. This was a decrease of 5.7kg compared to the 2021 period, when the average carcase weight of young bulls was 345.9kg.

There are significant penalties in place for young bulls slaughtered at over 16 months of age as these animals do not meet the specifications of most major retail customers.

Anlaysis of the price reporting data confirms NI producers continue to present cattle for slaughter across all categories which meet age and weight specifications for a prime beef product.

PRIME CATTLE CONTINUE TO MEET FARM RESIDENCY SPECIFICATION

Presenting cattle for slaughter which fulfil market specifications allows producers to negotiate a higher price for their animals as the processing plants can use the beef to service the widest range of customer orders from both the retail and food service sectors.

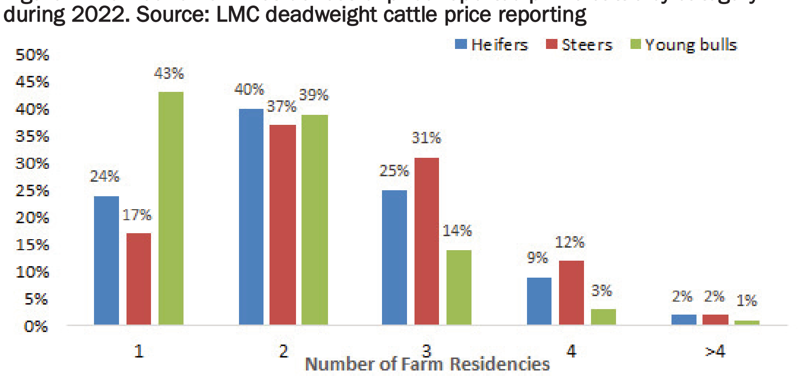
One of the current market specifications in NI processing plants requires cattle to have had four or less farm residences at the point of slaughter in response to consumer concerns for animal welfare. A farm residency refers to the number of farms an animal has resided on during its lifetime and not the number of movements. This includes the herd in which the animal was born in to.

Figure 2 provides an overview of the number of farm residences broken down by price reported prime cattle category in NI at point of slaughter during 2022 to week ending 01 October. During 2022, 98 per cent of price reported steers met the specification of residing on four or less farms over the course of their lifetime. This proportion is unchanged from 2021 levels. Just less than a quarter of NI steers were presented for slaughter from the farm on which they were born.

Similarly, 98 per cent of price reported heifers in NI met the four or less residency specification during 2022, which was unchanged from 2021. In comparison to steers and heifers, a slightly greater proportion of price reported young bulls met the residency specification to date in 2022 with 99 per cent of these cattle residing on four or less farms during their lifetime. This level was also the same as during 2021. Notably, 43 per cent of young bulls spent their lifetime on the farm on which they were born.

These figures reflect the high welfare standards within the NI beef industry and that NI beef producers are very ably presenting cattle for slaughter which meet processor and consumer requirements.

Figure 2: Number of farm residences of price reported prime cattle by category in NI during 2022. Source: LMC deadweight cattle price reporting



INCREASE IN SUCKLER ORIGIN COWS IN LOCAL KILL DURING QUARTER 3

Cow slaughterings in NI to date during 2022 have totalled 86,241 head, a 14 per cent increase on the 75,446 head slaughtered in the corresponding period in 2021.

Cow throughput in NI plants started to show a strong increase in August 2021 and remained well above previously recorded levels for the first six months of 2022. This high level of throughput continued during the period from July to September, remaining well ahead of previous years.

As shown in **Table 2**. cow throughput during the thirteen week period ending the 01 October 2022 totalled 28,397 head, a 6.8 per cent or 1,820 head increase on the thirteen week period of quarter 2. This was also an increase of 1,340 head or five per cent from the quarter 3 period of 2021.

It is a seasonal trend that the levels of suckler cows slaughtered in NI, increase during the quarter 3 period, compared to quarter 2. This occurs as suckled calves are weaned at the end of the summer and underperforming, aged or infertile suckler cows are culled from the herd before the winter housing period.

Analysis of price reported data during quarter 2 of 2022, has indicated the source of cows processed locally was unchanged from the corresponding periods of 2021 and 2020 as shown in **Table 2**. During the second quarter of 2022 the proportion of dairy origin cows processed in NI totalled 65 per cent, with the subsequent 35 per cent made up of beef bred cows. However, as the year has progressed a more signficiant shift in the origin of cows slaughtered in NI has been seen during 2022.

Table 2: Source of price reported cows in NI and the total numbers processed locally during quarter 2 and 3 from 2019 to 2022.
Source: LMC deadweight cattle price reporting and DAERA.

		Percentage Dairy Origin	Percentage Suckler Origin	Total Cows Processed
2019	Q2	61%	39%	20,206
	Q3	60%	40%	25,753
2020	Q2	64%	36%	20,688
	Q3	62%	38%	26,566
2021	Q2	64%	36%	22,344
	Q3	62%	38%	27,057
2022	Q2	65%	35%	26,577
	Q3	61%	39%	28,397

Further analysis of price reporting data during quarter 3 of 2022 reports the proportion of the local cow kill from dairy origin cows was 61 per cent, while 39 per cent were of suckler origin. While this is the largest proportion of suckler origin cows in the NI cow kill during a quarterly period of 2022, 2021 and 2020, this level remains slightly behind 2019 levels when suckler origin cows accounted for 40 per cent of cows slaughtered during the quarter 3 period.

The average O3 cow price in NI during quarter 3 of 2022 was 367.7p/kg, which was 52.4p/kg ahead of the O3 cow price during the same period last year. This equates to an additional £146.70 being paid on the value of a 280kg O3 grading cow carcase during quarter 3 of 2022.

In addition to availing of improved prices for cull cows, by reducing cow numbers on farms, NI producers may also be strategically planning to reduce on farm production costs during the winter period.

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

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WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

LMC Livestock & Meat Commission

CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 10/10/22	Next Week 17/10/22
Prime		
U-3	414 - 426p	414 - 426p
R-3	408 - 420p	408 - 420p
O+3	402 - 414p	402 - 414p
P+3	346 - 358p	346 - 358p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3	320 - 350p	320 - 350p

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 08/10/22	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	438.1	442.0	429.7
R3	431.7	434.7	427.0
O+3	427.1	428.3	415.7

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 08/10/22	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	251.8	266.4	280.7	285.8
P2	269.4	295.8	318.4	331.3
P3	291.5	311.1	334.9	342.2
O3	280.1	336.1	358.5	361.6
O4	310.0	355.0	364.7	362.1
R3	-	-	-	380.0

Deadweight Cattle Trade

Base quotes from the major processors for in spec U-3 grade steers and heifers remained steady this week at 414-426p/kg. The majority of plants are quoting 420p/kg and upwards for both steers and heifers. Base quotes for O+3 grading cows were back 10p/kg at the lower end this week to range from 320-350p/kg. Similar quotes are expected early next week.

Supplies of prime cattle for slaughter in NI have continued to remain strong with 7,937 head slaughtered in local plants last week. This is a similar level to the previous week. Cow throughput in NI last week totalled 2,620 head, an increase of 169 cows when compared to the previous week.

Imports from ROI for direct slaughter in local plants last week included 380 prime cattle and 136 cows, no cattle were imported from GB for direct slaughter in NI last week. Exports from NI to ROI for direct slaughter consisted of 16 prime cattle, 89 cows and one bull. Meanwhile, 19 prime cattle and 18 cows made the journey to GB for direct slaughter, the first cattle exports to GB for direct slaughter in 13 weeks.

The NI deadweight trade for prime cattle reported a mixed trade overall last week when compared to the previous week. A marginal increase of 0.1p/kg was reported in the average steer price bringing it to 425.1p/kg with the R3 steer price back by 1.2p/kg to 435p/kg. The average heifer price was up by 0.4p/kg last week to 428.1p/kg while the R3 heifer price was back 0.6p/kg to 436.2p/kg. The average young bull price was back by 4.5p/kg to 411.7p/kg while the R3 young bull price remained steady at 425.9p/kg. The trade for cows was generally back last week yet the average cow price was up 2.5p/kg to 326.5p/kg while the O3 price was back by half a penny to 359.8p/kg.

The deadweight trade for prime cattle improved in GB last week. The average steer price in GB last week was up just over half a penny to 439.8p/kg with the R3 steer price up 1.8p/kg to 447.6p/kg. This has widened the differential between NI and GB R3 steer prices last week to 12.6p/kg. Last week the average GB heifer price was up by a penny from the previous week to 437.4p/kg while the R3 heifer price reported an increase of 1.1p/kg to 445.9p/kg. This has widened the differential between NI and GB R3 heifer prices last week to 9.7p/kg. The average cow price in GB last week came back by 0.6p/kg to 344.4p/kg. Meanwhile the O3 price was up by a similar margin of half a penny to 375p/kg, 15.2p/kg ahead of the NI O3 cow price last week.

Deadweight prices for prime cattle in ROI came under pressure last week, in addition a weakening euro has resulted in declines in deadweight cattle prices in sterling terms. The R3 steer price was the equivalent of 407.3p/kg in ROI last week, back 13.6p/kg from the previous week. The R3 heifer price was back by 14.6p/kg to 410.3p/kg. This has resulted in the differential in R3 heifer prices between NI and ROI widening to 25.9p/kg or £83 on a 320kg carcase. Meanwhile, the cow trade in ROI remains ahead of NI despite the O3 cow price declining by 15.2p/kg last week to 364.7p/kg.

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

W/E 08/10/22		Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	438.4	416.8	453.3	449.8	448.5	453.2	451.2
	R3	435.0	407.3	455.5	449.8	442.9	443.3	447.6
	R4	433.2	406.7	454.6	451.8	442.4	445.6	450.4
	O3	425.4	391.2	441.7	436.7	422.5	424.7	429.8
	AVG	425.1	-	451.1	444.1	432.3	431.7	439.8
Heifers	U3	442.4	420.9	457.1	452.3	453.7	451.8	454.1
	R3	436.2	410.3	450.2	447.3	443.6	443.3	445.9
	R4	434.8	410.7	453.9	447.9	442.8	444.8	449.0
	O3	425.5	400.7	438.5	435.9	414.9	418.9	425.1
	AVG	428.1	-	450.9	444.3	427.0	426.8	437.4
Young Bulls	U3	429.4	405.2	448.0	447.3	444.1	443.9	446.2
	R3	425.9	396.2	442.9	443.8	438.7	441.3	441.2
	O3	411.7	379.6	423.0	409.2	408.6	398.7	411.1
	AVG	411.7	-	435.4	429.8	418.5	431.9	425.5
Prime Cattle Price Reported		6,370	-	5,747	6,878	7,548	4,700	24,873
Cows	O3	359.8	364.7	383.3	373.5	374.3	371.2	375.0
	O4	361.9	366.4	390.0	374.7	373.7	375.1	376.9
	P2	318.2	323.1	336.2	329.2	337.1	332.4	334.5
	P3	338.1	352.6	349.9	349.2	356.1	356.5	355.0
	AVG	326.5	-	379.3	345.6	338.6	336.1	344.4

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=87.33p 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 08/10/22	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	255	279	266	200	254	225
Friesians	200	205	203	175	180	178
Heifers	230	263	240	200	229	214
Beef Cows	209	248	221	170	208	185
Dairy Cows	144	186	158	100	143	120
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	250	295	275	210	249	225
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	235	289	255	180	234	210
Bullocks over 500kg	230	273	248	175	229	205
Heifers up to 450kg	245	278	265	200	244	220
Heifers over 450kg	230	269	250	170	229	200
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	430	650	475	300	425	360
Continental Heifers	345	640	440	250	340	305
Friesian Bulls	170	265	200	40	155	100
Holstein Bulls	95	190	125	4	90	40

SHEEP TRADE

NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 10/10/22	Next Week 17/10/22
R3 Lambs up to 21kg	500 - 510p	505 - 510p

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 24/09/22	W/E 01/10/22	W/E 08/10/22
NI L/W Lambs	452.3	450.6	454.3
NI D/W Lambs	486.9	494.2	496.6
GB D/W Lambs	524.8	522.4	519.9
ROI D/W	539.6	548.9	531.4

Deadweight Sheep Trade

Base quotes from the plants for R3 grading lambs ended this week ranging from 505-510p/kg with plants paying up to 21kg. Similar quotes are expected early next week. Lamb throughput in NI last week totalled 11,826 head, a decline of 351 lambs from the previous week. However this is an increase of 3,108 lambs when compared to the same week in 2021 when throughput totalled 8,718 head. Exports of lambs to ROI for direct slaughter decreased last week to 7,099 head compared to 7,996 head the previous week. In the same week last year 7,536 lambs were exported from NI for direct slaughter in ROI plants. The deadweight lamb price in NI last week increased by 2.4p/kg from the previous week to 496.6p/kg.

Liveweight Sheep Trade

The liveweight sheep trade held steady in the majority of local marts this week with numbers generally back from last week. In Swatragh last Saturday a good entry of 1,595 lambs sold from 393-480p/kg compared to 1,908 lambs the previous Saturday selling from 455-505p/kg. In Massereene on Monday 766 lambs sold from 453-495p/kg, a similar trade to last week when 788 lambs last week selling from 440-472p/kg. In Saintfield this week 555 lambs sold from 448-525p/kg compared to 606 lambs selling from 444-500p/kg. In Ballymena this week 2,411 lambs sold from 430-492p/kg (avg 459p/kg) compared to 2,469 lambs last week selling from 430-484p/kg (avg 445p/kg). Top reported prices for cull ewes generally ranged from £150-186 across the marts.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 08/10/22		Lambs			
To: 13/10/22		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Swatragh	1595	393	480	-
	Omagh	1212	461	498	-
Monday	Kilrea	600	444	482	-
	Massereene	766	453	495	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	555	448	525	-
	Rathfriland	777	440	551	463
Wednesday	Ballymena	2411	430	492	459
	Enniskillen	1020	430	495	-
	Armoy	455	430	485	-
	Markethill	1530	440	488	-

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