

DEADWEIGHT CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 29/07/24	Next Week 05/08/24
Prime		
U-3	454 - 460p	458 - 464p
R-3	448 - 454p	452 - 458p
O+3	442 - 448p	446 - 452p
P+3	386 - 392p	390 - 396p
Cows		
O+3	346 - 370p	350 - 370p

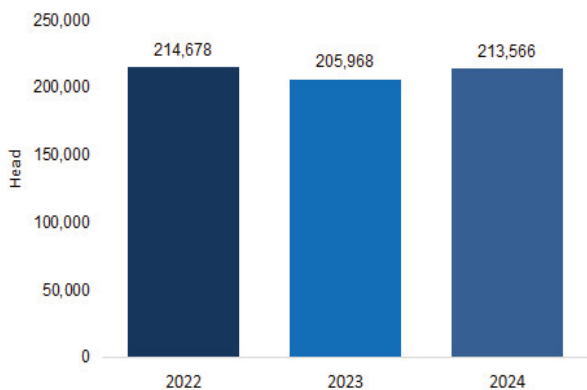
Cow quotes vary depending on weight and grade. Pricing policies vary from plant to plant. Producers are advised to check pricing policies before presenting cattle for slaughter.

FQAS MART DATES AUGUST 2024

Markethill - Tuesday 6th August
Ballymena - Friday 9th August
Omagh - Monday 12th August

LMC Farm Liaison Officer Terry White will be present at the locations outlined to assist FQAS members with scheme queries and offer advice. Terry is contactable on the FQAS Helpline: 028 9263 3024.

Figure 1: NI prime cattle throughput to w/e 27/07/24 and the corresponding period of 2022 and 2023. Source: DAERA.



REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 27/07/24	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	490.3	487.4	477.7
R3	480.9	480.3	473.4
O+3	471.9	472.8	464.5

*Prices exclude AA, HER, WAG and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 27/07/24	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	242.7	261.4	276.2	295.3
P2	260.6	290.3	316.4	333.5
P3	261.7	302.2	330.7	341.9
O3	356.0	341.9	351.9	359.3
O4	0.0	347.2	351.7	361.2
R3	0.0	362.0	394.0	377.9

Deadweight Cattle Trade

Cattle throughput in NI processing plants totalled 6,515 prime and 2,231 cows last week, bringing the total slaughter for the month of July to 24,647 prime animals (2.9 per cent above the same period last year) and 8,548 cows (3.3 per cent ahead of the same period last year). Last week there were 388 prime animals and 196 cows imported to NI for direct slaughter from ROI meanwhile, two prime animals and eight cows were exported from NI to ROI for direct slaughter.

The deadweight prime cattle trade in NI provided yet another mixed report with average steer and heifer prices back by 0.4p/kg and 0.2p/kg respectively. Meanwhile, the average young bulls category increased marginally by 1p/kg. Cow trade in NI continues to strengthen with an average increase of 3.9p/kg reported. The average price paid for an O3 cow last week in NI overtook ROI for the first time, recording a lead of 0.3p/kg over that paid in ROI. The deadweight cattle trade continues to soften across all grades in both sterling and euro terms in ROI last week. R3 grade steers, heifers and young bulls all reported declines of 3.1p/kg, 3p/kg and 4.5p/kg respectively. The cow trade was also back last week with O3 cows reporting a decline of 1.3p/kg.

In GB, prime cattle deadweight trade improved with marginal increases of 1.3p/kg reported for R3 grade steers and 0.7p/kg reported for both R3 grade heifers and young bulls. However, cow trade in GB declined with the average cow trade back 2.8p/kg from the week previous.

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

W/E 27/07/24	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	488.2	432.4	493.4	497.6	487.6	493.8
	R3	482.4	425.6	490.6	493.5	488.6	489.7
	R4	480.8	425.8	493.1	493.5	487.4	491.4
	O3	467.8	416.3	477.8	483.8	474.0	477.4
	AVG	471.6	-	488.6	488.3	478.8	483.9
Heifers	U3	488.1	439.7	498.6	501.6	497.2	498.7
	R3	480.9	428.9	492.1	493.1	485.9	488.3
	R4	480.7	429.7	493.5	492.4	487.3	490.9
	O3	468.7	423.4	476.3	471.7	470.5	471.4
	AVG	472.3	-	490.3	483.6	478.2	481.5
Young Bulls	U3	477.9	429.9	483.0	488.4	487.0	486.1
	R3	471.4	417.5	480.1	480.2	475.1	478.5
	O3	455.6	402.5	465.3	448.8	449.7	454.6
	AVG	462.4	-	478.5	478.6	471.0	475.7
	Prime Cattle Price Reported	5,411	-	5,823	6,774	8,071	4,412
Cows	O3	358.2	357.9	388.0	393.2	386.0	389.4
	O4	360.6	358.2	394.3	395.1	387.0	390.7
	P2	323.3	328.3	345.7	350.1	345.4	346.0
	P3	338.9	345.4	369.7	367.8	360.6	362.7
	AVG	324.3	-	379.9	372.5	356.3	360.3

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=84.18p 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

LIVEWEIGHT CATTLE TRADE

LATEST LIVEWEIGHT CATTLE MART PRICES NI

W/E 27/07/24	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	265	301	279	220	264	240
Friesians	220	243	229	168	218	193
Heifers	265	309	280	205	264	235
Beef Cows	230	285	250	130	229	175
Dairy Cows	140	184	158	65	139	105
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers up to 400kg	320	349	330	220	319	255
Steers 400kg - 500kg	260	326	290	205	259	230
Steers over 500kg	250	289	270	200	249	215
Heifers up to 450kg	280	346	310	200	279	235
Heifers over 450kg	275	338	290	185	274	230
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	420	760	490	300	415	350
Continental Heifers	370	740	445	250	365	305
Friesian Bulls	160	270	200	80	155	105
Holstein Bulls	140	260	155	35	135	80

DEADWEIGHT SHEEP TRADE

NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 29/07/24	Next Week 05/08/24
R3 Lambs up to 21 & 22kg	580 - 590p	600p

REPORTED NI SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 13/07/24	W/E 20/07/24	W/E 27/07/24
D/W R3 Lambs	567.6	558.4	588.5
D/W Lambs	568.0	559.3	586.9
L/W Lambs	507.4	527.9	533.4

REGIONAL SHEEP PRICES (GB / ROI)

GB D/W Lambs	645.6	647.2	649.0
ROI D/W Lambs	607.1	562.9	592.6

Base quotes received for early next week are in the region of 600p/kg with one plant paying up to 22kg. A total of 9,461 lambs were processed in NI plants last week, the highest throughput of lambs since the beginning of January 2024. A monthly total of 33,436 lambs were presented for slaughter in July 2024, 6.8 per cent behind slaughter levels for July 2023. Similarly in GB, there has also been a tighter supply of lambs with July 2024 throughput 11.9 per cent behind the lamb slaughter levels reported in July 2023.

Last week, 1,657 lambs were exported to GB for direct slaughter and 3,258 lambs were exported to ROI for direct slaughter. The export markets have played a contributing factor in strengthening the NI sheep trade. Lamb trade in NI reported a major recovery last week of 27.6p/kg for average deadweight lambs, meanwhile R3 grade lambs also recovered by 30.1p/kg on average last week. The average deadweight lamb prices also recovered in ROI by 29.7p/kg to an average paid price of 592.6p/kg last week.

The NI liveweight lamb trade continues to improve with strong numbers of lambs being presented in the sale rings and an improvement also reported for fat ewe trade last week.

LIVEWEIGHT SHEEP TRADE

LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 27/07/24		Lambs			
To: 01/08/24		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Omagh	752	524	586	-
	Swatragh	1,030	537	579	-
Monday	Kilrea	1,000	542	598	-
	Markethill	900	540	582	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	880	540	645	-
	Rathfriland	777	535	635	544
Wednesday	Ballymena	1,808	540	620	578
	Enniskillen	689	540	620	-
	Armooy	470	530	630	-

FQAS LOGO SECURES ICONIC STATUS

Public awareness of the Northern Ireland Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (NIBLFQAS) continues to grow. Originally launched some 32 years ago, this now iconic brand continues to develop in terms of its awareness amongst the public at large and the esteem within which it is held amongst consumers.

The use of NIBL FQAS logo illustrates that beef and/or lamb has been sourced from farms that have met the NIBL FQAS product standard, as independently verified by Northern Ireland Food Chain Certification (NIFCC). Moreover, all beef and lamb processing is carried out by a processor-member of the NIBL FQAS.

Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland (LMC) chief executive, Colin Smith further explained. "The impact made by our marketing activities is independently analysed on an annual basis. It is important we do this. Given that LMC is a levy funded body, it is critically important for beef and sheep farmers to see how their money is being spent.

He continued, "The latest analysis confirms that the NIBL FQAS logo has an 80% recognition rating with local consumers. This is an extremely high figure, well above what would be expected for most, if not all, of the best known-food brands purchased in local shops every day of the year."

Colin is quick to confirm that the high level of public awareness, where the quality assurance logo is concerned, reflects the

effective marketing work put in by LMC over many years. He said, "It's very much a case of building on the momentum that we can generate on a year-by-year basis. We take a multi-faceted approach to the promotion of farm quality assured beef and lamb that is produced here in Northern Ireland. And the latest, independent assessment of this work confirms that it is having the desired effect.

"What's more, the sustained growth in awareness of the farm quality assured logo benefits the beef and lamb sectors in equal measure. The growing awareness of the logo goes well beyond brand recognition. It gives consumers the absolute reassurance they want when it comes to buying the beef and lamb they want in retail outlets."

Further vindication of the real difference LMC has made in communicating the benefits of farm quality assured beef and lamb can be discerned from the growing success of the organisation's school cookery demonstrations. These now target school children of all ages. And a new academic year beckons. The significance of the relationship LMC enjoys with teachers and the education professionals' centres on two fundamentally important words: trust and credibility. At one level, demand for the aforementioned school demonstration continues to grow. But of more significance is the fact that teachers invariably regard the Commission as their first port of call when it comes to securing 'trusted' information on the role of red meat within a balanced diet. And, again, this level of credibility has been built up over many years.

Put simply, LMC is regarded as a facilitator and honest broker within Northern Ireland's red meat industry. And it's hard to put a value on this. However, it is more than significant. The world's largest brands are driven by marketing and communication' spends that exceed many millions of pounds on an annual basis. All of this investment is driven by one central objective: developing consumer trust. Many marketing gurus will argue that such an objective is impossible to secure. Consumers, by their very nature, are very fickle in terms of their buying habits. So, compare this scenario with the achievements secured by LMC in the development and marketing of the NIBL FQAS logo over the past three decades and more. It doesn't take long to put all of this into context, relative to the value-for-money delivered for primary producers on the back of the quality assurance logo.



SHEEP SECTOR CAN LOOK FORWARD TO THE FUTURE WITH CONFIDENCE

The start of 2024 saw lamb prices in Northern Ireland reach record heights. This was due to a supply: demand scenario that impacted in equal measure across the northern and southern hemisphere.

Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) chief executive, Colin Smith, explained. "There is every prospect of global sheep meat production and demand trends aligning to deliver relatively strong market prices during the period ahead. The reality is that a reduction in breeding ewe numbers, recorded in all of the world's main lamb producing areas, has been stronger than the decline recorded in global sheep meat consumption trends. Breeding ewe numbers in Great Britain are at their lowest since 1996. Meanwhile, the 5% reduction in European Union sheep meat output in 2023, is much more significant relative to the 3.3% fall-off in lamb consumption levels. Europe remains the main market for the lamb produced here in Northern Ireland. When set against the backdrop of an international decline in lamb output levels, this helps create the expectation that market prices will respond in kind."

But as Colin is also quick to confirm, a range of factors come into play when it comes to determining the strength or otherwise of international sheep markets: the impact of China being one of them. He commented: "Chinese consumer confidence is weak at the present time. This had a negative impact on the demand in that country for high value protein food sources, including lamb. So, lamb exporters in New Zealand and Australia, who traditionally view China as their prime market, have turned their attention to outlets in the northern hemisphere.

He added, "Both these lamb producing nations are currently putting product into Europe at levels that are well below the thresholds, previously agreed with Brussels. So, the possibility of more lamb coming into Europe from the likes of Australia and New Zealand cannot be ruled out and data is showing signs of

increased imports to the EU from New Zealand in 2024. But geopolitical developments, yet to unfold, could also play a part in determining the strength of future lamb prices. For example, if the Suez Canal became a no-go area for shipping again, this would have to have factored into the cost of bringing southern hemisphere lamb north."

Colin is also mindful of the demand for bespoke support measures to be made available for sheep producers here into the future. Former Northern Ireland agriculture minister, Edwin Poots, had officially recognised the validity of delivering specific support to the sheep sector. This principle was included within his package of farm policy reform proposals, announced prior to the collapse of the Stormont Executive back in 2022. However, the actual details of what the new sheep support schemes would comprise were not forthcoming at that time. Subsequent to this, a task force was established to look at ways of maintaining viability and improve productivity within the sheep sector. LMC is a member of the new grouping.

Colin Smith again, "It's up to the Sheep Task Force to work through



the detail of the support options that are available for flock owners with staff from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs." But there also remains a lot that sheep farmers can do themselves in order to maximise the profitability of their businesses.

According to the Commission's chief executive, producing lambs that are fully in spec with market requirements is fundamentally important in this regard. He added, "All of the issues that combine to determine the market suitability of a finished lamb are under the direct influence of farmers."

The current specification from the major processors is for quality assured lambs, grading R or better, with a fat score of 2 or 3 and a carcass weight of 19 to 22kg. Given this backdrop, there are basic steps that sheep farmers can take to maximise the efficiency and sustainability of their businesses. Making best use of grazed grass will always be a priority, as will the regular handling and weighing of lambs. What's more, all of the steps that can be taken by sheep producers to more fully comply with market specifications can be achieved on the back of relatively small investment commitments on their part.

Colin Smith concluded, "Northern Ireland's sheep sector can look forward to a sustainable future. Output from the industry remains a significant driver of all our rural communities. Record lamb prices were achieved earlier this year. And the fundamentals of international sheep markets look reasonably buoyant for the period ahead. The vast bulk of the lamb produced in Northern Ireland is destined for export. This being the case, local farmers will never control the markets they are helping to service. However, there remains so much that flock owners can do within the confines of their own farm gates to secure more efficient and profitable businesses into the future. And this is a genuine and positive news story for the local sheep industry."



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