

NI PRIME CATTLE BEING KILLED EARLIER

ANALYSIS of price reporting information has indicated that there has been a reduction in the average age at slaughter of both steers and heifers in NI during 2017 to date when compared to previous years.

The average age of slaughter for steers in NI during 2017 to date was 23.9 months at an average carcass weight of 351kg. During the corresponding period in 2016 the average age at slaughter was 24.6 months at an average carcass weight of 356kg. Meanwhile in the 2015 period the average age at slaughter was 24.8 months at an average carcass weight of 350kg. While there has been an overall decline in the average age at slaughter for steers in NI between 2015 and 2017 there has been some variation in the age at slaughter and average carcass weights when broken down by source.

The average age at slaughter of suckler origin steers during 2017 to date was 23.3 months, a reduction from 23.9 months in the corresponding period in 2016. It is also a further reduction from an average slaughter age of 24.2

months during the corresponding period in 2015. However despite the reduction in slaughter age by 26 days or 0.9 months between the 2015 and 2017 periods the average carcass weight at slaughter increased slightly from 365kg in the 2015 period to 367kg in the 2017 period.

A similar trend has been observed if we consider beef sired steers sourced from the dairy herd. During 2017 to date the average age at slaughter for these beef cross steers was 24.7 months, back from 25.1 months in the corresponding period in 2016 and a further decline from 25.7 months in the same period in 2015. However despite the decline in the average age at slaughter by 28 days between the 2015 and 2017 periods the average carcass weight remained unchanged at 338kg.

There has also been a reduction in the age at slaughter of dairy origin steers during the period under analysis. During 2017 to date the average age at slaughter was 25.2 months, back from 26.1 months in the same period in 2016 and 26.3 months in the 2015

period. However as with the other categories the reduction in the age at slaughter has not impacted carcass weights with an average carcass weight of 308kg in the 2017 period.

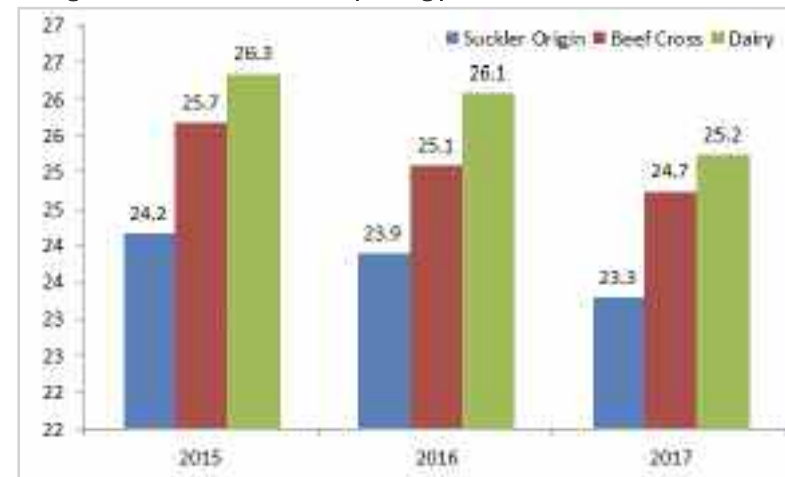
Heifers

The average age at slaughter of heifers in NI during 2017 to date was 24.1 months compared to 24.6 months in the same period in 2016 and 24.4 months in the same period in 2015. As with the steers there is some variability in the age at slaughter for heifers when broken down by source.

The average age of heifers sourced from the suckler herd in NI during 2017 to date is 23.3 months, back from 23.9 months in the same period in 2016 and 23.8 months in the same period in 2015. The reduction in age at slaughter between 2016 and 2017 was the equivalent of 16 days and coincided with a decline in the average carcass weight from 333kg in the 2016 period to 325kg in the 2017 period.

The average age at slaughter of beef cross heifers was 24.8 months during

Figure 1: Average age at slaughter of price reported steers in NI by source category during 2017 to date and the corresponding period in 2015 and 2016



2017 to date, back from 25.2 months in both the corresponding periods in 2015 and 2016. The average carcass weight in the 2017 period was 303kg, similar to the corresponding period in 2015 but 6kg lighter than the average carcass weight in 2016.

Under 30 months

With steers and heifers both being killed

earlier there has been an increase in the proportion of the NI steer and heifer kill meeting the under 30 month requirement. In 2017 to date 86 per cent of price reported steers and 89 per cent of heifers were killed under 30 months compared to 83 per cent of steers and 86 per cent of heifers in the corresponding period in 2016.

NI MOVES DOWN THE EU BEEF PRICES LEAGUE TABLE

UK TO CONFIRM ARTICLE 50

THE EU Deadweight Cattle price league table ranks the farmgate prices paid for R3 grade heifers across the EU in any particular week in euro terms and compares them to the corresponding week the previous month. The table provides a useful comparison of the trade across the EU.

In the week ending 12 March 2017 the Krona continued to trade strongly against Euro and this has helped Sweden retain first position in the EU league table with an R3 heifer price the equivalent of 480.6c/kg. This was back marginally from the week ending 12 February 2017 when the R3 heifer price in the region was 481.7c/kg.

In NI in the week ending 12 March 2017 the R3 heifer price was the equivalent of 399.6c/kg, back 7.1 c/kg from the week ending 12 February 2017 when it was the equivalent of 406.7c/kg. This has moved Northern Ireland down one place in the league table to put it in fifth place. The R3 heifer price in NI during the week ending 12 March 2017 was 16c/kg above the EU average which is the equivalent of €53 on a 330kg carcass.

A similar decline in GB prices in euro terms put the R3 heifer price at the equivalent of 410.1c/kg in the week ending 12 March 2017. This also

moved it down one position in the league table into fourth position, just one above Northern Ireland. The differential between NI and GB in euro terms was 10.5c/kg or €35 on a 330kg carcass.

A strengthening in the value of the euro against sterling from €1= 85.6p in the week ending 12 February 2017 to €1 = 86.7p/kg in the week ending 12 March 2017 will have contributed to the downward movement of both NI and GB in the league table during March 2017.

Meanwhile in ROI the deadweight cattle trade has remained fairly steady with an R3 heifer price of 385.4c/kg in the week ending 12 March 2017, up 1.3c/kg from the corresponding week in February 2017 as indicated in Table 1. This stability in the beef price in ROI has resulted in it remaining in eighth position in the league table. The R3 heifer price in ROI was 1.8c/kg above the EU average price of 383.6c/kg in the week ending 12 March 2017. This was slightly narrower than the corresponding week in February 2017 when the differential was 2.3c/kg. The differential between ROI and NI has also narrowed, back from 22.5c/kg in the week ending 12 February 2017 to 14.2c/kg in the week ending 12 March 2017.

As indicated in Table 1 there have been notable improvements in the R3 heifer price in Spain and France (up 9c/kg and 4c/kg respectively) in the week ending 12 March 2017. However the biggest increase was recorded in

Luxembourg where the R3 heifer price increased by 18.8c/kg to 415.2c/kg. This moved it from fifth position in the league table in the week ending 12 February 2017 to second position in the week ending 12 March 2017.

Position last Mth	Position this Mth	Country	Price last Mth (w/e 12.02.17)	Price this Mth (w/e 12.03.17)	Change on Mth (cents)
1	1	Sweden	481.7	480.6	-1.1
5	2	Luxembourg	396.4	415.2	+18.8
3	3	Italy	409.1	410.3	+1.2
2	4	Great Britain	417.4	410.1	-7.3
4	5	Northern Ireland	406.7	399.6	-7.1
7	6	Spain	386.3	395.3	+9.0
6	7	France	389.0	393.0	+4.0
8	8	Ireland	384.2	385.4	+1.3
10	9	Denmark	361.5	364.4	+2.9
9	10	Germany	364.1	362.1	-2.1
11	11	Austria	354.6	351.1	-3.5
12	12	Slovenia	327.2	337.2	+10.0
14	13	Poland	305.2	312.5	+7.2
13	14	Belgium	307.0	306.5	-0.5
15	15	Lithuania	290.7	297.1	+6.4
16	16	Czech Republic	262.2	259.6	-2.6
		EU Average	381.9	383.6	+1.7
		Euro (€1=)	85.6	86.7	+1.1

THE UK's Permanent Representative to the EU, Sir Tom Barrow, has informed the President of the European Council that the UK intends to invoke Article 50 of the Treaty of the European Union next Wednesday (29 March). This move means that the UK should officially leave the EU no later than April 2019.

While the process of leaving the EU is supposed to take two years some officials have indicated that this is an ambitious deadline and that the process could take significantly longer. It is possible for the timescale of leaving to be officially extended however this can only be done with the consent of the European Council and for this to be possible every other member state Government would have to agree.

Teresa May has highlighted that following the UK's exit from the EU the British Government will continue to support British farmers. At a recent meeting she said "The UK's high standards of food safety and of animal welfare will be a priority, while any trade deals we enter into will need to be right for consumers, for businesses, for farmers. We do have an opportunity to build a new future for our food and farming industry when we leave the EU and we recognise the need for certainty for businesses. We have already provided guarantees of support for farmers up to 2020".



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WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS



CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 20/03/17	Next Week 27/03/17
Prime		
U-3	336 - 346p	336 - 346p
R-3	330 - 340p	330 - 340p
O+3	324 - 334p	324 - 334p
P+3	270 - 294p	270 - 294p
Including bonus where applicable		
Cows		
O+3 & better	250 - 254p	250 - 254p
Steakers	140 - 170p	140 - 170p
Blues	120 - 130p	120 - 130p

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 18/03/17	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	352.3	355.0	345.2
R3	347.3	348.9	337.0
O+3	339.3	340.1	330.8

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 18/03/17	Wgt <220kg	Wgt 220-250kg	Wgt 250-280kg	Wgt >280kg
P1	161.0	169.1	173.0	188.6
P2	179.2	203.3	219.1	230.8
P3	186.4	215.1	236.0	240.4
O3	193.9	248.0	245.4	256.4
O4	-	232.4	240.2	260.4
R3	-	-	-	277.5

Deadweight Cattle Trade

BASE quotes from the major NI processing plants for U-3 grade prime cattle generally ranged from 342-346p/kg this week with one plant continuing to quote 336-338p/kg. The plants have reported steady supplies of prime cattle coming forward for slaughter to meet demand. Quotes for good quality O+3 grade cows this week ranged from 250-254p/kg. Similar quotes are expected for early next week.

Prime cattle throughput in NI last week totalled 6,127 head, back from 6,549 head the previous week. Throughput of prime cattle for the year to date has totalled 72,977 head, a four per cent increase on the corresponding period in 2016 when 69,975 prime cattle were slaughtered. This increase in throughput however has been offset by a decline in average carcase weights from 343kg in the 2016 period to 333kg during 2017 to date. Cow throughput in NI last week totalled 1,572 head and was the lowest weekly level of throughput for the year to date. Cow throughput in NI plants during 2017 to date has totalled 21,485 head, a nine per cent increase on the 19,748 cows killed in the same period in 2016.

Imports from ROI for direct slaughter in NI plants last week consisted of 171 prime cattle and 56 cows while six prime cattle and 84 cows were exported from NI for direct slaughter in ROI. Imports from GB for direct slaughter in NI last week consisted of 121 cows and five prime cattle while 15 cows and 36 prime cattle were exported from NI for direct slaughter in GB plants.

The average steer price in NI last week was almost unchanged from the previous week at 340.6p/kg, while the R3 steer price was up marginally to 350.5p/kg. In the corresponding week in 2016 the R3 steer price was 313.7p/kg, an increase of 36.8p/kg year on year. The average heifer price in NI last week was 341.6p/kg, back marginally from the previous week while the R3 heifer price increased by 1.4p/kg to 350.2p/kg. In the corresponding week in 2016 the R3 heifer price was 312p/kg, an increase of 38.2p/kg year on year.

In deadweight cattle trade in GB was generally back last week with the average steer price back by 1.4p/kg to 345.8p/kg. The R3 steer price in GB was back by 2.5p/kg to 354.9p/kg. This puts the differential between NI and the GB average at just 4.4p/kg. In the same week in 2016 the differential was 18.4p/kg. The average heifer price in GB last week was 348.4p/kg, back half a penny from the previous week. The R3 heifer price in GB last week was back by a penny to 356.8p/kg putting the differential with NI at 6.6p/kg. In the same week in 2016 the differential was notably wider at 20.7p/kg.

In ROI last week the R3 steer price was the equivalent of 329.7p/kg, up 3.9p/kg from the previous week while the R3 heifer price was the equivalent of 339.9p/kg, up 3.6p/kg from the previous week. This puts the differential with NI at 20.8p/kg for R3 steers and 10.3p/kg for R3 grade heifers.

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

W/E 18/03/2017	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	353.4	339.0	358.3	356.2	359.1	359.2
	R3	350.5	329.7	359.7	349.3	352.3	358.2
	R4	347.9	331.5	361.3	362.9	352.5	356.7
	O3	339.8	314.2	332.9	320.9	322.5	328.4
AVG	340.6	-	355.5	344.2	340.6	342.2	345.8
Heifers	U3	355.3	351.8	367.9	363.6	367.5	365.9
	R3	350.2	339.9	362.1	351.1	354.9	358.6
	R4	345.7	340.4	361.3	354.0	355.0	353.1
	O3	341.0	325.1	336.3	326.5	324.7	333.3
AVG	341.6	-	359.2	347.9	345.1	338.6	348.4
Young Bulls	U3	345.3	329.0	358.2	343.9	342.3	353.8
	R3	337.5	320.0	345.1	330.4	336.1	334.9
	O3	322.8	306.7	313.1	295.6	307.8	312.1
AVG	326.5	-	323.9	311.2	314.4	318.0	315.8
Prime Cattle Price Reported	5434	-	6973	6998	6766	4693	25430
Cows	O3	254.5	269.2	256.9	254.3	254.9	254.2
	O4	258.6	270.9	259.5	257.7	257.5	248.3
	P2	219.4	242.5	200.3	217.5	206.4	193.9
	P3	237.8	261.2	219.7	237.7	217.8	226.1
	AVG	238.2	-	242.2	234.1	224.5	215.8

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=87.11p 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 18/03/17	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	201	211	206	170	200	185
Friesians	145	150	149	127	135	131
Heifers	204	215	208	165	200	182
Beef Cows	132	204	145	105	130	120
Dairy Cows	110	130	114	70	109	90
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	225	269	245	200	224	212
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	215	246	230	190	214	200
Bullocks over 500kg	205	223	210	175	204	190
Heifers up to 450kg	225	257	240	180	224	200
Heifers over 450kg	210	233	215	170	209	190
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	275	390	325	160	272	220
Continental Heifers	200	295	250	100	198	155
Friesian Bulls	120	200	160	55	118	80
Holstein Bulls	80	145	110	30	78	50

SHEEP TRADE

SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 20/03/17	Next Week 27/03/17
Hoggets	400-405 > 22kg	400-405 > 22kg

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 04/03/17	W/E 11/03/17	W/E 18/03/17
NI Hoggets L/W	368.7	356.6	357.0
NI Hoggets D/W	396.7	401.8	387.5
GB Hoggets D/W	384.1	390.4	394.0
ROI D/W	405.4	412.8	414.6

Deadweight Sheep Trade

QUOTES from the major processors for R3 grade hoggets ranged from 400-405p/kg this week with plants paying up to 22kg. The plants have reported steady supplies of hoggets coming forward with throughput last week totalling 4,169 head. Throughput for the year to date has totalled 75,438 head, a notable increase from the 63,465 head killed in local plants in the same period last year. Exports of hoggets from NI to ROI last week totalled 5,186 head taking exports for the year to date to 75,012 head compared to 85,049 head in the same period in 2016. The deadweight hogget price in NI last week was back by 14.3p/kg to 387.5p/kg. Meanwhile the deadweight hogget price in ROI last week increased by the equivalent of 1.8p/kg to 414.6p/kg.

This week's marts

THERE was a slightly quieter trade across some of the marts this week with many of the marts reporting smaller numbers being offered for sale. Reports have also indicated some variability in the quality of hoggets passing through the sale rings. In Swatragh this week a smaller show of 600 hoggets sold from 327-373p/kg compared to 820 hoggets last week selling from 340-441p/kg. In Massereene this week 826 hoggets sold from 360-400p/kg compared to 901 hoggets last week selling from 355-390p/kg. In Ballymena this week 1,211 hoggets sold from 340-380p/kg (avg 355p/kg) compared to 1440 hoggets last week selling from 340-397p/kg (avg 348p/kg). The cull ewe trade has remained fairly steady for well fleshed ewes with top reported prices generally ranging from £90-110 across the marts.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS

From: 17/03/17		Hoggets (P/KG LW)			
To: 23/03/17		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Omagh	719	348	389	-
	Swatragh	600	327	373	-
Monday	Kilrea	300	358	390	-
	Massereene	826	360	400	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	388	340	380	-
	Rathfriland	395	324	380	360
Wednesday	Ballymena	1211	340	380	355
	Enniskillen	584	342	390	-
	Markethill	1200	335	375	-
	Armoey	360	342	397	-

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