

# REDUCTION IN AGE AT SLAUGHTER OF PRIME CATTLE IN NI PLANTS

PRODUCERS are constantly being encouraged to produce prime cattle that meet the market specifications of the major retailers and food service markets. Carcasses that meet current market specifications will provide a greater return per kg of beef to the producer and also allow the processor to use the beef produced to service a wider range of customers.

Age at slaughter of less than 30 months for steers and heifers is a key requirement for many of the major retailer and foodservice specifications. During the six week period ending 21 May 2017 91 per cent of price reported steers and heifers fulfilled this criteria, up marginally from 90 per cent during the corresponding six week period in 2016. In the same period in 2015 87 per cent of price reported steers and heifers were aged less than 30 months at point of slaughter.

There are also some limited market outlets for steers and heifers aged from 30-36 months and during the six weeks ending 21 May 2017 eight per cent of price reported steers and heifers were within this age range. This is a decrease from nine per cent in the same period

in 2016 and 11 per cent in the 2015 period. In the 2017 period one per cent of price reported steers and heifers were killed at over 36 months of age. This proportion was unchanged from previous years.

While there has been a slight increase in the proportion of price reported steers and heifers killed at under 30 months of age it is also worth noting that there has been a reduction in the average age at slaughter of prime cattle in NI in recent times.

During the six week period ending 21 May 2017 the average age at slaughter of suckler origin steers was 23.7 months (735 days). During the same period in 2016 the average age at slaughter was 23.9 months (742 days) while in the same period in 2015 it was 24.4 months (756 days). This has moved the average age at slaughter of suckler origin steers back by 21 days over two years.

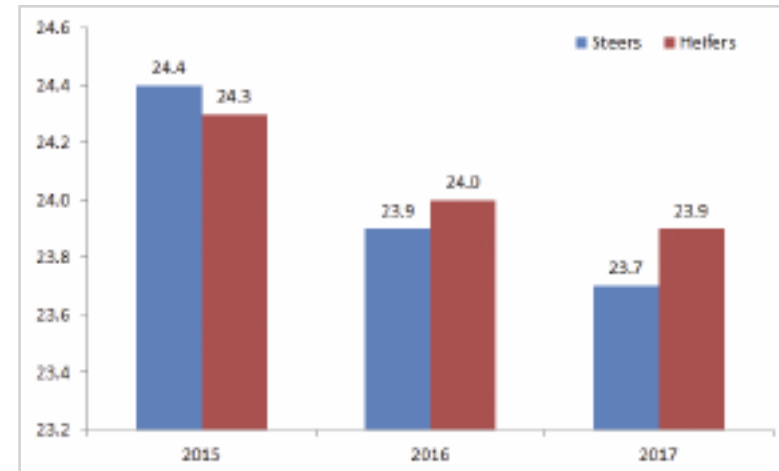
During the six week period ending 21 May 2017 the average age at slaughter for suckler origin heifers was 23.9 months (742 days). During the same period in 2016 the average age of

slaughter was 24 months (744 days) and in the 2015 period it was 24.3 months (755 days). This is a reduction in the average age at slaughter of suckler origin heifers by 13 days over the two year period.

A similar trend can be observed if we look at beef sired steers and heifers sourced from the dairy herd. In the 2017 period the average age of slaughter for price reported beef cross steers was 24.6 months (763 days) compared to 25.2 months (782 days) in the 2016 period and 25.5 months (790 days) in the 2015 period. Meanwhile the average age at slaughter for beef cross heifers during the 2017 period was 24.8 months (770 days). This was unchanged from the same period in 2016 however was lower than the 2015 period when the average age at slaughter was 25.4 months (786 days).

Dairy origin steers are also being killed earlier in NI with an average age of slaughter of 25.5 months (792 days) in the 2017 period. This is back from 26.5 months (820 days) in the 2016 period and 26.7 months (825 days) in the 2015 period.

Figure 1: Average age at slaughter of price reported steers and heifers during the six week period ending 21 May 2017 and the same weeks in 2015 and 2016



## Young Bulls

While the average age of slaughter of steers and heifers has declined in NI there has been a slight increase in the average age at slaughter of young bulls. During the 6 weeks ending 21 May 2017 the average age at slaughter of price reported young bulls was 15.2 months (479 days). This was a slight increase from the same period in 2016 when it was 14.8 months (465 days)

and the 2015 period when it was 14.9 months (468 days).

There has also been a reduction in the proportion of the young bull kill aged under 16 months. During the six weeks ending 21 May 2017 80 per cent of price reported young bulls fulfilled this requirement compared to 88 per cent in the 2016 period.

# FQAS MART CLINICS

## JUNE 2017

LMC's 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 above. For further information call (028) 9263 3024.

LOCATION	DAY	DATE
Omagh	Monday	05/06/2017
Saintfield	Wednesday	07/06/2017
Markethill	Tuesday	13/06/2017
Enniskillen	Thursday	15/06/2017
Kilrea	Wednesday	21/06/2017
Ballymena	Friday	23/06/2017

# NI LAMB PRICES AHEAD OF 2016 LEVELS

QUOTES from the major NI lamb processors have continued to firm with quotes this week ranging from 475-485p/kg for R3 grading lambs up to 21kg. In the same week in 2016 quotes from the major NI plants for lambs ranged from 385-390p/kg while in 2015 they were in the region of 350p/kg.

Good demand for lambs from local processors and also from plants in ROI has contributed to a firming in both the liveweight and deadweight prices in NI in recent weeks. Figure 2 displays the average R3 lamb price in NI from January 2015 through to May 2017. As indicated in the chart deadweight lamb prices in recent weeks have been notably higher than previous years.

The average price reported R3 lamb price in NI last week was 465.5p/kg compared to 416.7p/kg in the same week last year. This increase by 48.8p/kg accounts for a 12 per cent increase year on year and equates to an increase of €10 in

the value of a 21kg R3 grading lamb.

The lambs being presented for slaughter in NI continue to be of a high quality with 44 per cent of lambs awarded a U grade last week while 55 per cent achieved an R grade. In the corresponding week in 2016 47 per cent of lambs achieved a U grade and 52 per cent an R grade.

There is a preference from the key lamb markets for carcasses with a fat cover of 2 or 3. Last week 93 per cent of price reported carcasses fulfilled this requirement. In the same week last year 90 per cent of price reported lambs fulfilled this market specification.

The local plants have reported good supplies of lambs coming forward for slaughter with 6,049 lambs killed in NI last week. A further 4,652 lambs were exported from NI to ROI for direct slaughter last week, accounting for 43 per cent of total output from the NI sheep flock. In the corresponding week last year

6,607 lambs were killed locally while 4,024 lambs were exported to ROI for direct slaughter.

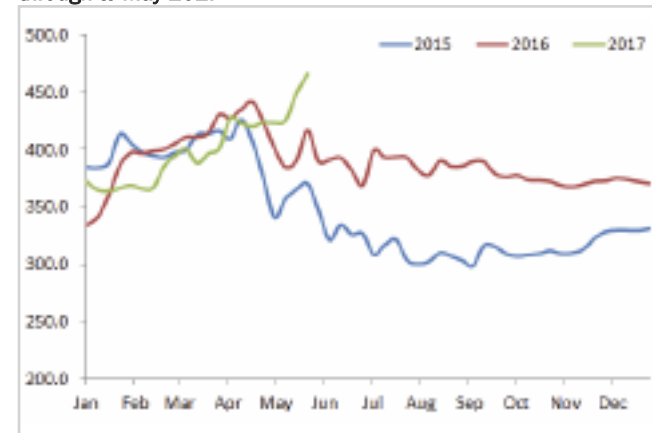
The average carcass weight of lambs killed in NI plants last week was 21.4kg, back marginally from previous weeks. In the corresponding week in 2016 the average lamb carcass weight in NI was 21.6kg.

The total volume of lamb handled by NI processors last

week was 130 tonnes. This is a nine per cent decrease from the 143 tonnes of lamb handled by NI processors in the corresponding week last year.

Ewe and ram throughput in NI last week totalled 403 head with an average carcass weight of 29.8kg. This puts the volume of mutton from ewes/rams handled in NI plants last week at 12 tonnes. In the same week last year NI plants handled nine tonnes of mutton.

Figure 2: Price reported R3 lamb prices in NI from January 2015 through to May 2017



### 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 Quotes & Mart Results  
Updated 5pm Daily

Tel: 028 9263 3011

Text Service  
Free Price Quotes sent to your mobile phone weekly

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 29/05/17	Next Week 05/06/17
<b>Prime</b>		
U-3	356 - 364p	358 - 366p
R-3	350 - 358p	352 - 360p
O+3	344 - 352p	346 - 354p
P+3	292 - 312p	294 - 314p
Including bonus where applicable		
<b>Cows</b>		
O+3 & better	260 - 280p	260 - 290p
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 27/05/17	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	367.8	367.4	362.1
R3	362.1	361.2	357.4
O+3	353.3	351.5	346.4

\*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

### REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 27/05/17	Wgt <220kg	Wgt 220-250kg	Wgt 250-280kg	Wgt >280kg
P1	179.6	189.2	211.1	219.0
P2	194.5	224.9	247.8	252.7
P3	202.9	240.5	261.1	263.5
O3	245.0	250.2	275.4	281.2
O4	-	272.0	285.1	284.2
R3	-	-	-	298.3

## Deadweight Cattle Trade

THE deadweight cattle trade has remained firm in NI with quotes from the major plants for in spec U-3 grade prime cattle ending this week at 358-366p/kg. The majority of plants are quoting from 360-364p/kg with similar quotes expected for early next week. Quotes from the major processors for good quality O+3 grade cows ranged from 260-280p/kg this week with the majority of plants quoting in the upper end of the range.

Prime cattle throughput in local plants has remained strong with 6,579 prime cattle killed locally last week. This brings prime cattle throughput for the last six weeks to 38,540 head, an 11 per cent increase from the corresponding six week period in 2016 when 34,840 prime cattle were killed in NI plants. However despite the increase in prime cattle throughput a drop in average carcase weights combined with a firm demand for beef has created competition for prime cattle between the plants. Cow throughput in NI last week totalled 1,848 head, the highest weekly throughput since early March this year.

Imports of prime cattle for direct slaughter from ROI last week totalled 174 head with 72 cows also imported. Imports from GB for direct slaughter last week consisted of six prime cattle and 141 cows. Exports from NI to ROI for direct slaughter last week comprised of 40 prime cattle and 188 cows with 36 prime cattle and three cows exported to GB.

The deadweight trade in NI has remained firm with the average steer price unchanged last week at 354.3p/kg while the R3 steer price increased by 2.1p/kg to 364.5p/kg. The average heifer price in NI last week was 355.4p/kg, up 1.6p/kg from the previous week, while the R3 heifer price was 362.4p/kg, up 1.5p/kg from the previous week. This puts the R3 heifer price in NI at its highest level since January 2015.

In GB last week the average steer price was 357p/kg, up 1.4p/kg from the previous week, while the average R3 steer price was 365.4p/kg, up 1.9p/kg from the previous week. This was 1p/kg higher than the R3 steer price in NI last week however the R3 steer price in NI was higher than all the GB regions with the exception of Scotland. The deadweight heifer trade in GB also improved last week with the average heifer price up by 1.7p/kg to 360.4p/kg and the R3 heifer price up by half a penny to 365.9p/kg. The R3 heifer price in GB was 3.5p/kg higher than the R3 heifer price in NI last week.

In ROI last week deadweight prices for prime cattle continued to firm in euro terms and a weakening in the value of sterling against euro has resulted in notable increases in sterling terms. The R3 steer price in ROI last week increased by 6.5p/kg to 353.3p/kg while the R3 heifer price increased by 6.6p/kg to 362.8p/kg. This takes the R3 heifer price in ROI higher than the R3 heifer price in NI for the first time since July 2016. The O3 cow price in ROI increased by 5.2p/kg to 293.8p/kg last week, 13.7p/kg higher than the equivalent price in NI.

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

W/E 27/05/2017	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB	
Steers	U3	369.1	362.6	376.9	361.7	366.5	372.1	368.9
	R3	364.5	353.3	377.5	358.9	362.0	361.7	365.4
	R4	361.1	355.3	379.8	370.2	359.1	359.5	368.8
	O3	351.7	339.6	351.8	334.2	332.3	331.8	337.8
	AVG	354.3	-	374.2	354.5	351.1	345.4	357.0
Heifers	U3	368.4	374.4	387.2	368.1	375.0	370.1	376.3
	R3	362.4	362.8	378.7	354.0	364.6	361.2	365.9
	R4	359.9	362.9	379.5	361.1	364.6	358.2	366.5
	O3	352.8	346.6	359.2	337.6	338.8	342.3	344.7
	AVG	355.4	-	377.7	356.4	356.0	346.7	360.4
Young Bulls	U3	361.7	357.7	371.7	355.1	358.6	358.8	360.2
	R3	357.4	348.3	365.5	346.7	348.0	347.0	350.7
	O3	339.0	332.0	321.9	312.3	319.3	327.3	319.3
	AVG	346.2	-	357.2	335.6	338.0	343.0	341.9
Prime Cattle Price Reported		5848	-	6953	7443	7022	4579	25997
Cows	O3	280.1	293.8	280.1	269.3	272.9	272.4	272.6
	O4	284.2	294.0	284.0	273.2	276.0	271.9	275.7
	P2	243.2	275.6	230.5	240.3	222.9	227.4	228.0
	P3	261.4	287.5	260.6	251.9	234.0	244.4	242.3
	AVG	265.7	-	272.3	250.0	240.6	239.9	246.0

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=86.57p 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 27/05/17	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
<b>Finished Cattle (p/kg)</b>						
Steers	218	232	223	185	216	200
Friesians	160	181	170	125	154	140
Heifers	204	226	213	170	192	184
Beef Cows	158	214	174	125	157	141
Dairy Cows	119	145	129	75	118	97
<b>Store Cattle (p/kg)</b>						
Bullocks up to 400kg	220	243	235	190	218	205
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	210	232	225	180	208	195
Bullocks over 500kg	205	227	215	180	204	192
Heifers up to 450kg	210	253	225	175	209	192
Heifers over 450kg	200	228	214	172	199	185
<b>Dropped Calves (£/head)</b>						
Continental Bulls	300	470	370	200	298	250
Continental Heifers	200	285	250	100	198	160
Friesian Bulls	100	200	150	50	98	75
Holstein Bulls	50	80	65	40	48	45

# SHEEP TRADE

## SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 29/05/17	Next Week 05/06/17
Lambs >21kg	475-485p	475-485p

## REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 13/05/17	W/E 20/05/17	W/E 27/05/17
NI Lambs L/W	424.9	434.4	463.3
NI Lambs D/W	442.6	448.8	465.5
GB Lambs D/W	469.7	480.6	498.3
ROI D/W	445.6	458.4	479.3

## Deadweight Sheep Trade

**Q**UOTES for R3 grade lambs this week ranged from 475-485p/kg up to 21kg across the major processing plants in NI. Supplies of lambs have started to pick up with 6,049 lambs killed in local plants last week, an increase of 553 head from the previous week when 5,496 lambs were killed locally. Exports of lambs for direct slaughter also increased last week with 4,652 lambs exported to ROI compared to 2,844 head exported the previous week. The deadweight trade in NI last week increased strongly with an average price of 465.5p/kg. This was an increase of 16.7p/kg from the previous week. In the corresponding week last year the deadweight lamb price in NI was 415.32p/kg. In ROI last week the average lamb price was the equivalent of 479.3p/kg, up 20.9p/kg from the previous week.

## This week's marts

**A** firm trade was reported in the marts early this week with reports of increased lamb numbers passing through the rings as the week progressed. In Massereene on Monday a steady trade saw 782 lambs selling from 460-510p/kg compared to 544 lambs the previous week selling from 460-500p/kg. A similar trade was also reported in Saintfield this week with 473 lambs selling from 440-480p/kg. In Enniskillen this week 402 lambs sold from 428-455p/kg compared to 320 lambs last week selling from 468-512p/kg. In Ballymena this week 1,101 lambs sold to an average of 441p/kg compared to 702 lambs last week selling to an average of 460p/kg. The ewe trade has remained firm with top reported prices generally ranging from £90-110.

## LATEST SHEEP MARTS

From: 26/05/17		Lambs (P/KG LW)			
To: 01/06/17		No	From	To	Avg
Friday	Newtownstewart	105	429	471	-
Saturday	Omagh	464	436	505	-
	Swatragh	250	452	500	-
Monday	Kilrea	350	470	491	-
	Massereene	782	460	510	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	473	440	480	-
	Rathfriland	800	428	500	453
Wednesday	Ballymena	1101	416	473	441
	Enniskillen	402	428	455	-
	Armoyle	284	415	475	449

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## DR. TEMPLE GRANDIN WARNS

# “DO NOT UNDER-STAFF AND OVER WORK”

FARM businesses must be adequately staffed, according to world leading animal behaviour specialist Dr. Temple Grandin. “Farmers that are over worked are doing themselves no favours. And, in addition, they will not be doing what is right for their stock,” she said.

animals. And, in this regard, preventing lameness is a number one priority. Work in the US has shown that a consistent approach to this issue will pay dividends.”

“Lameness levels can be reduced to almost zero levels. But the starting-off point must be an accurate assessment of how bad the problem is at the outset. The fact is that lameness can be measured. The same principle holds where issues such as swollen joints are concerned.” Grandin said that flooring systems have a critical role to play in determining lameness levels on livestock farms. “Providing animals with sufficient grip is of paramount importance,” she further explained.

Grandin had the opportunity of visiting a number of farms during her stay in Northern Ireland. “The significant use of grazed grass gives the dairy, beef and sheep industries here a tremendous story to tell,” she said. “Consumers around the world regard grass-based systems as the most natural way to produce food.”

“When people become over tired, jobs are not done properly. And this has major implications for both animal husbandry and welfare practices. Vaccination programmes may be only half completed, or not done at all and sick animals may be missed or over looked. In addition to this tasks that are critically important and which could have a major impact on farm businesses’ bottom line may not be addressed with the required level of competency.”

Grandin spoke to a grouping of livestock industry representatives at an LMC-hosted event during the recent Balmoral Show. She said that irrespective of whether animals have feelings, or not, they do feel pain. “The core objective for every livestock farmer must be to provide a pain-free environment for their

Image 1: LMC Chairman Gerard McGivern (right) welcomes Dr. Temple Grandin (centre) and Gary Cooper (left) CEO of Middletown Centre for Autism to Balmoral Show



## LMC WELCOMES ATTAINMENT OF BSE NEGLIGIBLE RISK STATUS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

LMC Chief Executive Ian Stevenson has welcomed the attainment of BSE Negligible Risk Status for Northern Ireland's beef industry. Notification of the risk classification upgrade to the safest level was confirmed by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) at a recent meeting in Paris.

"The development will bring with it a number of benefits for both meat processors and livestock farmers in Northern Ireland," said Stevenson. "In the first instance, the amount of specified risk material that must be disposed of by processors will be reduced and this could be a potential saving in its own right. Changes to what constitutes specified risk material also gives the potential for more of the fifth quarter to be sold commercially."

Looking ahead, the LMC representative said that the OIE decision should have positive implications for Northern Ireland's beef industry on export markets. "While it should allow processors to export more product into those countries they are currently servicing but the fact that we now have secured the safest BSE status should also make the attainment of new export markets for beef more achievable." Stevenson said that local beef processors are currently targeting a range of countries, including China, the Philippines, the US and Japan.

"The Paris decision will significantly improve the reputation of beef produced in Northern Ireland. And this is a very important factor when it comes to doing business in countries like China and the United States, where there is a significant demand for manufacturing beef."

Stevenson confirmed that LMC paid the fee that accompanied the submission to OIE, requesting BSE Negligible Status for Northern Ireland. "A joint application was submitted on behalf of Northern Ireland and Scotland. Our portion of the accompanying fee amounted to £4,500. It was a charge that we were more than happy to meet. But more than that, LMC staff played a key role in developing the business case for the overall submission that was presented to OIE on behalf of the local beef industry."

## FARMERS 'WALK-THE-LINE' AT WD MEATS

WD MEATS hosted a 'Walk-the-Line' event for farmer-suppliers this week. The demonstration, which allowed the visitors assess cattle on-the-hoof and on-the-hook, was organised in association with the Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC), UFU and NIMEA. This was the first in a series of 'Walk the Line' visits with an event also hosted in Linden Foods early this week.

We started off in the lairage, where six cattle had been separated out for inspection," said Andrew Turtle, a member of the WD Meats' procurement team. "The animals were a mixed bag, both in terms of their breeding and liveweights. At the outset, we asked the farmers to predict how the cattle might kill-out in terms of their final carcass weights and classification grades."

The farmers then visited the various stages of the production process in the factory from slaughter right through to the boning hall and had the opportunity to ask questions at all stages. "Visiting the boning hall in particular stimulated a lot of questions from the producers as it allowed them to see the attention to detail that is required in complying with our supermarket supply contracts and helped to explain why current in-spec requirements are in place" said Turtle.

Turtle said that WD Meats is very keen to communicate the need for cattle to be in-spec, so as to comply with the requirements laid down by the UK supermarkets. "For steers and heifers this

means they must grade within the gold box, have a carcass weight of 280kg and 380kg, be aged under 30 months, be FQ assured, have been on four or less farms in their lifetime and been on their last farm for 90 days prior to slaughter. When producing cattle that don't meet these specifications producers are losing out, both in terms of the price they get and the input costs they incur."

At the end of the visit the farmers were supplied with the actual kill weights and classification grades of the six animals they had initially inspected in the lairage. "Carcass weights ranged from 320kg to 400kg and classification grades ranged from an O=2+ to a U+3+" said Turtle. "As it turned out, most of the farmers were pretty

close with their initial predictions."

LMC Economist Seamus McMenamin was part of the visiting group. He highlighted the value of the 'Walk the Line' event. "It is important for beef finishers to have a good idea of how their cattle will kill out, once they go to the factory," he said. Farmers should try to produce cattle that comply with the processors commercial requirements as this will provide the greatest return to both the producer and the wider beef industry.

All of the major beef and lamb processors in NI are involved in the 'Walk the Line Programme' and anyone interested in attending an event should contact LMC on 028 9263 3000 to register their interest.

Image 2: WD Meats' Adam Turtle (front left) invites LMC's Seamus McMenamin (front right) and a group of visiting farmers to 'walk the line'



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