

NI PRIME CATTLE CARCASS WEIGHTS

CARCASS weight is an important aspect of current market specifications for beef. The majority of the major processing plants want steers and heifers with carcass weights of 280-380kg as cuts from these carcasses will meet the specification requirements of the widest range of customers.

However while the desired weight limit is 280-380kg the majority of the major processing plants in NI will accept steer and heifer carcasses of up to 420kg before applying weight penalties. While producers taking cattle to higher carcass weights to maximise returns is understandable it is important that they aim to finish cattle within current market specifications. There are also penalties in place for carcasses being killed under 260kg across the plants.

There is a more limited market outlet for beef from carcasses outside the desired

weight range of 280-380kg. It is therefore important that processors send the correct market signals to NI producers to encourage them to produce cattle that meet current market specifications.

Steer Kill

During the 12 week period ending 25 November 2017 the average steer carcass weight in NI was 349.5kg. This was back slightly from the same period in 2016 when the average steer carcass weight was 350.1kg. Steers accounted for 55 per cent of the prime cattle kill in NI during the 2017 period, back slightly from 56 per cent in the same period in 2016.

Figure 1 displays the distribution of price reported steer carcasses by carcass weight during the 12 week period ending 25 November 2017 and the corresponding 12 week period in 2016. As indicated in the chart 60 per

cent of steer carcasses were within the desired 280-380kg weight range during the 2017 period. This was back slightly from year earlier levels when 62 per cent of price reported steer carcasses in NI were within this range.

Steer carcasses within the 380-400kg weight range accounted for 13 per cent of price reported steers during the 2017 period. This proportion was unchanged from year earlier levels. There was however a slight increase in the proportion of steer carcasses over 400kg in the NI slaughter mix. In the 2017 period 18 per cent of steer carcasses were within this weight range, a one percentage point increase from 17 per cent in the same period in 2016.

In the 12 weeks ending 25 November 2017 four per cent of price reported steer carcasses were under 260kg, with a further five per cent of steer carcasses in the 260-280kg weight range. These

proportions were unchanged from the corresponding period in 2016.

Heifer Kill

During the 12 week period ending 25 November 2017 the average heifer carcass weight in NI was 316.7kg. This was an increase of 3kg from the same period in 2016 when the average heifer carcass weight was 313.7kg. Despite this increase the average heifer carcass weight is well below the 323.2kg recorded during the corresponding period in 2015. Heifers accounted for 36 per cent of the prime cattle kill in NI during the 2017 period, up slightly from 35 per cent in the 2016 period.

In the 2017 period 72 per cent of price reported heifer carcasses in NI were within the desired 280-380kg weight range. This proportion was unchanged from year earlier levels as indicated in Figure 2. A further five per cent of the price reported heifer kill had a carcass

weight of between 380-400kg in the 2017 period. This was a slight increase from year earlier levels when 4 per cent of heifers had carcass weights within this weight range. The proportion of heifers with carcass weights over 400kg also recorded a small increase year on year as indicated in the chart.

Meanwhile during the 12 weeks ending 25 November 2017 20 per cent of price reported heifers in NI had a carcass weight below 280kg. This was a slight decrease from 21 per cent of price reported heifer carcasses in the corresponding period in 2016.

NI beef producers are encouraged to liaise directly with the procurement staff of the individual plants before finishing cattle. This will help ensure that the cattle being presented for slaughter will meet current market specifications and maximise returns for the entire supply chain.

Figure 1: Breakdown of NI steer kill by weight category during the 12 weeks ending 25 November 2017 and corresponding period in 2016.

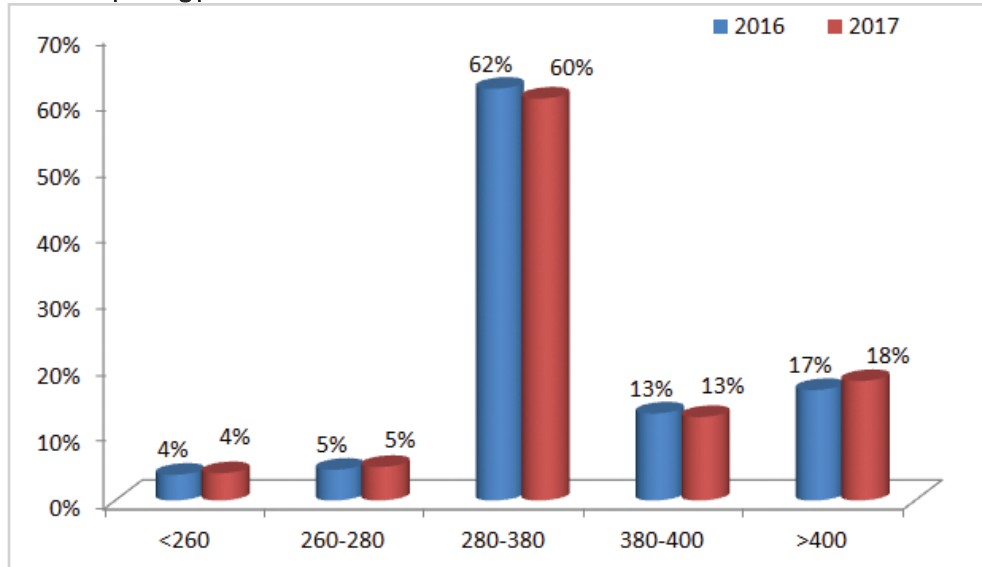
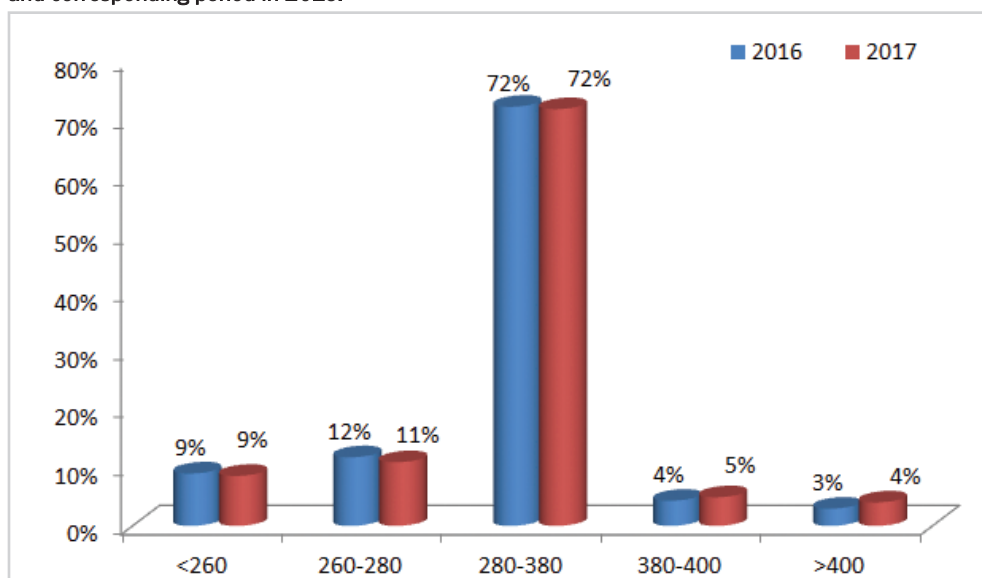


Figure 2: Breakdown of NI heifer kill by weight category during the 12 weeks ending 25 November 2017 and corresponding period in 2016.



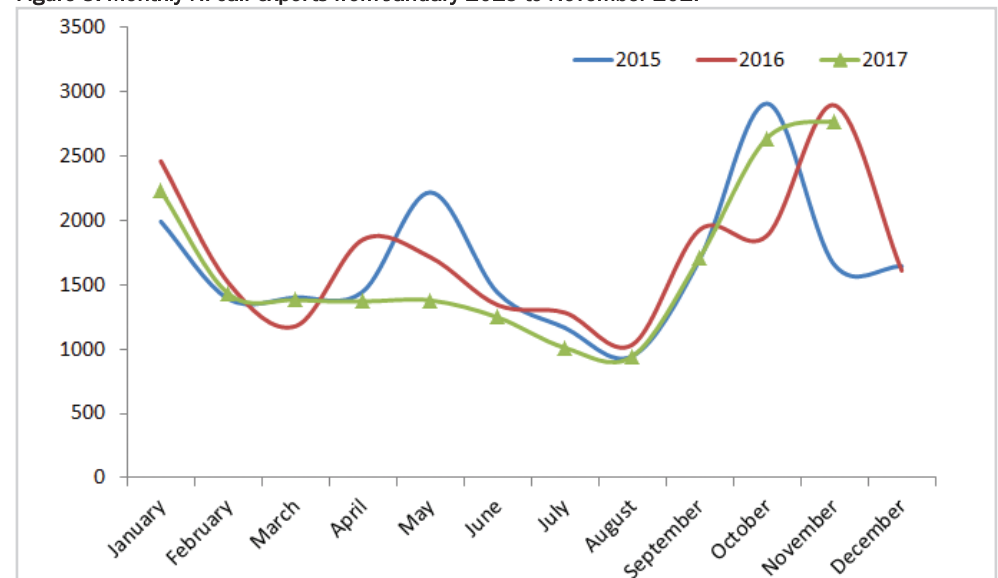
NI CALF EXPORTS REMAIN STEADY IN NOVEMBER

DURING November 2017 a total of 2,773 calves were exported out of Northern Ireland. This was marginally higher than the 2,640 calves exported during October 2017 and just below the 2,896 calves exported during November 2016. As indicated in Figure 3 NI calf exports did not show the usual seasonal increase in late spring this year to coincide with the spring calving of the dairy herd. Calf exports have however followed normal seasonal trends and have recorded an increase in the autumn.

The 2,773 calves exported during November 2017 take calf exports for the year to date to 18,125 head. This was a five per cent reduction from the 19,096 head exported during the same period in 2016. The majority of calves being exported out of NI are dairy sired male calves and during the first eleven months of 2017 there was a five per cent reduction in registrations of these types of calves on NI farms. This will have contributed to the overall reduction in calf exports however despite this the export market remains a very important outlet for these types of calves.

Spain continues to be the primary destination for NI origin calves with 18,120 calves exported to the region during 2017 to date with the remaining five calves exported to ROI. In the same period in 2016 Spain was also the main market outlet for calves exported from NI however small numbers of calves were also exported to France, GB, ROI and Italy. The main production system in operation in Spain for Friesian bulls is a 12 month bull beef system which is based primarily on a diet of ad-lib cereals and straw.

Figure 3: Monthly NI calf exports from January 2015 to November 2017



WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS



CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 04/12/17	Next Week 11/12/17
Prime		
U-3	350 - 356p	350 - 356p
R-3	344 - 350p	344 - 350p
O+3	338 - 344p	338 - 344p
P+3	288 - 306p	288 - 306p
Including bonus where applicable		
Cows		
O+3 & better	260 - 280p	260 - 280p
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.

Deadweight Cattle Trade

BASE quotes from the plants this week for in spec U-3 grade prime cattle weakened slightly to 350-356p/kg however with higher prices available producers should use these quotes as a starting point for negotiation. Base quotes for O+3 grade cows remained steady ranging from 260-280p/kg across the plants. Similar quotes are expected for Monday.

The plants have reported strong supplies of prime cattle coming forward for slaughter with a total of 7,285 head killed locally last week. This is an increase of 719 head from the corresponding week last year when 6,566 prime cattle were slaughtered in NI plants. Cow throughput in NI recorded a decrease last week at 2,346 head, back 350 head from the previous week when 2,696 cows were killed locally. In the same week last year cow throughput in NI totalled 2,555 head.

Imports of prime cattle for direct slaughter last week remained small in comparison to the corresponding week in previous years. A total of 28 prime cattle were imported last week, 26 head of which came from ROI with the remaining two from GB. Meanwhile the number of cows imported remained steady with a total of 68 head imported last week at an even split of 34 cows coming from both ROI and GB. Exports of cattle out of NI for direct slaughter last week continued at relatively similar levels to previous weeks with 11 prime cattle and 181 cows exported to ROI and a further 54 prime cattle and 5 cows exported to GB.

The average steer price in NI last week increased by 1.9p/kg to 351.3p/kg while the R3 steer price similarly increased by 1.5p/kg to 360.4p/kg. Meanwhile the average heifer price decreased by a penny to 354p/kg and the R3 heifer price was back by 1.8p/kg to 360p/kg. The average young bull price last week decreased by 2.1p/kg to 335.3p/kg while the R3 young bull price was up by a penny to 349.2p/kg. The average cow price in NI last week decreased by 1.4p/kg to 248.7p/kg however the O3 cow price increased by just over a penny to 273.8p/kg.

In GB last week there was a mixed trade across the regions for prime cattle. The average steer price in GB was up by a penny to 367.5p/kg with the R3 steer price also up by a penny to 378.5p/kg. There was a strong increase in the R3 steer price in the Midlands and Wales (+5.2p/kg) while the R3 steer price in Northern England and Scotland improved by smaller margins (+1.2p/kg and +0.8p/kg respectively). Meanwhile the R3 steer price in Southern England was back by 4.9p/kg to 371.6p/kg. The average heifer price in GB last week increased marginally to 368.4p/kg while the R3 heifer price decreased by a penny to 378.2p/kg.

The deadweight trade in ROI last week firmed in both sterling and euro terms. The R3 steer price increased by the equivalent of 2.6p/kg to 336.7p/kg last week while the R3 heifer price increased by the equivalent of 2.5p/kg to 347.8p/kg. The young bull trade also improved in ROI last week with the R3 price up by 0.7p/kg to 334.4p/kg. The O3 cow price in ROI last week was the equivalent of 282.1p/kg.

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

W/E 02/12/2017	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	363.9	347.2	393.2	379.3	380.5	383.4
	R3	360.4	336.7	388.6	372.5	371.6	378.5
	R4	358.6	337.0	387.4	379.0	373.7	378.9
	AVG	351.3	-	386.6	361.5	361.9	367.5
Heifers	U3	365.0	359.9	396.2	380.0	389.9	388.0
	R3	360.0	347.8	388.2	368.2	379.7	378.2
	R4	358.1	348.6	387.2	375.8	376.3	378.0
	AVG	354.0	-	386.1	363.9	362.2	368.4
Young Bulls	U3	347.9	342.7	385.0	370.1	371.3	373.1
	R3	349.2	334.4	367.4	358.8	362.8	362.4
	O3	331.0	321.8	332.0	316.1	331.9	328.4
	AVG	335.3	-	357.0	338.8	341.9	344.3
Prime Cattle Price Reported	6291	-	7423	7487	6907	4883	26700
Cows	O3	273.8	282.1	267.3	261.9	270.2	264.1
	O4	279.2	283.8	271.3	259.8	268.8	264.1
	P2	232.1	251.6	224.0	216.1	219.2	217.0
	P3	251.5	270.6	229.2	234.7	233.3	232.0
AVG	248.7	-	258.6	237.2	227.8	220.7	231.4

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=88.66p 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

REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 02/12/17	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	362.9	365.0	347.7
R3	357.3	357.6	349.3
O+3	350.2	351.2	341.9

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 02/12/17	Wgt <220kg	Wgt 220- 250kg	Wgt 250- 280kg	Wgt >280kg
P1	174.5	179.4	189.8	204.5
P2	195.8	207.8	231.1	244.7
P3	202.5	233.4	250.2	253.6
O3	-	252.4	267.1	275.4
O4	-	278.5	266.1	279.7
R3	-	-	324.4	299.4

SHEEP TRADE

SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 04/12/17	Next Week 11/12/17
Lambs >22kg	390-395p	385-395p

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 18/11/17	W/E 25/11/17	W/E 02/12/17
NI Lambs L/W	354.0	358.2	346.1
NI Lambs D/W	375.2	386.5	390.9
GB Lambs D/W	396.2	397.1	397.7
ROI D/W	395.6	413.4	413.7

Deadweight Sheep Trade

BASE quotes from the plants held steady this week for R3 grading lambs at 390-395p/kg with plants paying up to 22kg. Quotes for early next week are 385-395p/kg up to 22kg. Lamb throughput in local plants increased to 8,922 head last week and this is also an increase from the same week last year when a total of 8,430 lambs were killed in local plants. Exports of lambs to ROI for direct slaughter last week totalled 9,500 head, very similar to the previous week when 9,528 lambs were exported. A total of 1,055 ewes/rams were exported to ROI for direct slaughter last week compared to 764 head the previous week. The deadweight lamb price in NI last week increased by 4.4p/kg to 390.9p/kg while the liveweight lamb price was back by 12.1p/kg to 346.1p/kg.

This week's marts

THE marts have reported a steady trade this week with similar numbers of lambs passing through most of the sale rings compared to the previous week. In Omagh last Saturday 1,013 lambs sold from 351-376p/kg compared to 974 lambs the previous Saturday selling from 359-383p/kg. In Kilrea on Monday 500 lambs sold from 345-361p/kg compared to 500 lambs last week selling from 346-362p/kg. In Saintfield this week a slightly sharper trade saw 856 lambs sold from 336-383p/kg compared to 820 lambs last week selling from 319-376p/kg. In Ballymena this week 2,007 lambs sold to an average of 345p/kg compared to 2,520 lambs last week selling to an average of 347p/kg. The cull ewe price generally ranged from £90-100 with a top reported price of £105 in Kilrea on Monday.

LATEST LIVELWEIGHT CATTLE MART PRICES NI

W/E 02/12/17	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	205	222	210	175	204	190
Friesians	150	168	161	130	149	141
Heifers	196	214	204	165	195	180
Beef Cows	151	194	160	115	150	130
Dairy Cows	105	123	115	70	104	88
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	215	236	225	185	214	200
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	210	221	215	170	209	190
Bullocks over 500kg	205	226	210	165	204	185
Heifers up to 450kg	190	216	205	165	199	180
Heifers over 450kg	190	205	195	165	189	175
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	300	415	340	175	298	240
Continental Heifers	250	330	280	130	248	190
Friesian Bulls	100	180	120	40	98	70
Holstein Bulls	60	100	80	2	58	30

LATEST SHEEP MARTS

From: 01/12/17		Lambs (P/KG LW)			
To: 07/12/17		No	From	To	Avg
Friday	Newtownstewart	258	334	378	-
Saturday	Omagh	1013	351	376	-
	Swatragh	946	317	360	-
Monday	Kilrea	500	345	361	-
	Massereene	1106	340	372	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	856	336	383	-
	Rathfriland	729	328	373	352
Wednesday	Ballymena	2007	330	365	345
	Enniskillen	782	338	359	-
	Markethill	1200	330	361	-
	Armooy	246	338	370	349

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