LMC
Livestock & Meat Commission

WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF THE LIVESTOCK AND MEAT COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Saturday 02 June 2018 Issue No. 2522

INCREASE IN AVERAGE AGE AT SLAUGHTER

AT the end of April 2018 there were 125,108 beef sired cattle and dairy males on NI farms in the 24-30 month age category. This was a eight per cent increase from April 2017 levels when there were 116,077 cattle for beef production in this age category.

A poor summer in 2017 combined with tight fodder supplies across NI over the 2017/18 winter have influenced production decisions at farm level. While some producers will have decided to finish cattle on more intensive diets other producers have opted to maintain cattle over the winter and turn them back out the grass this spring. For producers that opted to finish cattle during the early months of year there was an increase in the finishing period required.

The average age of slaughter for steers in NI during the first four months of 2018 to date was 24.9 months (758 days) compared to 24.5 months (745 days) in the corresponding period last year. This represents an increase of 13 days in the average finishing time and despite the extra time on farm the average steer carcase increased by just 3kg to 353kg in the 2018 period.

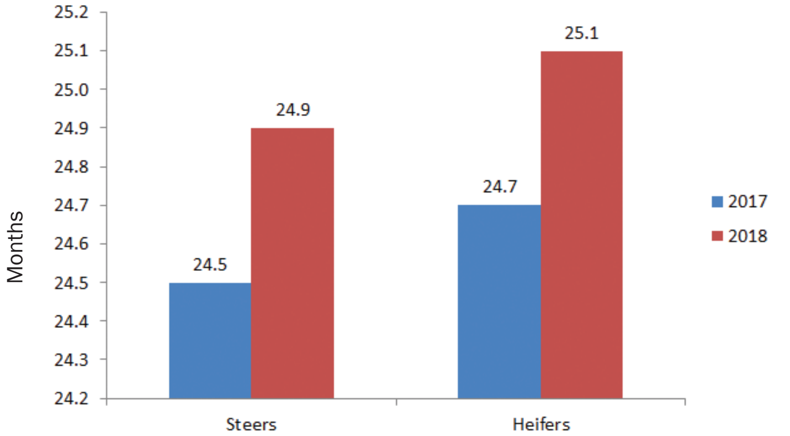
All types of steers recorded an increase in the average age of slaughter during the first four months of 2018 when compared to the same period in 2017. Suckler origin steers had an average age of 24.3 months (740 days) in the 2018 period compared to 23.9 months (727 days) during the same period last year.

Beef cross steers had an average age at slaughter of 25.4 months (774 days), up from 25.2 months (768 days) in the 2017 period while dairy sired steers had an average age of slaughter of 26.5 months (807 days), up from 25.9 months (787 days) in the 2017 period.

The average age at slaughter for heifers in NI was 25.1 months (764 days) during the first four months of 2018. This was an increase from 24.7 months (751 days) in the same period last year. Despite this increase in the average finishing time by 13 days the average carcase weight increased by just 1kg to 317kg.

The average age at slaughter of suckler origin heifers during the 2018 period was 24.5 months (746 days), up from 24 months in the same period in 2017 (730 days). The average age at slaughter of beef sired heifers originating from the dairy herd increased slightly from 25.3 months (770 days) in the 2017 period to 25.4 months (773 days) in the first four months of 2018.

Figure 1: The average age of slaughter for steers and heifers in NI during the first four months of 2017 and 2018.



The increase in the average finishing time for prime cattle in NI during 2018 to date will have increased production costs for NI beef finishers with no associated increase in average carcase weights. In addition the changes to production systems at farm level has increased in the number of older cattle for beef production still on farm in NI and with reports from the plants reporting tight supplies of prime cattle at present there could be a strong increase in prime cattle availability for slaughter as we move into the late summer/autumn period as producers start finishing these cattle off grass.

SLIGHT DECLINE IN UK LAMB IMPORTS IN FIRST QUARTER OF 2018

THE UK imported 10,365 tonnes of mutton and lamb during March 2018 which takes total imports for the first quarter of the year to 22,476 tonnes according to the latest available data from HMRC. This is a one per cent decrease from the corresponding period in 2017 when 22,685 tonnes of lamb/mutton were imported.

Imports of lamb/mutton from the EU during the first quarter of 2018 totalled 4,004 tonnes, a notable increase from 2,803 tonnes during the corresponding period in 2017. However despite the strong increase recorded the scale of the trade remains small in comparison to lamb/mutton imports from non-EU countries. During the first quarter of 2018 the UK imported 18,472 tonnes of lamb/mutton from non-EU sources. This was a seven per cent decline from the same period in 2017 when the UK imported 19,882 tonnes of lamb/mutton.

New Zealand remains the biggest source of lamb/mutton imports for the UK with 15,968 tonnes imported from the region during the first quarter of 2018. In the same period in 2017 the UK imported 16,318 tonnes of lamb/mutton from New Zealand which accounts for a two per cent decline year on year.

While New Zealand has remained the biggest source of lamb/mutton imports for the UK there has been a slight decline in its market share. During the 2018 period imports from New Zealand accounted for 82 per cent of total UK lamb imports, back from 88 per cent of total imports in the same period in 2017.

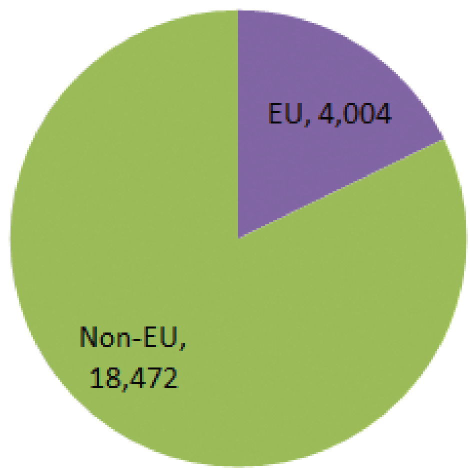
The UK imported 2,141 tonnes of lamb/mutton from Australia during the first quarter of 2018, a notable 34 per cent decline from the 3,245 tonnes of lamb imported from the region during the same period in 2017. A small volume of lamb (25 tonnes) was also imported from Uruguay during the 2018 period, back from 74 tonnes during the same period in 2017.

There have also been some key changes to the type of lamb/mutton that the UK is importing. The UK imported 11,363 tonnes of fresh/chilled produce during the 2018 period, a six per cent decline from 2017 levels when 12,036 tonnes of fresh/chilled produce was imported. Meanwhile there was a four per cent increase in the import of frozen cuts year on year to total 11,113 tonnes in the 2018 period.

Imports of bone in cuts totalled 15,119 tonnes during the 2018 period and these accounted for 67 per cent of total lamb/mutton imports. This was a three per cent increase from 2017 levels when 14,619 tonnes of bone in cuts were imported, accounting for 64 per cent of total imports.

Meanwhile the volume of boneless cuts recorded volume declines with 6,820 tonnes imported during the first quarter of 2018. This was a six per cent decline from the same period in 2017 when 7,228 tonnes of boneless cuts were imported. Imports of boneless cuts from the EU increased by 84 per cent to total 2,499 tonnes in the 2018 period while imports from non-EU countries declined by 26 per cent to total 4,321 tonnes.

Figure 2: Imports of lamb/mutton from EU and non-EU sources during the first three months of 2018 (tonnes)



FQAS MART CLINICS JUNE 2018

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 in the table. For further information call (028) 9263 3024.

LOCATION	DAY	DATE
Enniskillen	Thursday	07/06/2018
Omagh	Monday	11/06/2018
Saintfield	Wednesday	13/06/2018
Markethill	Tuesday	19/06/2018
Ballymena	Friday	22/06/2018
Kilrea	Wednesday	27/06/2018

WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

LMC

CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 28/05/18	Next Week 04/06/18
Prime		
U-3	360 - 366p	360 - 366p
R-3	354 - 360p	354 - 360p
O+3	348 - 354p	348 - 354p
P+3	302 - 314p	302 - 314p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3 & better	270 - 294p	275 - 294p
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 26/05/18	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	372.3	373.7	365.4
R3	366.6	367.9	360.0
O+3	357.4	358.9	348.9

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 26/05/18	Wgt <220kg	Wgt 220-250kg	Wgt 250-280kg	Wgt >280kg
P1	198.4	213.5	226.8	249.4
P2	217.0	238.7	263.3	274.2
P3	224.4	256.7	276.8	282.4
O3	210.0	282.8	291.0	300.8
O4	-	284.7	299.8	303.5
R3	-	-	330.0	318.7

Deadweight Cattle Trade

THE deadweight cattle trade has remained firm in NI with base quotes from the major plants for in spec U-3 grade prime cattle ending this week at 360-366p/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 270-294p/kg this week with the majority of plants quoting at the upper end of the range.

Prime cattle throughput in NI plants last week totalled 6,122 prime cattle back 587 head from the previous week. This brings prime cattle throughput for the year to date to 139,371 head, a 2.2 per cent increase from the corresponding period in 2017 when 136,318 prime cattle were slaughtered in NI plants. Cow throughput in NI last week totalled 1,807 head, an increase of 90 cows from the previous week. This brings the cow throughput for 2018 to 41,931 cows, a 12.4 per cent increase from the 37,301 cows killed during the same period last year.

Imports of prime cattle for direct slaughter from ROI last week totalled 24 head with 9 cows also imported. Imports from GB for direct slaughter last week consisted of 2 steers and 84 cows. Exports from NI to ROI for direct slaughter last week comprised of 35 prime cattle and 133 cows while reports indicate that no cattle were exported to GB for direct slaughter last week.

The deadweight trade in NI continued to strengthen last week with the average steer price up 1.4p/kg to 361.4p/kg while the R3 steer price increased by 1.6p/kg to 370.1p/kg. This was the highest R3 steer price to date in 2018. The average heifer price in NI last week was 362.1p/kg, up 0.4p/kg from the previous week, while the R3 heifer price was 369.5p/kg, up 1.6p/kg from the previous week. This was the highest reported R3 heifer price during 2018 to date. The O3 cow price also recorded an increase last week of 2.6p/kg to 299.4p/kg which was the highest O3 cow price reported in five years.

In GB last week the deadweight cattle trade improved with the majority of regions showing an overall increase in prime cattle prices. The average steer price was 367.6p/kg, up 1.7p/kg from the previous week, while the average R3 steer price was 376.4p/kg, up 1.9p/kg from the previous week. The R3 steer price in GB was 6.3p/kg higher than the R3 steer price in NI last week. The deadweight heifer trade in GB also improved last week with the average heifer price up by 2.4p/kg to 370.3p/kg and the R3 heifer price up by 0.8p/kg to 375.2p/kg. The R3 heifer price in GB was 5.7p/kg higher than the R3 heifer price in NI last week.

In ROI last week the deadweight cattle trade for prime cattle continued to firm. The R3 steer price in ROI increased by 2.3p/kg to 361.6p/kg, while the R3 heifer price increased by 1.8p/kg to 371p/kg. This places the R3 heifer price in ROI 1.5p/kg higher than the equivalent price in NI. The O3 cow price in ROI also reported an increase of 2p/kg to 306.4p/kg last week, 7p/kg higher than the equivalent price in NI.

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

W/E 26/05/2018		Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	373.7	370.3	384.6	376.8	376.1	381.6	379.5
	R3	370.1	361.6	385.3	374.8	371.9	373.9	376.4
	R4	372.2	362.8	388.2	384.4	371.9	380.4	382.0
	O3	359.7	348.2	363.6	349.4	340.7	350.8	351.0
	AVG	361.4	-	381.4	368.2	357.9	362.0	367.6
Heifers	U3	374.0	383.4	393.8	379.7	383.8	388.3	386.0
	R3	369.5	371.0	382.4	373.3	373.4	370.8	375.2
	R4	368.4	371.9	388.8	381.9	374.2	373.5	380.0
	O3	360.8	356.5	368.7	351.9	342.0	351.0	353.4
	AVG	362.1	-	384.1	371.2	364.3	359.3	370.3
Young Bulls	U3	365.2	366.0	378.9	364.4	371.6	368.2	370.4
	R3	359.5	357.9	371.1	360.9	359.1	363.1	362.6
	O3	340.6	342.7	347.1	314.5	324.2	329.0	325.3
	AVG	347.9	-	373.6	342.0	349.0	355.7	352.9
Prime Cattle Price Reported		5503	-	7199	7308	7539	5074	27120
Cows	O3	299.4	306.4	304.5	286.7	290.4	286.8	290.5
	O4	303.2	308.6	302.9	289.7	288.6	286.4	290.0
	P2	262.0	277.6	253.3	240.7	238.6	245.2	242.6
	P3	278.7	297.4	267.3	260.5	255.6	264.8	259.7
	AVG	285.9	-	292.8	263.0	256.0	254.0	261.2

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=87.66p 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

LATEST LIVEWEIGHT CATTLE MART PRICES NI

	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
W/E 26/05/18	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	210	223	216	180	209	195
Friesians	166	184	172	154	165	159
Heifers	211	225	218	180	206	190
Beef Cows	150	213	170	120	149	135
Dairy Cows	128	141	133	85	124	102
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	225	261	245	200	224	212
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	215	243	230	180	214	200
Bullocks over 500kg	210	228	220	170	209	192
Heifers up to 450kg	210	249	230	175	209	192
Heifers over 450kg	215	237	220	170	214	196
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	300	390	340	200	298	240
Continental Heifers	210	280	240	100	208	150
Friesian Bulls	100	130	115	65	98	90
Holstein Bulls	-	-	-	-	-	-

SHEEP TRADE

SHEEP BASE QUOTES		
(P/Kg DW)	This Week 28/05/18	Next Week 04/06/18
Lambs >21kg	480-510p	450-480p

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES			
(P/KG)	W/E 12/05/18	W/E 19/05/18	W/E 26/05/18
NI L/W Lambs	555.3	537.3	505.7
NI D/W Lambs	571.8	575.5	559.9
GB D/W Lambs	610.5	619.5	590.1
ROI D/W	543.5	553.4	554.7

Deadweight Sheep Trade

QUOTES for R3 grade lambs came back early this week to 480-510p/kg up to 21kg across the local NI plants with quotes for next week expected to be 450-480p/kg up to 21kg. Throughput of lambs killed in local plants last week reported a decrease of 654 head to 4,502 from the previous week when 5,156 lambs were killed locally. Exports of lambs for direct slaughter also decreased last week with 2,471 lambs exported to ROI compared to 4,566 head exported the previous week. The average NI deadweight lamb price was back by 15.7p/kg to 559.9p/kg. In the corresponding week last year the average deadweight lamb price in NI was 465.5p/kg. In ROI last week the average sheep price was the equivalent of 554.7p/kg, up 1.3p/kg from the previous week.

This week's marts

THE trade across the marts this week was generally back from previous weeks while the number of lambs passing through the rings has showed a slight increase. In Swatragh last Saturday 350 lambs sold from 382-491p/kg compared to 230 lambs the previous week selling from 534-613p/kg. In Massereene on Monday 496 lambs sold from 450-495p/kg compared to 368 lambs last week selling from 530-560p/kg. In Saintfield this week 566 lambs sold from 415-470p/kg compared to 372 lambs selling from 500-525p/kg. In Ballymena this week 602 lambs sold from 400-481p/kg (avg 422p/kg) compared to 480 lambs last week selling from 495-561p/kg (avg 510p/kg). In Armoy this week 224 lambs sold from 400-464p/kg. The ewe trade has reported top prices ranging from £81-£126 across the marts.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS					
From: 25/05/18		Lambs (P/KG LW)			
To: 31/05/18		No	From	To	Avg
Friday	Newtownstewart	247	457	500	-
Saturday	Omagh	96	443	491	-
	Swatragh	350	382	491	-
Monday	Massereene	496	450	495	-
	Kilrea	200	471	513	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	566	415	470	-
	Rathfriland	434	398	455	422
Wednesday	Ballymena	602	400	481	422
	Armoy	224	400	464	-
	Markethill	350	420	465	-

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LMC MONTHLY NEWS
Saturday 02 June 2018 Issue No. 0027

REFLECTIONS ON A VERY SUCCESSFUL BALMORAL SHOW

THE Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) estimated a total footfall on to its stand at this year's Balmoral Show of around 6,000 people. "Saturday morning was particularly busy," confirmed Education Services' Manager Cherrie Kenny. "This followed an equally hectic Wednesday, Thursday and Friday."

This year's show marked the launch of a new cook book from the LMC. Entitled: The secret to simple, fuss-free Beef and Lamb. Cherrie confirmed that there was a strong demand for the new publication."It covers a wide range of topics including the significance of the Northern Ireland Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance scheme; the importance of red meat in the diet and a host of mouth watering beef and lamb recipes."

Cherrie continued; "Cookery demonstrations were ongoing throughout the four days of the event with two beef and lamb recipes featuring daily. These went down particularly well with the many visitors coming on to the stand."

Getting an insight into the revised Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (FQAS) Standards and Rules was a key talking point amongst many of the farming visitors coming on to the LMC stand at the show. "The new arrangements kicked-in on June 1st," confirmed Commission Industry Development Manager Colin Smith.

"There was a strong feeling of acceptance amongst the producers that we spoke with, to the effect that the new measures had to be implemented. As a consequence, the conversations centred on how the amended regulations could be met in the most efficient way possible."

One of the key drivers for change, where FQAS is concerned, is the need to maintain equivalence with the Red Tractor assurance scheme. Other changes have been driven by the requirement to have better animal health planning standards built into FQAS and to have full recognition taken of the need to tackle the issue of antimicrobial resistance at farm level.

Legislative changes are also reflected in the new FQAS measures. These include the need for FQAS-registered farmers to have a Certificate of Competence for spraying purposes Colin confirmed "There is now a specific section on farm safety within the new set of standards. By taking this approach, we hope to further increase producer awareness, where all aspects of health and safety are concerned. Keeping farmers and their families safe is one of the biggest challenges facing agriculture as a whole at the present time. A single farm accident is one too many."

LMC is proud to have sponsored four of the major livestock classes at Balmoral 2018 and would like to congratulate all of the winners. The classes sponsored by LMC were the Beef Champion of Champions, Sheep Young Handlers, Sheep Interbreed Pairs Championship and the Beef Interbreed Team of Five.

Images 1-4: A selection of LMC sponsored award winners at Balmoral Show 2018

IN MY OPINION..........RICHARD HALLERON

SOMETIMES WE SHOULD BE WARY OF GETTING WHAT WE WISH FOR!

RECENT research projects, looking at the impact of WTO trading options on the local beef and sheep meat industry post-Brexit, should act as a wake-up cap for the red meat sectors.

Specifically, they highlight the absolute exposure of both industries to trade deals that tick all the wrong boxes, if the UK commits to free trade deals that have absolutely no grounding in the principle of compatible production and processing standards.

And there will be no end of potential suitors, seeking to put their beef and lamb on to the UK market. A case in point is Canada, a country that already has tariff-free access to the British market, courtesy of the recently agreed CETA deal with the European Union.

February of last year saw the European Parliament vote through this measure. It makes provision for 50,000t of Canadian beef – mostly high-quality cuts – to be exported on a tariff free-basis into the EU market. So it will be interesting to see how much of this meat ends up in the UK prior to the Brexit deal taking effect.

Given that Britain sits close to the top of the EU beef price league at the present time, I sense that our Canadian friends are giving the UK market serious consideration, where their beef is concerned.

At the very least, the CETA deal will give the red meat industry here in Northern Ireland some sense of the competition coming down the track, once the UK starts forging its own trade deals with countries around the world. And, in this context, one has to be extremely concerned for the local farming & food sectors, given that the Prime Minister Theresa May has already identified a selection of the world's agri-food power house countries as potential trade partners for the future!

The list, which is still growing, currently includes New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the United States.

Striking trade deals is one thing. But giving countries such as these tariff-free access to the UK market with beef and lamb is something else entirely. The reality is that the UK's farming and food sectors must be fully protected in the context of future deals, which the British government commits to.

At a very fundamental level, there must be absolute parity, where production and processing standards are concerned. If these other countries cannot meet our traceability, animal welfare and environmental criteria then they must not be allowed to export food into the UK, under any circumstances.

Moreover, British supermarkets must be told that they cannot use imported foodstuffs in ways that undercut produce coming from local farms.

FQAS REMINDER: FQAS STANDARDS & RULES 2018

LMC would like to remind all FQAS participants that the new Standard and Rules 2018 will come into effect from 1 June 2018.

A copy of the new Standard and Rules book was posted to all FQAS participants earlier this year. It is this book that must be presented at inspection from 1 June 2018 onwards as the previous edition will become obsolete. A copy of the new Standard and Rules is also available on the LMC website (www.lmcni.com) along with relevant templates.

If you have any queries or require any further information please call the FQAS helpline on 028 9263 3024.

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