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NI PRIME CATTLE NUMBERS FOR SLAUGHTER TO REMAIN FIRM

STRONG supplies of prime cattle have continued to come forward for slaughter in local plants with throughput during October 2018 running five per cent ahead of October 2017 levels as indicated in Figure 1. Supplies of prime cattle for slaughter locally are expected to remain strong until early next year.

NI beef cattle supplies

As outlined in Table 1 there were 91,773 cattle for beef production on NI farms aged 24-30 months at the end of October 2018, a figure unchanged from year earlier levels but nine per cent higher than October 2016 levels. Meanwhile the number of cattle in the 18-24 month age range totalled 196,044 head at the end of October 2018, back marginally from October 2017 levels and 8.2 per cent ahead of October 2016 levels. Cattle in these two age ranges will provide the majority of prime cattle throughput in NI over the next six months.

There has been a decline in the number of dairy sired male cattle on NI farm in particular. Lower levels of dairy sired calf registrations combined with stable levels of calf exports to the EU for further production have contributed to this trend.

While the number of cattle available for slaughter in the short term is expected to remain firm there will be a reduction in cattle availability as we move towards the second half of 2019. As outlined in Table 1 there has been a decline in the number of cattle for beef production in the lower age groups due to a reduction in calf registrations in NI over the last 12-18 months.

In October 2018 there were 146,207 cattle for beef production on NI farms in the 12-18 month age category. This is a 2.7 per cent reduction from October 2017 levels and 7.9 per cent lower than October 2016 levels. Cattle for beef production on NI farms in the 6-12 month age range totalled 227,851 head in October 2018 which is 6.1 per cent below October 2017 levels. While the majority of these cattle will start coming through for slaughter in autumn 2019 there has been an increase in young bull slaughterings in NI this year and if this trend continues it will remove some of these cattle from the system earlier.

A similar reduction has been recorded in the number of cattle for beef production in the 0-6 month age range. The decline in the number of cattle on NI farms in these lower age brackets will start to impact prime cattle supplies for slaughter as we move into the second half of 2019. There has however been a slight increase in prime cattle imports for direct slaughter from ROI in recent months and if this continues it will help to offset any projected decline in local cattle supplies.

Table 1: Cattle for beef production on NI farms October 2016-2018 by age (months)

Age (Months)	2016	2017	2018	2017/2018	2016/2018
0-6	135977	134975	127113	-5.8%	-6.5%
6-12	243071	242591	227851	-6.1%	-6.3%
12-18	158766	150310	146207	-2.7%	-7.9%
18-24	181222	197313	196044	-0.6%	8.2%
24-30	84174	91774	91773	-0.0%	9.0%

Figure 1: Weekly prime cattle slaughterings in NI 2017 and 2018

UK prime cattle supplies

AHDB has just released its cattle kill outlook for 2018/19 and this has identified similar trends to the projected NI cattle kill. Supplies of prime cattle are expected to remain steady in the first half of 2019 before declining in the second half of the year. A smaller cow herd in GB has resulted in fewer calf registrations and this combined with higher calf mortality due to challenging production conditions are identified as key drivers behind the expected decline in cattle availability for slaughter in the second half of next year.

MAJORITY OF PRIME CATTLE MEET RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS

ONE aspect of current retailer specifications for beef is that the animal being presented for slaughter must have had four or less different farm residences over its lifetime. It is worth noting that it is the number of DIFFERENT RESIDENCES an animal has in its lifetime that is counted and NOT the number of movements.

Establishing the number of farm residences an animal has had over its lifetime is a straight forward process but it is important to know the rules. When calculating the number of residences you need to be looking for the number of distinct herd numbers in the animal movement history including the herd it was born into.

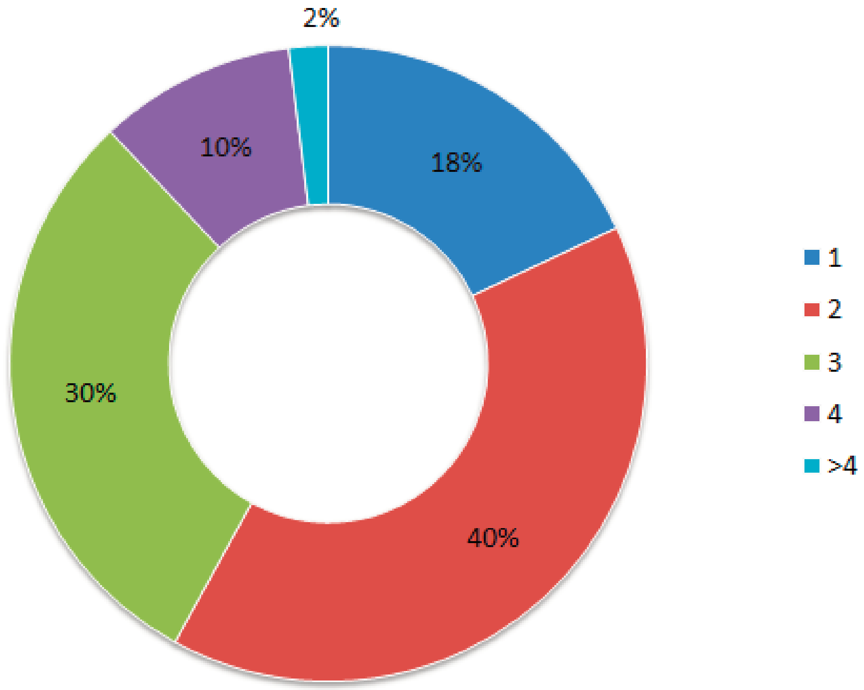
It is important to note that trading premises herds are included as a farm residency but agricultural shows, marts and meat plants are not counted. It should also be noted that if an animal is moved to a mart but is not sold and is taken home again there is no change to the number of farm residences.

The largest majority of cattle killed in local plants meet this requirement. During 2018 to date the average number of residencies for steers was 2.4 farms while for heifers the average was 2.2 residencies. This was similar to the corresponding period in previous years. For price reported young bulls the average number of residences was 1.7 farms during 2018 to date, also similar to previous years.

Figure 2 displays a breakdown of the price reported steer kill in NI by the number of farm residencies during 2018 to date. Just two per cent of price reported steers failed to meet the current residency requirement for four or less farms. As indicated in Figure 2 18 per cent of steers lived on just one farm during their lifetime with a further 40 per cent having lived on two farms. During 2018 to date two per cent of price reported heifers also failed to meet the current residency requirement. Heifers with one farm residency accounted for 25 per cent of the heifer kill with a further 41 per cent of heifers lived on two farms.

During 2018 to date 95 per cent of cows killed locally met the residency requirements with cows living on an average of 2.1 farms in their lifetime. Cows that resided on one farm accounted for 42 per cent of total price reported cows while a further 30 per cent of cows resided on two farms.

Figure 2: Breakdown of the NI steer kill during 2018 to date by number of farm residencies.



WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

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CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 05/11/18	Next Week 12/11/18
Prime		
U-3	346 - 354p	346 - 354p
R-3	340 - 348p	340 - 348p
O+3	334 - 342p	334 - 342p
P+3	288 - 302p	288 - 302p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3 & better	232 - 270p	228 - 265p
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 03/11/18	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	355.8	363.1	345.0
R3	352.5	355.1	343.5
O+3	346.0	346.3	333.5

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 03/11/18	Wgt <220kg	Wgt 220-250kg	Wgt 250-280kg	Wgt >280kg
P1	151.7	161.5	177.5	185.4
P2	181.3	200.2	211.7	227.1
P3	176.0	218.6	233.7	237.3
O3	180.0	218.1	256.8	260.1
O4	-	226.2	253.6	263.2
R3	-	-	290.1	283.6

Deadweight Cattle Trade

THE deadweight cattle trade has continued to hold steady in NI this week with base quotes from the plants ranging from 346-354p/kg for in spec U-3 grade steers and heifers. Quotes this week for good quality O+3 grade cows ranged from 232-270p/kg. Similar quotes for all types of cattle are expected early next week.

Prime cattle throughput in local plants totalled 7,394 head last week, similar to the previous week. Throughput of prime cattle has totalled 281,970 head for 2018 to date, a 1.4 per cent increase on the corresponding period in 2017 when 278,127 prime cattle were killed locally. Cow throughput in local plants last week totalled 2,508 head. This was an increase of 130 head from the previous week and is the highest weekly throughput of cows in NI during 2018. This takes the total cow throughput in 2018 to 87,465 cows, a 3.2 per cent increase when compared to the same period in 2017.

Imports from ROI for direct slaughter last week included 223 prime cattle and 89 cows. Meanwhile exports from NI for direct slaughter in ROI last week included 5 prime cattle, 177 cows and 16 bulls. There were 28 prime cattle and 12 cows exported from NI to GB last week for direct slaughter, while 72 cows made the journey from GB to NI for direct slaughter.

The average steer price in NI last week was back 0.6p/kg to 348.9p/kg while the R3 steer price was back by 0.4p/kg to 357p/kg. The average NI heifer price last week was up by 2.3p/kg to 352.8p/kg while the R3 heifer price was up by 2.9p/kg to 359.8p/kg. The average young bull price in NI increased by 0.4p/kg to 334.2p/kg however the U3 and R3 young bull prices were back by 0.8p/kg and 1.8p/kg respectively. The cow trade came under pressure last week with the O3 cow price reporting a decrease of 2p/kg to 258.7p/kg while the average cow price marginally decreased to 237.4p/kg.

The deadweight trade for prime cattle in GB generally came under pressure last week. The average steer price decreased by 2.1p/kg to 362.6p/kg while the R3 steer price was back by 0.7p/kg to 372.6p/kg. There was some variations across the regions with R3 steer prices increasing marginally in Scotland and Southern England while declines were recorded in Northern England (-3.5p/kg) and the Midlands (-0.4p/kg). The average heifer price in GB last week was up slightly to 364.1p/kg while the R3 heifer price decreased by 0.7p/kg to 373.4p/kg. There was also a variance between regions with the R3 heifer price increasing in Northern England (+1.5p/kg) and Southern England (+0.6p/kg) while it came back strongly in Scotland (-4p/kg).

In ROI last week deadweight prices held steady in euro terms with a slight strengthening in the euro meant prices were generally up in sterling terms. The R3 steer price last week was the equivalent of 327p/kg, up 1.1p/kg from the previous week with the R3 heifer price reporting an increase of 0.8p/kg to 337.6p/kg.

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

W/E 03/11/2018		Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	356.5	336.9	383.9	370.5	372.6	375.0	375.2
	R3	357.0	327.0	381.9	369.4	367.9	372.2	372.6
	R4	357.6	326.7	384.5	382.8	368.8	367.9	378.0
	O3	349.5	309.5	363.7	349.6	338.5	343.2	348.9
	AVG	348.9	-	379.4	364.8	353.5	350.3	362.6
Heifers	U3	363.6	349.9	388.1	376.0	382.1	377.8	381.3
	R3	359.8	337.6	381.3	371.9	370.4	370.2	373.4
	R4	358.3	336.7	382.5	375.9	371.9	369.8	375.4
	O3	353.6	323.1	358.9	348.9	341.1	343.2	348.0
	AVG	352.8	-	379.8	363.7	357.4	353.0	364.1
Young Bulls	U3	346.2	335.5	369.3	358.0	360.2	366.5	361.8
	R3	344.4	324.3	369.2	357.3	354.4	354.0	358.6
	O3	331.6	310.8	328.1	313.6	321.4	313.0	320.3
	AVG	334.2	-	354.5	344.0	331.2	332.7	339.0
Prime Cattle Price Reported		6399	-	6984	7248	7554	4747	26533
Cows	O3	258.7	265.0	246.3	243.7	244.8	236.7	243.3
	O4	262.5	265.7	250.1	240.7	247.7	233.0	243.4
	P2	216.9	230.7	206.6	196.4	203.4	196.6	200.8
	P3	234.9	253.2	214.8	217.2	218.0	214.2	216.6
	AVG	237.4	-	239.4	216.3	210.9	198.7	212.7

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=88.57p 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

	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
W/E 03/11/18	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	190	195	193	175	189	180
Friesians	140	160	148	126	139	132
Heifers	190	208	200	160	188	175
Beef Cows	140	186	159	110	139	125
Dairy Cows	102	113	108	60	99	80
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	220	256	238	175	219	198
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	215	256	230	170	214	192
Bullocks over 500kg	200	214	207	160	199	175
Heifers up to 450kg	210	232	218	170	209	185
Heifers over 450kg	200	230	210	165	199	182
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	330	460	380	230	325	280
Continental Heifers	245	355	295	120	240	180
Friesian Bulls	130	200	175	75	125	100
Holstein Bulls	65	110	90	10	62	35

SHEEP TRADE

SHEEP BASE QUOTES		
(P/Kg DW)	This Week 05/11/18	Next Week 12/11/18
Lambs >21kg	375-380p	380p

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES			
(P/KG)	W/E 20/10/18	W/E 27/10/18	W/E 03/11/18
NI L/W Lambs	347.5	352.4	348.1
NI D/W Lambs	365.2	375.5	376.9
GB D/W Lambs	388.9	387.4	386.7
ROI D/W	384.2	392.3	-

Deadweight Sheep Trade

THE deadweight sheep trade in NI has held steady this week with plants quoting from 375-380p/kg for R3 grading lambs up to 21kg. There were 6,221 lambs killed in local plants last week, back 2,398 head from the previous week. Throughput of hoggets/lambs 2018 to date totalled 328,822 head, a nine per cent decrease on the same period in 2017 when 361,703 hoggets/lambs were killed locally. Lamb exports to ROI for direct slaughter came back last week to 7,299 head. This takes the total lamb/hoggets exports for the year to date to 290,021 head, a nine per cent increase when compared to 266,880 lambs/hoggets in 2017. The deadweight lamb price in NI last week increased by 1.4p/kg to 376.9p/kg.

This week's marts

A relatively steady trade was reported across the NI marts this week. In Omagh last Saturday 1565 lambs sold from 366-414p/kg compared to the previous week when 821 lambs sold from 362-424p/kg . In Massereene on Monday a similar trade to the previous week saw 946 lambs sold from 340-371p/kg. In Kilrea 450 lambs sold from 340-375p/kg compared to 330 lambs last week selling from 340-370p/kg. In Ballymena this week 1,922 lambs sold from 320-371p/kg (avg 331p/kg) compared to 2,401 lambs last week selling from 320-368p/kg (avg 335p/kg). In Armoy this week 264 lambs sold from 340-378p/kg, an improved trade from last week when 246 lambs sold from 324-370p/kg. Top reported prices for cull ewes ranged from £74.50 to £88 across the marts.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS					
From: 02/11/18		Lambs (P/KG LW)			
To: 08/11/18		No	From	To	Avg
Friday	Newtownstewart	500	314	336	-
Saturday	Omagh	1585	366	414	-
	Swatragh	900	315	363	-
Monday	Massereene	946	340	371	-
	Kilrea	450	340	375	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	700	330	376	-
	Rathfriland	802	303	409	341
Wednesday	Ballymena	1922	320	371	331
	Enniskillen	482	325	363	-
	Markethill	1100	330	362	-
	Armoy	264	340	378	-

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