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INCREASE IN CATTLE EXPORTS FOR FURTHER PRODUCTION TO GB AND ROI

EXPORTS of cattle (excluding calves) from NI to GB for further breeding and production increased during 2015 with a total of 13,230 head making the journey compared to 11,374 head during 2014. The level of export was also above 2013 levels when a total of 12,923 cattle were exported from NI to GB for further production.

During 2015 8,888 of the cattle exported from NI to GB were male store cattle which will have been predominantly for beef production on GB farms. This was an increase from 2014 levels when 7,813 male cattle were exported from NI for further breeding and production in GB and from 2013 when 8,086 male cattle were exported.

Figure 1 outlines the monthly exports of male cattle from NI to GB for breeding and production from 2014 to date. As indicated in the chart the monthly level of export during 2015 was higher than the corresponding period in 2014 from March until August with exports peaking in May 2015 at 1,305 head. Exports of male cattle from NI to GB then declined as we moved into the last quarter in line with the normal seasonal trend to a notable low of 194 head in December of 2015.

During January and February 2016 however exports of male cattle from NI to GB for breeding and production have totalled 1,478 head, notably higher than the 957 head exported to GB during the corresponding months in 2015.

Reports have indicated that supplies of store cattle tightened in GB during 2015 due to lower calf birth rates in 2013 and this resulted in increased demand for good quality NI origin store cattle by GB finishers. As NI origin cattle have UK 9 tag numbers when they are finished and slaughtered in GB they are eligible for Red Tractor Farm Quality Assured status. This makes NI origin store cattle more attractive to finishers in GB than store cattle sourced from ROI.

While exports from NI to GB for further production have increased during 2015 the number of prime cattle being exported from NI for direct slaughter in GB plants decreased from year earlier levels. During 2015 a total of 6,029 prime cattle crossed the Irish Sea for direct slaughter compared to 7,629 prime cattle during 2014. Exports from NI to GB for direct slaughter during 2016 to date have totalled 1,452 head, a notable increase from the 478 head exported during the same period in 2014 but similar to 2013 levels.

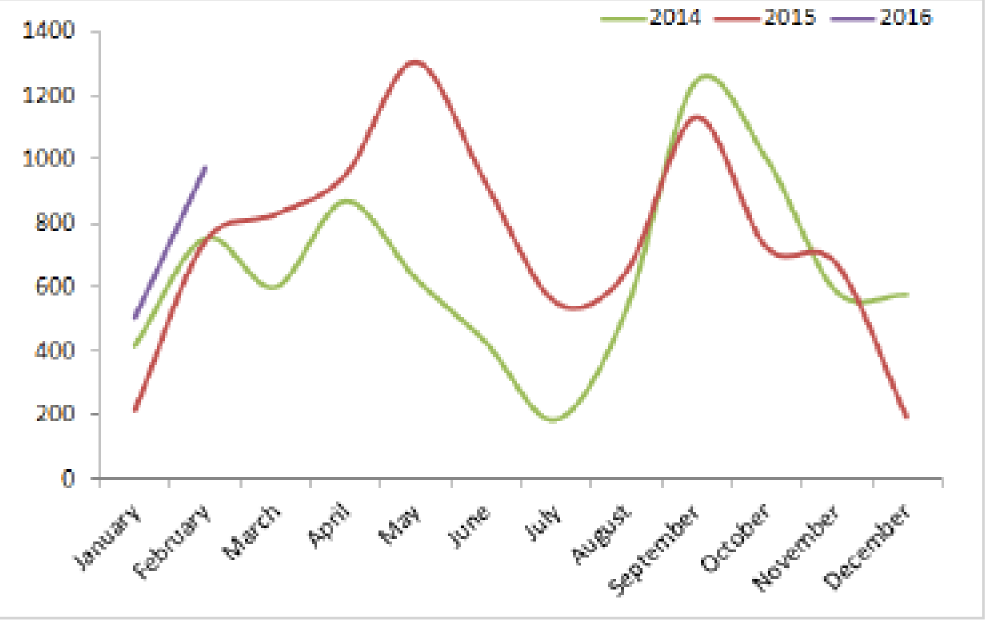
Exports to ROI

Exports of cattle (excluding calves) from NI to ROI for further production also recorded an increase during 2015 but remain at much lower levels than the level of export to GB. A total of 2,058 cattle were exported from NI to ROI for further production during 2015, compared to 1,476 head during 2014.

The level of export was however below 2013 levels when 2,925 cattle were exported from NI to ROI for further production. During 2015 538 of the cattle exported from NI to ROI were male store cattle, an increase from the 318 head exported during 2014. A total of 194 cattle were exported from NI to ROI for further production during 2016 to date.

The exports of prime cattle to ROI for direct slaughter remains a very small trade with 1,176 head exported during 2015. While this was an increase from the 555 head the previous year the trade remains small in comparison to total kill numbers. During 2016 to date 448 prime cattle have been exported from NI to ROI for direct slaughter.

Figure 1: Exports of male store cattle from NI to GB for further breeding and production from 2014 to February 2016



SHEEP INDUSTRY UPDATE FEBRUARY 2016

THE average deadweight hogget price in NI during February 2016 was 399.2p/kg. This was 3.8p/kg higher than the 395.4p/kg paid in February 2015 which is the equivalent of £0.84 on a 22kg hogget carcase.

Meanwhile in GB during February 2016 the average reported deadweight hogget price was 413.7p/kg compared to an average reported price of 419.4p/kg in February 2015. This accounts for a 1.4 per cent decline year on year and puts the differential between NI and GB during February 2016 at 14.5p/kg or £3.19 on a 22kg hogget carcase.

In ROI during February 2016 the average deadweight hogget price was the equivalent of 403.9p/kg, 24.8p/kg higher than the corresponding month in 2015 when the average price was 379.1p/kg. This increase accounts for a 6.5 per cent increase in sterling terms year on year. In euro terms the increase in hogget prices in ROI was much less pronounced. During February 2016 the average hogget deadweight price was 521c/kg, 9c higher than during February 2015 when it was 512c/kg. This increase accounts for a 1.8 per cent increase year on year.

The increase in deadweight hogget prices in sterling terms has been driven by a strengthening in euro against sterling as indicated in Table 1. In February 2015 €1 was worth 74.1 pence sterling and in February 2016 this had increased to €1 being worth 77.6 pence sterling.

Hogget throughput in NI plants during February 2016 totalled 19,332 head, a 9 per cent decrease on the 21,255 hoggets killed in NI plants during February 2015. The major processors have reported steady supplies of hoggets available to meet demand.

There has been a slight decrease in the average carcase weight of hoggets killed in NI plants year on year. The average hogget carcase weight in NI during February 2016 was 21.8p/kg compared to 22.4p/kg during February 2015.

Meanwhile ewe and ram throughput in NI during February 2016 totalled 2,339, a 33.4 per cent decrease from 3,511 head in February 2015. The average ewe and ram carcase weight increased slightly to 26.3kg in February 2016.

ROI continues to act as an important outlet for the NI sheep sector with 34,398 sheep exported from NI to ROI for direct slaughter during February 2016. In the corresponding period in 2015 a total of 25,693 sheep made the journey from NI to ROI for direct slaughter. This accounts for a 33.9 per cent increase year on year.

The strengthening in the value of euro against sterling has made NI hoggets less expensive in euro terms and this has resulted in increased demand for NI origin hoggets from ROI processors whilst also making competing on the EU market slightly less challenging for NI processors.

Table 1: NI Sheep Industry Key Performance Indicators (February Snapshot)

	Feb-15	Feb-16	% Change
Sheep Prices (p/kg)			
Average Deadweight Price **NI**	395.4	399.2	+0.9%
Average Liveweight Price **NI**	358.4	359.2	+0.2%
Average Weekly Price **GB** (D/W)	419.4	413.7	-1.4%
Average Weekly Price **ROI** (D/W)	379.1	403.9	+6.5%
Slaughterings			
Total Hoggets & Lambs Slaughterings (Head)	21,255	19,332	-9.0%
Total Ewes & Rams Slaughterings (Head)	3,511	2,339	-33.4%
Average Hogget & Lambs Carcase Weight (kg)	22.4	21.8	-2.4%
Average Ewe & Rams Carcase Weight (kg)	26.2	26.3	+0.4%
Trade (Head)			
Live Imports for Direct Slaughter	213	177	-16.9%
Live Exports for Direct Slaughter	25,693	34,398	+33.9%
Euro / Stg Exchange Rate (€ / £)	74.1	77.6	+4.7%
All NI Figures Unless Otherwise Stated			

WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

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CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 07/03/16	Next Week 14/03/16
Prime		
U-3	306 - 310p	306 - 310p
R-3	300 - 304p	300 - 304p
O+3	294 - 298p	294 - 298p
P+3	222 - 258p	222 - 258p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3 & better	218 - 240p	218 - 235p
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 05/03/16	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	312.4	318.6	306.5
R3	311.5	312.7	305.3
O+3	302.1	300.2	301.6

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

w/e 05/03/16	Wgt <220kg	Wgt 220-250kg	Wgt 250-280kg	Wgt >280kg
P1	125.8	138.8	144.7	160.8
P2	140.1	163.4	178.4	198.4
P3	156.3	189.2	199.9	212.3
O3	210.0	218.8	216.6	228.3
O4	-	-	226.1	233.3
R3	-	-	-	249.9

Deadweight Cattle Trade

THE deadweight cattle trade has come under some pressure in NI with base quotes this week for in spec U-3 grade prime cattle ranging from 306-310p/kg. Quotes for good quality O+3 grade cows this week ranged from 218-240p/kg across the plants. Similar quotes are expected for all types of cattle early next week.

Prime cattle throughput in NI last week totalled 6,581 head, almost unchanged from the previous week. In the corresponding period in 2015 a total of 7,038 prime cattle were killed in NI plants. Meanwhile cow throughput has remained strong with a total of 1,634 cows slaughtered in NI last week compared to the 1,482 cows killed in the corresponding week in 2015.

Imports of prime cattle from ROI for direct slaughter in NI plants last week totalled 295 head and accounted for four cent of the total prime cattle kill. This was less than the corresponding week in 2015 when 542 prime cattle were imported from ROI for direct slaughter and accounted for per eight cent of the prime cattle kill. A small number of cows were imported from ROI for direct slaughter in NI plants last week compared to 77 cows during the corresponding week in 2015. Meanwhile exports from NI to ROI for direct slaughter last week consisted of 44 prime cattle and 246 cows compared to 36 prime cattle and 217 cows exported to ROI during the same week in 2015. Exports from NI for direct slaughter in GB last week consisted of 94 prime cattle and 40 cows.

The average steer price in NI last week decreased by 1.9p/kg to 303.4p/kg while the R3 steer price was back marginally to 313.9p/kg. Meanwhile the average heifer price in NI last week increased by almost a penny to 308.9p/kg while the R3 heifer price remained steady at 314.3p/kg. The average cow price in NI last week was back by half a penny to 210.7p/kg while the O3 cow price was back by 1.8p/kg 227.2p/kg.

The deadweight cattle trade also came under pressure in GB last week with the average steer price back by 1.2p/kg to 328.3p/kg while the average R3 steer price was back by a similar margin to 334.7p/kg. The differential in R3 steer prices last week between NI and the GB average for R3 steers was 20.8p/kg which is the equivalent of £69 on a 330kg carcase. The average heifer price in GB last week was back by 1.6p/kg to 328.2p/kg while the R3 heifer price was back by a penny to 335.4p/kg. This puts the differential in R3 heifer prices last week between NI and the GB average at 21.1p/kg which is the equivalent of £70 on a 330kg carcase.

Reports from ROI have indicated steady supplies of prime cattle with throughput totalling 25,788 last week. The deadweight cattle trade in ROI held relatively steady in euro terms however a slight weakening in euro against sterling has meant deadweight prices decreased in sterling terms. The R3 steer price in ROI last week was the equivalent of 296.9p/kg, back by 3.3p/kg from the previous week while the R3 heifer price was the equivalent of 310p/kg, back by 3.6p/kg from the previous week. The O3 cow price in ROI last week recorded a decrease of 1.7p/kg to 240.7p/kg which is 13.5p/kg higher than the equivalent price in NI.

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

W/E 05/03/2016		Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	313.0	303.3	344.9	342.8	342.2	344.7	343.5
	R3	313.9	296.9	338.3	332.9	332.7	334.9	334.7
	R4	310.7	297.6	340.3	346.5	333.2	330.7	339.9
	O3	298.3	285.5	313.9	305.5	300.8	305.7	306.8
	AVG	303.4	-	337.2	332.4	321.9	317.9	328.3
Heifers	U3	319.1	320.8	350.8	346.2	348.4	345.0	348.0
	R3	314.3	310.0	336.6	333.0	335.4	335.4	335.4
	R4	312.6	310.0	340.0	336.7	333.6	331.3	336.0
	O3	300.3	297.9	315.9	302.9	305.7	312.4	309.8
	AVG	308.9	-	337.4	330.4	322.7	318.2	328.2
Young Bulls	U3	306.5	291.1	336.1	327.2	342.1	340.7	335.8
	R3	305.5	284.2	329.8	315.2	327.5	328.8	325.2
	O3	293.0	272.9	299.9	281.6	297.8	291.9	292.3
	AVG	290.4	-	297.2	301.2	306.7	299.5	302.0
Prime Cattle Price Reported		5777	-	6918	6830	4915	4701	23364
Cows	O3	227.2	240.7	228.8	221.4	220.9	213.3	220.7
	O4	233.1	240.9	229.9	223.5	219.9	215.6	221.1
	P2	181.9	210.9	168.7	183.4	169.8	167.8	173.0
	P3	206.8	232.5	185.1	200.1	191.6	197.8	194.6
	AVG	210.7	-	214.0	199.4	191.6	187.1	195.4

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=77.74p 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 05/03/16	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	180	189	183	169	177	173
Friesians	-	-	-	-	-	-
Heifers	182	200	191	165	180	172
Beef Cows	130	158	140	100	129	115
Dairy Cows	96	114	101	60	95	77
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	205	232	215	180	204	192
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	200	221	211	170	199	185
Bullocks over 500kg	180	198	190	165	179	175
Heifers up to 450kg	200	229	210	170	199	180
Heifers over 450kg	190	205	198	160	189	175
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	260	365	320	160	258	210
Continental Heifers	205	315	250	100	200	150
Friesian Bulls	100	155	120	30	98	55
Holstein Bulls	50	85	65	15	48	30

SHEEP TRADE

SHEEP QUOTES		
(P/Kg DW)	This Week 07/03/16	Next Week 14/03/16
Hoggets	410p > 22kg	405-415p > 22kg

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES			
(P/KG)	W/E 20/02/16	W/E 27/02/16	W/E 05/03/16
NI Lambs L/W	366.8	354.6	365.5
NI Lambs D/W	400.9	403.8	409.4
GB Lambs D/W	422.5	421.0	423.2
ROI D/W	413.6	413.4	408.9

Deadweight Sheep Trade

QUOTES from the major NI processors for R3 grade hoggets this week firmed at 410p/kg with plants paying up to 22kg. Quotes for early next week range from 405-415p/kg. The plants have reported steady supplies of hoggets coming forward for slaughter with 5,095 hoggets killed in NI last week. This was an increase of 333 head from the previous week and 163 head lower than throughput in the corresponding week in 2015. Exports of sheep from NI to ROI for direct slaughter last week totalled 7,084 head compared to 6,745 head the previous week. The average deadweight hogget price in NI last week increased by 5.6p/kg to 409.4p/kg while the deadweight hogget price in ROI last week decreased by an equivalent of 4.5p/kg to 408.9p/kg.

This week's marts

A firm trade was reported across the marts this week with similar numbers passing through many of the sale rings. In Massereene on Monday 812 hoggets sold from 365-415p/kg compared to 726 hoggets last Monday selling from 360-397p/kg. In Saintfield on Tuesday 669 hoggets sold from 360-405p/kg compared to 505 hoggets last week selling from 365-403p/kg. In Ballymena on Wednesday 1,542 hoggets sold from 345-417p/kg compared to 1,341 hoggets last week selling from 350-413p/kg. In Armoy this week 629 hoggets sold from 365-422p/kg compared to 412 hoggets last week selling from 350-425p/kg. Reported prices for well fleshed cull ewes last week ranged from £84-£122 across the marts.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS					
From: 04/03/16		Hoggets (P/KG LW)			
To: 10/03/16		No	From	To	Avg
Friday	Newtownstewart	168	352	400	-
Saturday	Omagh	688	358	402	-
	Swatragh	685	346	458	390
Monday	Kilrea	385	377	399	-
	Massereene	812	365	415	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	669	360	405	-
	Rathfriland	810	349	405	371
Wednesday	Ballymena	1542	345	417	364
	Enniskillen	898	349	385	-
	Markethill	1190	350	398	365
	Armoy	629	365	422	391

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