LMC BULLETIN

WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF THE LIVESTOCK AND MEAT COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

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LMC SUPPORTS NI APPLICATION FOR BSE NEGLIGIBLE RISK STATUS

DARD has recently issued a public consultation in Northern Ireland seeking views on the making of an application to the OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) for BSE Negligible Risk Status for Northern Ireland. LMC is strongly supportive of the application being made and the LMC Board at its March 2016 meeting has agreed to fund, on behalf of industry, the 9,000 Euro application fee that will be required to accompany the application to the OIE.

LMC has been a long advocate for progressing at the earliest possible opportunity the dismantling of costly BSE controls that are no longer proportionate to the risk, a fact that was recognised by the Agri Food Strategy Board in its Going for Growth report where it is recommended that Government and Industry must work together to speed up the implementation of the TSE roadmap thereby improving access to new markets, particularly third world countries.

As Northern Ireland can now meet the eligibility criteria laid down by the OIE for a region of a Member State to apply for BSE Negligible Risk Status it makes perfect sense for Northern Ireland to seek a positive change in its current official recognition as having a BSE Controlled Risk Status.

From a sustainability perspective the potential to reduce the volume of Specified Risk Material (SRM) requiring disposal under a BSE Negligible Risk scenario, which has been valued by industry at current disposal costs, as a potential annual supply chain saving of £1.2 million is, on its own, strong justification for the application to the OIE.

LMC has been meeting with its main stakeholders in recent months and a common message from both producers and processors is that Northern Ireland must get a broader range of market access opportunities outside the European Union in order to realise the maximum value to the supply chain for every edible and non-edible technical component of the animal that can be sold.

Whilst the UK already has access, under its BSE Controlled Risk Status, for beef exports to a broad range of countries outside the European Union the potential game changers in the marketplace such as mainland China, USA, Japan and the Philippines currently remain closed to UK exporters.

Whilst Defra is the UK lead authority for negotiating third country market access for all regions of the UK, and is making steady progress in third country negotiations, it is LMC's firm view that having a region, or regions, of the UK officially recognised as BSE Negligible Risk must present a positive message in negotiations that the scourge of BSE in the UK has been consigned to the history books.

LMC, as a member of the UK Export Certification Partnership, has been working closely with its sister UK levy bodies, industry organisations and government agriculture departments across the UK to prioritise and develop access to third country markets. LMC is no doubt that the UK continues to suffer from a negative image and legacy left by BSE in the minds of some third countries, with which, the UK would like to do beef export business.

Putting our best foot forward in negotiations with BSE Negligible Risk Status for Northern Ireland is a strategy well worth pursuing, and beef exporters have conservatively estimated, in the consultation document, that the prize of greater third country market access could be worth over £12 million annually to the local beef supply chain.

UK BEEF CONSUMPTION AND EXPENDITURE RECORD A DECLINE

THE major NI processors have indicated that demand for beef has been subdued during much of 2016 to date with current supplies of prime cattle meeting demand for beef. Prime cattle throughput in NI during 2016 to date has totalled 80,641 head, a 6.5 per cent reduction on the 86,260 head slaughtered during the corresponding period in 2015. There has however been an increase in average carcase weights year on year which has offset some of the decline in throughput.

The latest available UK retail beef data from Kantar is for the twelve week period ending 28 February 2016. During this period expenditure on beef totalled 558.7 million, a 1.8 per cent decrease from the corresponding period in 2015 when retail beef sales totalled 568.8 million. The total volume of retail beef sales also recorded a decline with 70,507 tonnes sold during the 12 weeks ending 28 February 2016. This was a 2.1 per cent decrease from 71,988 tonnes of retail beef sales during the corresponding period in 2015.

Meanwhile the average retail price of beef during the 12 week period ending 28 February 2016 was £7.92/kg, almost unchanged from the corresponding period in 2015 when the average retail price was £7.90/kg. Household penetration has also remained fairly steady year on year with 74 per cent of households purchasing beef during the 12 weeks ending 28 February 2016.

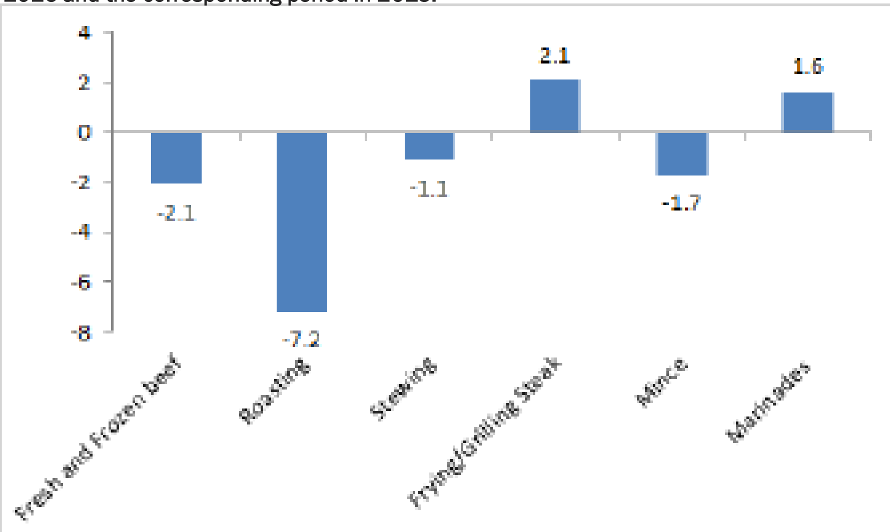
While the total volume of retail beef sales in the UK has recorded a decline year on year there has been variation in the performance of individual cuts in terms of volume sales as indicated in Figure 1.

Volume sales of roasting joints recorded the most notable decline, back by 7.2 per cent during the 12 weeks ending 28 February 2016 when compared to year earlier levels. Meanwhile volume sales of stewing beef recorded a 1.1 per cent decline over the same period while volume sales of mince were back by 1.7 per cent from year earlier levels. The milder weather this winter/spring when compared to previous years may have been a factor in the reduced demand for these cuts of beef.

Some beef cuts did however record increases in volume sales year on year with retail sales of frying and grilling steaks increasing by 2.1 per cent during the 12 week period ending 28 February 2016 when compared to year earlier levels while volume sales of beef marinades increased by 1.6 per cent over the same period.

There was also a mixed performance recorded for processed beef products in terms of retail sales during the 12 week period ending 28 February 2015. Volume sales of chilled ready meals containing beef increased by 3.5 per cent while volume sales of burgers, frozen ready meals and frozen pies all recorded notable declines when compared to year earlier levels.

Figure 1: Percentage change in volume of retail beef sales during 12 weeks ending 28 February 2016 and the corresponding period in 2015.



FQAS MART CLINICS APRIL 2016

LOCATION	DAY	DATE
Omagh	Monday	04/04/2016
Saintfield	Wednesday	06/04/2016
Markethill	Tuesday	12/04/2016
Enniskillen	Thursday	14/04/2016
Kilrea	Wednesday	20/04/2016
Ballymena	Friday	22/04/2016

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.

WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

LMC

CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 28/03/16	Next Week 04/04/16
Prime		
U-3	304 - 310p	304 - 308p
R-3	298 - 304p	298 - 302p
O+3	292 - 298p	292 - 296p
P+3	222 - 260p	222 - 258p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3 & better	218 - 235p	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 26/03/16	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	312.8	317.1	304.8
R3	310.9	311.7	302.6
O+3	299.9	300.9	297.0

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

w/e 26/03/16	Wgt <220kg	Wgt 220-250kg	Wgt 250-280kg	Wgt >280kg
P1	130.6	130.7	144.3	159.2
P2	143.4	162.2	179.9	195.4
P3	175.7	187.5	203.1	212.9
O3	-	198.3	208.3	228.8
O4	-	232.0	215.1	229.7
R3	-	-	-	251.2

Deadweight Cattle Trade

QUOTES from the major NI processors for in spec U-3 grade prime cattle ranged from 304-308p/kg towards the end of this week with the majority of plants quoting 306p/kg for both steers and heifers. Quotes for good quality O+3 grade cows remained fairly steady and ranged from 218-235p/kg this week. The plants have reported steady supplies of cattle coming forward to meet demand for beef with similar quotes expected for all types of cattle early next week.

Prime cattle throughput in NI last week totalled 6,425 head bringing throughput for the year to date 80,641 head, a 6.5 per cent reduction from the corresponding period in 2015. Meanwhile cow throughput in NI last week totalled 1,323 head which brings throughput for 2016 to date to 21,968 head, an 8.5 per cent increase from the corresponding period in 2015.

Imports of prime cattle from ROI for direct slaughter in NI plants last week totalled 189 head, the lowest level of import since early January 2016. Meanwhile 40 prime cattle and 200 cows were exported from NI for direct slaughter in ROI. Exports of prime cattle from NI to GB for direct slaughter totalled 51 head last week, a notable decline from the 182 head exported the previous week. A small number of cows were also exported from NI for direct slaughter in GB last week.

The deadweight trade for prime cattle in NI last week came under some pressure with an R3 steer price of 313.1p/kg, back half a penny from the previous week while the average steer price was back by 2.1p/kg to 302.6p/kg. Meanwhile the R3 heifer price in NI last week increased by 0.9p/kg to 312.9p/kg while the average heifer price was back by 1.4p/kg to 306.1p/kg.

In GB last week the deadweight cattle trade also came under pressure with declines in reported prices in all of the GB regions. The average R3 steer price in GB last week was 329.4p/kg, back by 2.7p/kg from the previous week. The most notable decline in R3 steer prices was in Northern England where it was back by 3.5p/kg to 328.2p/kg with R3 steer prices back in the region of 2-3p/kg in Scotland, the Midlands and Southern England. There were also declines recorded in the deadweight heifer trade in GB with the average R3 heifer price back by 1.6p/kg to 331.1p/kg. R3 heifer prices were back in the region of 3p/kg in Scotland and the Midlands last week while the R3 heifer price in Northern England increased by 2.1p/kg to 330.7p/kg.

Deadweight prices for prime cattle in ROI held fairly steady in euro terms last week although a strengthening in the value of euro against sterling has increased prices in sterling terms. The R3 steer price increased by the equivalent of 1.8p/kg to 301.1p/kg while the R3 heifer price increased by 3.7p/kg to 314.5p/kg. This takes the R3 heifer price in ROI above the equivalent price in NI for the first time since July 2013. Cow prices also firmed in ROI last week in sterling terms with an equivalent O3 cow price of 243.9p/kg. This was 16.6p/kg higher than the O3 cow price in NI last week.

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

W/E 26/03/2016		Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	313.2	308.2	337.6	334.3	333.5	338.3	335.5
	R3	313.1	301.1	332.5	328.2	327.6	329.1	329.4
	R4	310.7	301.3	335.7	338.2	325.9	328.6	333.7
	O3	295.8	289.9	312.3	300.5	298.9	298.5	302.7
	AVG	302.6	-	332.7	326.0	318.0	314.0	323.6
Heifers	U3	317.4	326.3	346.2	339.1	343.7	338.8	342.1
	R3	312.9	314.5	334.2	330.7	328.9	330.5	331.1
	R4	310.6	313.8	334.6	332.4	327.6	325.7	330.8
	O3	301.9	300.2	303.1	299.0	286.1	299.3	297.4
	AVG	306.1	-	333.3	325.7	314.7	312.1	323.0
Young Bulls	U3	304.6	297.3	333.5	324.1	336.0	339.2	332.5
	R3	302.7	289.4	323.7	312.7	324.2	325.1	321.6
	O3	287.1	277.4	290.5	273.4	291.9	280.6	281.7
	AVG	289.5	-	308.1	293.6	314.0	297.6	303.1
Prime Cattle Price Reported		5443	-	6532	6585	4109	4114	21340
Cows	O3	227.3	243.9	220.7	221.1	224.0	211.1	220.8
	O4	229.3	245.4	227.3	224.4	222.4	212.6	221.8
	P2	183.0	218.2	164.6	182.5	168.4	162.1	170.0
	P3	210.1	237.9	190.2	203.5	192.0	185.8	193.3
	AVG	208.0	-	213.0	204.8	189.9	183.6	195.7

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=78.75p 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 26/03/16	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	170	180	175	148	168	158
Friesians	140	155	145	130	139	135
Heifers	180	206	190	155	179	167
Beef Cows	130	218	143	105	128	116
Dairy Cows	96	117	104	60	95	75
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	210	250	230	180	209	195
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	187	200	193	163	177	170
Bullocks over 500kg	185	202	193	165	184	175
Heifers up to 450kg	200	218	209	170	199	185
Heifers over 450kg	180	202	191	155	179	167
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	300	405	350	200	298	250
Continental Heifers	250	375	295	125	245	185
Friesian Bulls	100	200	150	40	98	70
Holstein Bulls	60	148	90	2	58	32

SHEEP TRADE

SHEEP QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 28/03/16	Next Week 04/04/16
Hoggets	410 - 420p > 22kg	410 - 420p > 22kg

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 12/03/16	W/E 19/03/16	W/E 26/03/16
NI Hoggets L/W	376.6	377.1	380.2
NI Hoggets D/W	410.4	412.0	414.4
GB Hoggets D/W	428.0	435.0	433.5
ROI D/W	410.9	421.7	423.4

Deadweight Sheep Trade

QUOTES from the NI plants this week for R3 grade hoggets ranged from 410-420p/kg up to 22kg while quotes for spring lambs ranged from 450-460p/kg up to 21kg. Similar quotes are expected for early next week. The plants have reported steady supplies of hoggets/lambs coming forward for slaughter to meet demand with throughout last week totalling 4,637 head. Exports of sheep from NI to ROI for direct slaughter last week totalled 5,648 head compared to 8,311 head the previous week. The average deadweight hogget price in NI last week increased by 2.4p/kg to 414.4p/kg while in ROI the deadweight hogget price increased by the equivalent of 1.7p/kg to 423.4p/kg

This week's marts

A steady trade was reported across the marts this week although smaller numbers passed through the sale rings when compared to previous weeks. Some marts where also closed due to the Easter holidays. In Rathfriland on Tuesday 422 hoggets sold from 346-388p/kg compared to 676 hoggets last week selling from 364-425p/kg. In Ballymena this week 904 hoggets sold from 345-419p/kg compared to 1,226 hoggets last week selling from 350-409p/kg. In Markethill this week 600 hoggets sold from 350-392p/kg compared to 1,305 hogget's last week selling from 350-386p/kg. A very small number of spring lambs passed through some of the marts this week with average reported prices ranging from 368-478p/kg. Top reported prices for ewes this week generally ranged from £110-120 across the marts with a top price reported of £124 for a pen of Texel ewes in Rathfriland.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS

From: 25/03/16		Hoggets (P/KG LW)			
To: 31/03/16		No	From	To	Avg
Tuesday	Saintfield	305	365	405	-
	Rathfriland	422	346	388	363
Wednesday	Ballymena	904	345	419	364
	Enniskillen	402	382	425	-
	Markethill	600	350	392	370

LATEST SHEEP MARTS

From: 25/03/16		Spring Lambs (P/KG LW)			
To: 31/03/16		No	From	To	Avg
Tuesday	Saintfield	44	396	478	-
	Rathfriland	59	-	-	423

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LMC MONTHLY NEWS

Saturday 02 April 2016 Issue No. 0001

LMC HAS A NEW CHAIRMAN AND A NEW STRATEGY

GERARD McGivern took up his new role as Chairman of the LMC at the beginning of November last: he will serve a three-year term. A native of Rostrevor in Co Down, his background is in small business development and marketing, specifically within the context of local government support for SMEs.

His marketing roles include leading the formulation and delivery of the Mourne Mountains and Ring of Gullion Tourism Marketing Brand. He was also the founding Manager of Banbridge District Enterprises Ltd. Gerard was the first person in Northern Ireland to be appointed a Fellow of the Institute of Economic Development, an accolade bestowed upon him back in 2008.

Significantly, McGivern has no track record in agri food, but feels this could be to his advantage as he settles down to address the challenges that now confront the LMC and the redmeat sector as a whole.

"I bring a totally independent perspective to the position of Chairman. And this, in my opinion, is a strength: not a weakness.

"But I do have a very sound grasp of how businesses work, at every level. In addition, I am working with a very forward looking group of board members and an executive staff team with both tremendous ability and a commitment to ensuring that the targets set for the Commission are met in full."

McGivern confirmed that LMC is in the final stages of compiling a new, three year strategy document, which will be submitted to the new (Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) minister in the very near future.

"Our job is to ensure a viable future for the cattle and sheep sectors in Northern Ireland, at all levels of the supply chain," he said.

"This will require us building on the activities that are already in train. Working to secure new markets for beef and lamb outside the EU will be crucially important in this context, as will our helping to bed down the new marketing body, envisaged as part of the Going for Growth strategy."

Significantly, McGivern does not believe the new marketing body, that has been espoused by the Agri -Food Strategy Board for the past couple of years, will act to reduce the impact made by the LMC.

"The very opposite may well be the case," he stressed. "Our stakeholders account for 26% of Northern Ireland's entire agri food output. So we bring a fair amount of influence to the table. "But, strategically, we recognise the need for all the sectoral interests within the farming and food industry to support each other moving forward. This is the vision espoused by the Agri-Food Strategy Board. And it is one which LMC fully recognises."

McGivern concluded: "Beef and lamb are at the very heart of Northern Ireland's agri food sector. And LMC remains totally committed to playing its part in developing a redmeat industry that delivers, in terms of sustainability, for farmers and processers in equal measure."

Image 1: Current LMC Board Members. Seated left to right: Mrs. Oonagh Chesney, Mr. Gerard McGivern (Chairman) and Mr. Jim Lennon Standing left to right: Mr. Harry Sinclair, Mr. Paddy McElroy and Mr. Gerry Maguire

LMC MONTHLY NEWS

THERE'S a lot more to the Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) than simply collating, reporting and interpreting the facts and figures that relate to Northern Ireland's redmeat sectors. In many ways the organisation is a bit like an iceberg: the bit that's seen above the surface represents only a small fraction of its total scale.

Given this scenario, the decision has been taken to include a third page within the LMC News' slots that feature henceforth in Farming Life on the first Saturday of each month.

"This represents a wonderful opportunity for us to expand on what the Commission is all about," confirmed LMC's chief executive Ian Stevenson. "As an organisation we play a key role in delivering a range of key supply chain services to industry, including the Farm Quality Assurance Scheme.

"We are also totally committed to promoting the consumption of beef and lamb produced here in Northern Ireland. This work entails us liaising closely with the complete gamut of consumer and professional groups, not just here but throughout the UK and beyond.

"We export 80 per cent plus of the beef and lamb produced locally. So part of our remit must be to facilitate the securing of new market opportunities for these high value products."

Ian is very mindful of the need for the Commission to communicate, at all levels, with its farmer and meat processer stakeholders.
"The additional space provided by Farming Life on a monthly basis will allow us to meet this objective in an informative and enlightening manner."

He concluded: "I would particularly like to thank the team at Farming Life for giving us the opportunity to expand on the Commission's input within the publication.

"Beef and lamb in Northern Ireland has a tremendous story to tell. And we hope to do just that courtesy of our enhanced commitment to Farming Life."

LEADING DIETITIAN AT ODDS WITH EAT WELL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RED MEAT

A leading dietitian has questioned the blanket recommendation to reduce red meat intakes, as contained within Eat Well Guide, recently published by Public Health England and widely used as a teaching resource in schools across the UK.

According to Dr Carrie Ruxton, a member of the Meat Advisory Panel, beef and lamb are healthy and nutritional options for all age groups. Ruxton highlighted this issue while addressing the 2016 LMC Home Economics' Conference in Belfast, adding that the messages relating to red meat within the recently published Eat Well Guide, if taken out of context, could be misleading.

She pointed out that the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition recommends a daily intake of up to 70g of cooked red and processed meats to ensure adequate dietary iron levels are achieved. Processed meats are those products that have been either smoked or cured. "According to the 2014 UK National Diet and Nutrition Survey adolescent males eat 74g of red meat on average, while girls only eat 45g daily," said Ruxton.

"However, average intakes of processed meats in the UK are around 17g. This is well below the 50g highlighted by the World Health Organisation as a concern. Continuing, she confirmed that teenage girls and young women are not including enough red meat in their diets. "The latest consumption figures for teenage boys indicate that their red meat intake levels are, pretty much, in line with current recommendations," she said.

Image 2: Dr Carrie Ruxton(left) from the Meat Advisory Panel discusses the benefits of eating red meat with Colin Smith and Cherrie Kenny from LMC and two pupils from Rathmore Grammar School

Ruxton made a clear differentiation between processed meat intakes and the consumption of lean, carcase meats. "I am concerned that blanket recommendations, where all meat consumption levels are concerned, serve only to take away from the key message that fresh, lean meat can play a crucially important role in all our diets."

According to Ruxton, red meat represents a valuable source of iron, B vitamins and Vitamin D. "It is also rich in protein and zinc and also crucially contains iodine and selenium. "All of these nutrients are critically important for young people as they aid both physical and cognitive development. In addition, we also know that up to four in 10 women and young girls lack sufficient iron in the diet while one in 10 are iron deficient."

"Red meat's significance as a source of Vitamin D reflects many people's preference not to eat oily fish." Ruxton continued: "The reality is that the recommendation to eat less red meat, contained within the new Eat Well guide, is not relevant to most consumers. "Teenage girls and young women should increase the levels of red meat contained within their diets: this is fact.

She concluded: "Red meat is a healthy option and its importance increases for those involved in sport and in education. We must encourage young people to choose lean cuts of red meat and keep processed and fatty meat options to occasional treats.

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