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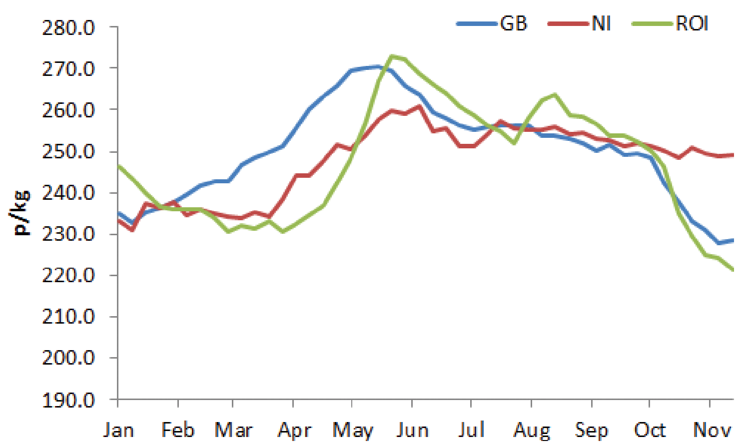
NI COW BEEF PRICES HOLDING STEADY

QUOTES from the major processors for O+3 grading cows have held steady in NI in recent weeks/months with quotes this week ranging from 230-256pkg. The majority of plants are quoting in the region of 240-256p/kg.

With quotes holding steady the prices paid for O3 grading cows have also held relatively steady. The O3 cow price in NI last week was 249p/kg, up marginally from the previous week and very similar to this time last year. However while NI cow prices have held steady there has been a marked decline in the cow trade in both GB and ROI as outlined in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: O3 cow prices in NI, GB and ROI during 2019 to date (p/kg)



The average O3 cow price in GB last week was 228.3p/kg. This was up 0.5p/kg from the previous week however it was 20.7p/kg below the equivalent price in NI. On a 300kg carcase this is the equivalent of £62. Meanwhile the O3 cow price in ROI last week in sterling terms was 221.4p/kg, back 2.8p/kg from the previous week. This puts the value of a 300kg O3 grading cow at £74 behind the same price in NI.

Cow throughput in NI has recorded a five per cent decline during 2019 to date when compared to 2018 levels and with demand for cows from the plants holding steady this may have contributed to the relative stability in the NI cow trade in recent months. In GB cow throughput up until the end of October 2019 totalled 462,367 head which was similar to 2018 levels.

Meanwhile in ROI there has been downward pressure on the prices being paid for all classes of cattle, including cows. There has been a decline in the cow kill in ROI in recent weeks however strong supplies of prime cattle have helped processors maintain throughput.

EU Trade

Table 1 displays O3 cow prices across the EU in euro terms for the week ending 10 November 2019 and the corresponding week last year. The average EU O3 cow price was 271.9c/kg, back 6.4c/kg from the same week last year. There is however some notable variation in the deadweight cow trade recorded across the regions.

The O3 cow price in NI during the week ending 10 November 2019 in euro terms was 287.0c/kg, up marginally from the same week in 2018. This puts NI cow prices the fourth highest in the EU, behind Sweden, France and Denmark respectively. In the same week last year NI had the sixth highest O3 cow price in the EU.

The O3 cow price in GB was the equivalent of 262.7c/kg during the w/e 10 November 2019, back 11.4c/kg from the same week last year. This decline has placed it in ninth place in the league table, down two places from the same week last year and 9.2c/kg below the EU average price.

However the biggest decline in O3 cow prices have been recorded in ROI which was back by 34.8c/kg year on year to 258.5c/kg. This moves it down from fourth position in the table to tenth position and places it 13.4c/kg below the EU average. This notable decline year on year equates to a decline in the value of a 300kg carcase of €104 year on year.

Table 1: O3 cow prices in a range of EU countries (c/kg) Source: EU Commission

EU Deadweight Cattle Prices – Cows O3 Equivalent (€ Cents)						
Position w/e 11/11/18	Position w/e 10/11/19	Country	Price 2018 (w/e 11/11/18)	Price 2019 (w/e 10/11/19)	Change on Mth (cents)	% Change year on year
1	1	Sweden	374.9	355.8	-19.0	-5.1%
2	2	France	305.0	300.0	-5.0	-1.6%
3	3	Denmark	293.4	289.5	-4.0	-1.3%
5	4	Northern Ireland	286.7	287.0	+0.3	0.1%
9	5	Germany	270.0	268.9	-1.1	-0.4%
8	6	Belgium	274.4	265.0	-9.3	-3.4%
10	7	Italy	268.0	263.5	-4.5	-1.7%
7	8	Great Britain	274.4	262.7	-11.7	-4.3%
4	9	Ireland	293.3	258.5	-34.8	-11.9%
6	10	Poland	275.1	251.8	-23.3	-8.5%
11	11	Spain	254.1	247.1	-6.9	-2.7%
12	12	Austria	244.5	245.8	+1.3	0.5%
14	13	Lithuania	236.7	239.4	+2.8	1.2%
13	14	Czech Republic	237.0	228.7	-8.3	-3.5%
15	15	Slovenia	223.4	224.6	+1.2	0.5%
		EU Average	278.2	271.9	-6.4	-2.3%
	Euro (€1=)		87.3	86.2	-1.1	-1.2%

UPDATE ON NI LIVE CATTLE TRADE WITH ROI

LAST week there were 263 prime cattle imported from ROI for direct slaughter in local plants, taking the total for the last six weeks to 1,724 head, with these prime cattle accounting for four per cent of total prime cattle throughput in NI. In the corresponding six week period last year 1,314 prime cattle were imported from ROI for direct slaughter in local plants and accounted for three per cent of total throughput.

> Prime cattle imported from ROI have accounted for three per cent of prime cattle throughput in NI in the last six weeks

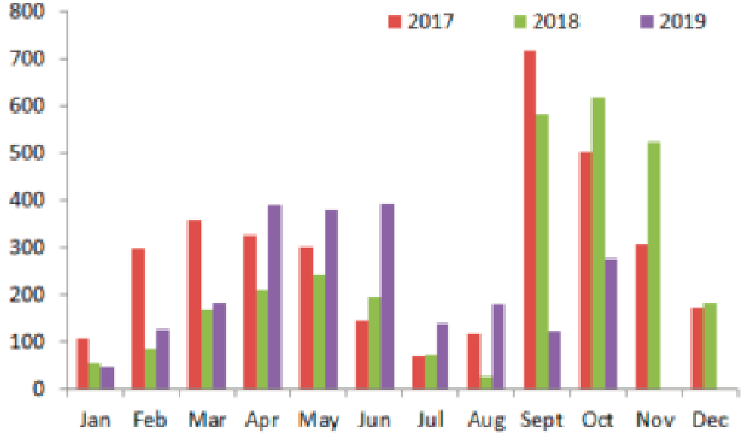
The increase in the level of prime cattle imports from ROI in recent weeks has been in line with normal seasonal trends. There has also been a tightening in prime cattle supplies in NI for slaughter combined with the firming in demand for beef from major retail and food service customers. In addition to this the weak deadweight beef trade in ROI and an oversupply of cattle have also contributed to the increased levels of export of prime cattle across the NI border.

It is however worth noting that despite the increase in imports in the last few weeks current levels of import are well behind historical levels. In the corresponding six week period in period in 2015 3,507 prime cattle were imported from ROI, accounting for nine per cent of prime cattle throughput locally.

Breeding and Production

While the number of prime cattle being imported from ROI for direct slaughter in local plants has increased in the last few months the number of cattle being imported for further breeding and production has been operating at very low levels.

Figure 2: Monthly male cattle imports from ROI for further breeding and production January 2017 to October 2019. Source: APHIS



During October 2019 there were 277 male cattle over 42 days of age imported from ROI, a notable decline from the 617 head imported during the same period in 2019. Cattle imported from ROI for further production on local farms have a much more limited number of market outlets due to their mixed origin status and this is reflected in the prices available at point of slaughter.

It is important therefore that anyone considering importing cattle from ROI for further productionon local farms takes this into account and consults with the procurement staff of the individual plants.

Cow Imports

During the last six weeks there have been 366 cows imported from ROI for direct slaughter in local plants. These cows have accounted for just over two per cent of total cow throughput in local plants. In the same period in 2018 cow imports from ROI were operating at very similar levels with 351 cows imported for direct slaughter.

> Cows imported from ROI have accounted for two per cent of total cow throughput in NI in the last six weeks

Exports to ROI

There is a very small trade for prime cattle exported from NI for slaughter in plants in ROI with just 36 head exported in the last six weeks. During 2019 to date there have been 704 prime cattle exported to ROI for direct slaughter, back from 1,504 head in the same period last year. With deadweight prices in NI operating at higher levels than ROI for much of 2019 the live trade from NI to ROI has been discouraged.

This has also been reflected in the level of cow export from NI to ROI for direct slaughter. During 2019 to date 3,601 cows have been exported from NI to ROI for direct slaughter, back from 5,679 head in the same period in 2018.

WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

LMC Livestock & Meat Commission

CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 18/11/19	Next Week 25/11/19
Prime		
U-3	322 - 328p	322 - 328p
R-3	316 - 322p	316 - 322p
O+3	310 - 316p	310 - 316p
P+3	262 - 270p	262 - 270p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3 & better	230 - 256p	230 - 256p
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 16/11/19	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	329.8	336.7	318.5
R3	327.9	331.4	319.7
O+3	322.0	323.3	313.1

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 16/11/19	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	144.8	155.5	166.1	177.8
P2	175.3	184.7	208.0	219.0
P3	175.0	204.0	221.4	229.9
O3	222.0	229.0	244.8	249.8
O4	-	-	245.6	250.6
R3	-	-	270.0	271.7

Deadweight Cattle Trade

Base quotes from the plants for U-3 grade prime cattle ranged from 322-328p/kg this week. The majority of plants are now quoting 326-328p/kg for steers and heifers. The deadweight cow trade in NI has continued to remain steady with quotes for O+3 grading cows ranging from 230-256p/kg this week. Similar quotes for all types of cattle are expected early next week.

Prime cattle throughput has remained strong with 7,097 prime cattle killed in local plants last week up 214 head from the 6,883 head killed during the previous week. However this is back by 412 head from the same week last year when 7,509 prime cattle were killed in local plants. Cow throughput in local plants reported a decline of 210 head last week to 2,383 cows and is also back by 512 cows when compared to the same week in 2018.

Imports of prime cattle for direct slaughter last week totalled 267 head, 263 head of which came from ROI and the remaining four steers from GB. Cow imports for direct slaughter have remained similar to previous weeks with 46 cows from ROI and a further 87 from GB last week. Exports out of NI for direct slaughter have continued at similar levels to previous weeks with six prime cattle and 32 cows exported last week to ROI with no cattle exported to GB for direct slaughter.

The NI deadweight trade last week for prime cattle firmed compared to previous weeks. The average steer price in NI last week was up 4.4p/kg to 323p/kg while the R3 steer price was up 3.8p/kg to 332.5p/kg. The average heifer price in NI last week increased by 2.6p/kg to 326.6p/kg while the R3 heifer price increased by 1.8p/kg to 334.1p/kg. The cow trade in NI held steady with the average cow price up by a penny to 222.4p/kg while the O3 cow price was slightly up to 249p/kg.

In GB last week the deadweight trade for prime cattle reported signs of improvement compared to previous weeks. The average steer price in GB last week was up just over a penny to 325.4p/kg with the R3 steer price reporting an increase of 0.4p/kg to 333.7p/kg. There were variations in R3 steer prices across the regions with increases reported in Scotland (1.6p/kg) and the Midlands and Wales (1.3p/kg), prices held steady in Southern England while there was a decline reported in Northern England (-1.8p/kg). The average heifer price in GB last week was up half a penny to 325.4p/kg with the R3 heifer price up by a similar margin to 334.1p/kg. The R3 heifer price increased last week in Scotland (+2.1p/kg), Midlands and Wales (+0.6p/kg) and Northern England (+0.4p/kg) with a decline reported in Southern England (-1.4p/kg).

In ROI last week a weakening in the euro against sterling has resulted in the deadweight prime cattle prices decreasing in sterling terms. The R3 steer price was back by the equivalent of 1.7p/kg to 296.1p/kg. This brings the differential to 36.4p/kg below the R3 steer price in NI. The R3 heifer price was back by 2.1p/kg to 302.9p/kg which puts the differential at 31.2p/kg behind the corresponding price in NI.

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

W/E 16/11/19		Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	331.5	302.1	347.6	335.9	333.3	331.7	337.1
	R3	332.5	296.1	345.8	334.5	329.3	325.9	333.7
	R4	330.1	293.7	347.0	346.5	329.1	324.7	339.6
	O3	325.0	279.0	326.2	310.3	306.5	305.3	312.1
	AVG	323.0	-	343.4	326.2	317.7	312.9	325.4
Heifers	U3	338.1	312.4	352.6	339.8	341.9	338.9	343.5
	R3	334.1	302.9	345.1	331.2	330.6	329.2	334.1
	R4	332.4	302.2	345.9	334.2	331.9	326.8	335.4
	O3	326.0	290.1	325.5	313.3	304.5	308.4	312.5
	AVG	326.6	-	343.9	324.7	316.6	315.7	325.4
Young Bulls	U3	321.7	284.6	334.5	322.4	333.8	318.7	327.6
	R3	321.3	276.4	331.3	320.2	321.9	306.0	322.0
	O3	307.1	261.0	301.4	289.0	290.6	287.5	291.8
	AVG	308.2	-	322.1	302.1	297.5	300.1	303.8
Prime Cattle Price Reported		5,938	-	7,082	7,452	8,177	5,048	27,759
Cows	O3	249.0	221.4	229.4	231.6	227.6	225.0	228.3
	O4	250.4	221.7	233.1	232.7	228.8	220.2	228.8
	P2	208.9	196.8	185.2	185.0	186.3	190.4	187.1
	P3	227.0	209.5	202.5	198.7	204.0	198.6	201.9
	AVG	222.4	-	222.0	206.3	192.1	191.0	198.5

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=85.73p 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

W/E 16/11/19	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	200	212	204	175	199	187
Friesians	140	151	144	124	136	132
Heifers	194	204	200	165	193	180
Beef Cows	143	180	157	115	142	127
Dairy Cows	105	122	110	60	102	82
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	210	263	228	175	209	190
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	205	222	212	160	204	185
Bullocks over 500kg	190	210	200	160	189	175
Heifers up to 450kg	190	211	200	160	189	175
Heifers over 450kg	185	203	195	165	184	175
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	350	450	400	250	345	290
Continental Heifers	280	365	325	150	275	215
Friesian Bulls	100	200	150	38	80	60
Holstein Bulls	75	175	120	1	70	40

SHEEP TRADE

NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 18/11/19	Next Week 25/11/19
Lambs up to 22kgs	370-380p	375-380p

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 02/11/19	W/E 09/11/19	W/E 16/11/19
NI L/W Lambs	320.9	333.7	355.6
NI D/W Lambs	342.4	350.5	373.7
GB D/W Lambs	377.1	390.0	407.3
ROI D/W	365.5	372.3	379.0

Deadweight Sheep Trade

Quotes from the plants for R3 grading lambs firmed as the week progressed ranging from 375-380p/kg up to 22kgs towards the end of this week. Similar quotes are expected for early next week. Lamb throughput in local plants increased by 210 lambs to 8,493 head last week. Exports of lambs to ROI for direct slaughter decreased last week with 8,070 lambs making to journey to plants in ROI. The deadweight lamb price in NI last week improved by 23.2p/kg to 373.7p/kg when compared to the previous week. In the same week in 2018 the NI deadweight lamb price was 373p/kg. The deadweight lamb price in ROI last week increased by the equivalent of 6.7p/kg to 379p/kg.

This week's marts

A strong demand for good quality lambs has been reported this week with many marts reporting a sharper trade. In Omagh last Saturday 1,396 lambs sold from 373-406p/kg compared to 683 lambs the previous Saturday selling from 333-401p/kg. In Kilrea this week 500 lambs sold from 340-397p/kg compared to 200 lambs last week selling from 330-409p/kg. In Rathfriland this week 700 lambs sold from 336-445p/kg (avg 360p/kg) compared to 774 lambs last week selling from 330-418p/kg (avg 347p/kg). In Enniskillen on Wednesday 584 lambs sold from 332-370p/kg compared to 402 lambs last week selling from 330-379p/kg. In Markethill this week 930 lambs sold from 350-385p/kg compared to 720 lambs last week selling from 330-376p/kg. The trade for cull ewes also improved with top reported prices ranging from £87–£150.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 15/11/19		Lambs			
To: 21/11/19		No	From	To	Avg
Friday	Newtownstewart	279	333	365	
Saturday	Swatragh	1065	325	376	
	Omagh	1396	373	406	
Monday	Massereene	968	340	380	
	Kilrea	500	340	397	
Tuesday	Saintfield	710	322	422	
	Rathfriland	700	336	445	360
Wednesday	Ballymena	2359	340	374	350
	Enniskillen	584	332	370	-
	Armoy	388	352	400	-
	Markethill	930	350	385	-

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