

# PRIME CARCASS WEIGHTS REMAIN HIGH

THE carcass weight of prime cattle passing through price reporting plants in Northern Ireland has continued to increase during 2019 to date.

During the six week period ending 23 November 2019 the average carcass weight of prime cattle killed in local plants was 343.9kg, up from 341.1kg in the corresponding period in 2018 and 336.4kg in the same period in 2017. All categories of prime cattle killed in local plants have recorded an increase in average carcass weights over the last two years as outlined in Table 1.

### Specifications

The majority of major retail and foodservice customers want beef from carcasses between 280-380kg. Cuts from these carcasses fit into standard pack sizes, can be presented well and meet price points for the consumer.

**Table 1: Average carcass weight of prime cattle during the six weeks ending 23 November 2019 and the corresponding period in 2017 and 2018.**

	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls	Total
2017	349.1	317.6	338.7	336.4
2018	357.5	319.2	342.5	341.1
2019	359.8	322.9	342.4	343.9

While there are market outlets for beef from carcasses outside these weight ranges they are much more limited and do not necessarily provide the same return to the processor. It is important that anyone considering finishing cattle outside this desired weight range consults with the procurement staff of the individual plants to ensure there is a market outlet for the cattle they are producing.

### Weight ranges

Price reporting data has indicated that during the last six weeks 58 per cent of steers killed locally produced carcasses within the desired 280-380kg weight range as outlined in Figure 1 and Table 2. A further 15 per cent of carcasses were between 380-400kg while 18 per cent of carcasses were between 400-450kg. Six per cent of steers produced carcasses below the desired 280kg.

During the same six week period 75 per

cent of price reported heifers produced carcasses within the desired 280-380kg weight range. A further 10 per cent of carcasses were over 380kg with 15 per cent of heifers producing carcasses lighter than 280kg.

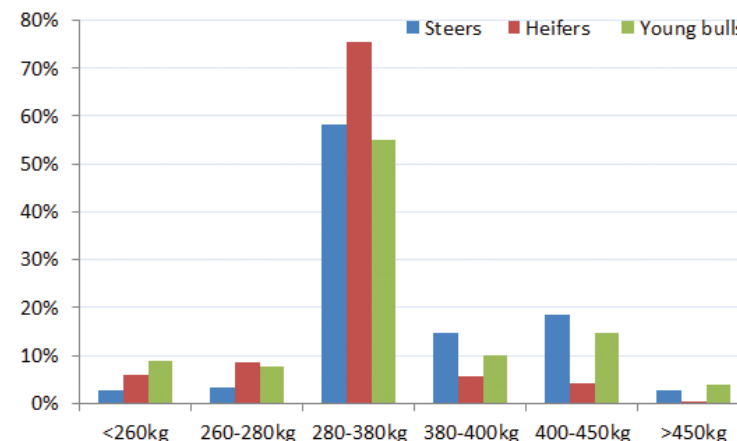
During the six weeks ending 23 November 2019 55 per cent of young bulls produced carcasses between 280-380kg. A further 10 per cent of carcasses were between 380-400kg while 19 per cent of carcasses produced carcasses over 400kg. The remaining 17 per cent of young bulls produced carcasses weighing less than 280kg.

### Penalties

There are currently a range of penalties on place across the major beef processing plants for carcasses outside the desired 280-380kg weight range and producers should engage with the individual processors prior to presenting cattle for slaughter.

Quoted penalties across the major processing plants for underweight carcasses are generally £24/head for carcasses under 240kg, and £12/head for carcasses between 240-260kg. There are however some breed specific schemes that may not penalise for these lighter carcasses.

**Figure 1: Breakdown of the price reported prime cattle kill by category and weight range during the six weeks ending 23 November 2019.**



**Table 2: Breakdown of the price reported prime cattle kill by category and weight range during the six weeks ending 23 November 2019.**

	<260kg	260-280kg	280-380kg	380-400kg	400-450kg	>450kg
Steers	3%	3%	58%	15%	18%	3%
Heifers	6%	9%	75%	6%	4%	0%
Young bulls	9%	8%	55%	10%	15%	4%

Meanwhile penalties are generally being applied on prime cattle carcasses over 400kg in the major processing plants. While penalties vary across the plants they generally range from 10-30p/kg and increase within this range

as the carcass weight increases. The application of these penalties however can be variable. It is important that processors give producers the correct market signals and reward cattle that best meet market specifications.

# FQAS MART CLINICS DECEMBER 2019

Liaison MC'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.

The Liaison Service is in place to assist farmers and to ensure that as many producers as possible can continue to benefit from being a member of the

scheme. Producers can use the service for any general enquiries in relation to FQAS membership, to help prepare for an inspection and also to help resolve any non-conformances identified during a farm 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 Table 3. For further information call (028) 9263 3024.

**Image 1: Terry White will be visiting several marts during December 2019**



# LAMB WEIGHTS INCREASE

THE average lamb carcase weight in Northern Ireland last week was 22.6kg. This was the highest recorded average weight for this seasons lambs and was similar to the 22.7kg recorded during the same week last year.

In recent weeks local processors have increased the upper weight limit for lambs to 22kg however processors have indicated that there are still a large number of lambs being killed at heavier carcase weights.

The current specification from the major processors is for R grading lambs or better with a fat score of 2 or 3 and a carcase weight of 18-22kg. Processors also have a strong preference for lambs with FQ status

with bonuses available in some plants while other plants will not handle non assured lambs.

Producers should aim to finish lambs as close to market specifications for weight and fat cover as possible. Finishing lambs at heavier carcase weights or with higher levels of fat cover increases production costs for the producer while providing no additional financial return to the farm enterprise.

Top quoted prices for R3 grading lambs in the plants this week were 380p/kg with plants paying up to 22kg. This puts the value of 22kg R3 grading carcase at £83.60. With plants paying to a maximum of 22kg it makes no economic sense to finish lambs at heavier weights as outlined in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Finishing lambs at higher carcase weights provides no financial return.**



**Table 3: FQAS Clinics for December 2019**

Mart	Day	Date
Omagh	Monday (Day)	02/12/2019
Saintfield	Wednesday (Day)	04/12/2019
Enniskillen	Thursday (Day)	05/12/2019
Markethill	Tuesday (Day)	17/12/2019
Kilrea	Wednesday (Day)	18/12/2019
Ballymena	Friday (Day)	20/12/2019

## FQAS Helpline

If you have had a recent inspection and need help and advice to rectify any non-conformances, contact the FQAS helpline:  
Tel: 028 9263 3024

## Answerphone Service

Factory Quotes & Mart Results  
Updated 5pm Daily  
Tel: 028 9263 3011

## Text Service

Free weekly price quotes sent to your mobile phone  
Email - bulletin@lmcni.com  
Tel: 028 9263 3000

# WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

## CATTLE TRADE

### NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 25/11/19	Next Week 02/12/19
<b>Prime</b>		
U-3	322 - 328p	322 - 330p
R-3	316 - 322p	316 - 324p
O+3	310 - 316p	310 - 318p
P+3	262 - 270p	262 - 272p
	Including bonus where applicable	
<b>Cows</b>		
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.

### Deadweight Cattle Trade

Base quotes from the major processors remained steady this week ranging from 322-328p/kg for in-spec U-3 grade prime cattle. The majority of plants are quoting 326-328p/kg for both steers and heifers. The cow trade also remained steady this week with quotes for O+3 grading cows at 230-256p/kg across the plants. Similar quotes expected for all types of cattle early next week.

Prime cattle throughput has remained strong in local plants with 7,019 prime cattle killed last week. This was back 78 head from the previous week. In the same week last year prime cattle throughput in NI was 7,727 head. Cow throughput in NI has also remained similar with throughput last week totalling 2,211 head back 172 cows from the previous week. In the same week last year 2,184 cows were killed in local plants.

Imports of cattle from ROI for direct slaughter last week consisted of 227 prime cattle and 32 cows with a further 150 cows and three steers imported for direct slaughter from GB. Exports of cattle out of NI for direct slaughter to ROI last week consisted of nine prime cattle and 37 cows with no cattle exported to GB.

The deadweight trade in NI for prime cattle continued to show signs of improvement last week. The average steer price in NI last week was up half a penny to 323.5p/kg while the R3 steer price was up by a similar margin to 333.1p/kg. Meanwhile the average heifer price reported an increase of 2.3p/kg to 328.9p/kg in NI last week with the R3 heifer price up by a similar margin to 336.6p/kg. The average young bull price in NI last week increased by 0.4p/kg to 308.6p/kg while the R3 young bull price decreased by 2.8p/kg to 318.5p/kg. The cow trade also improved last week in NI with the average and O3 cow prices both increasing by 3.1p/kg to 225.5p/kg and 252.1p/kg respectively.

The deadweight trade for prime cattle also improved in GB last week with the average steer price up 1.3p/kg to 326.7p/kg. The R3 steer price in GB last week was up by 3.4p/kg to 337.1p/kg with increases recorded in all the GB regions. The differential in R3 steer prices between NI and GB last week was 4p/kg or £14 on a 350kg carcass. The average heifer price in GB last week reported a slight decrease of 0.3p/kg to 325.1p/kg, while the R3 heifer price reported an increase of 1.7p/kg to 335.8p/kg. The R3 heifer price last week recorded an increase in Scotland (+0.5p/kg), Northern England (+4.5p/kg) and the Midlands (+2.4p/kg) with a slight decrease reported in Southern England (-0.3p/kg). In GB last week the R3 heifer price was 0.8p/kg below the same price in NI.

In ROI last week prime cattle deadweight prices came under pressure in both euro and sterling terms when compared to the previous week. The R3 steer price decreased 1.8p/kg to the equivalent of 294.3p/kg while the R3 heifer price was back by a penny of 301.9p/kg. However the deadweight cow trade in ROI improved with the O3 cow price up by the equivalent of 1.4p/kg to 222.8p/kg last week.

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

W/E 23/11/19	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	332.3	301.7	347.6	336.9	337.6	339.6
	R3	333.1	294.3	349.0	338.1	331.9	337.1
	R4	330.2	292.5	348.4	341.6	331.4	338.9
	O3	323.8	278.7	332.0	315.2	309.0	315.8
	AVG	323.5	-	344.4	327.6	318.9	326.7
Heifers	U3	339.1	311.8	353.6	342.2	342.4	344.4
	R3	336.6	301.9	345.6	335.7	333.0	335.8
	R4	334.7	300.4	347.0	335.0	333.9	336.5
	O3	326.2	288.6	327.0	313.6	309.3	313.5
AVG	328.9	-	343.3	325.2	319.0	325.1	
Young Bulls	U3	321.0	285.6	345.0	332.0	324.4	331.0
	R3	318.5	275.6	336.2	321.6	324.4	325.2
	O3	301.0	262.3	284.3	289.5	296.8	292.9
	AVG	308.6	-	318.6	300.1	305.4	304.5
Prime Cattle Price Reported	5,889	-	7,131	7,236	7,886	5,022	27,275
Cows	O3	252.1	222.8	231.1	232.3	225.6	227.3
	O4	253.3	222.3	235.7	232.6	228.9	228.1
	P2	207.9	193.1	192.3	185.2	183.1	185.0
	P3	228.6	209.1	203.5	199.9	202.6	201.3
	AVG	225.5	-	220.1	209.3	190.7	198.7

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=85.63p 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

### REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 23/11/19	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	331.5	339.1	320.4
R3	329.1	334.7	317.1
O+3	321.9	324.9	306.8

\*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

### REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 23/11/19	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	143.7	156.7	165.2	177.1
P2	163.8	185.3	204.0	220.5
P3	215.2	205.2	221.7	231.3
O3	180.0	234.9	248.1	252.7
O4	-	224.5	252.5	253.7
R3	-	-	-	272.5

### LATEST LIVEWEIGHT CATTLE MART PRICES NI

W/E 23/11/19	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
<b>Finished Cattle (p/kg)</b>						
Steers	201	212	205	170	200	185
Friesians	162	173	167	134	156	146
Heifers	200	211	204	165	199	182
Beef Cows	136	184	152	115	135	125
Dairy Cows	103	122	108	60	102	82
<b>Store Cattle (p/kg)</b>						
Bullocks up to 400kg	220	267	232	180	219	198
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	215	259	225	165	214	190
Bullocks over 500kg	202	216	205	167	197	182
Heifers up to 450kg	200	281	220	160	199	175
Heifers over 450kg	185	207	195	165	184	175
<b>Dropped Calves (£/head)</b>						
Continental Bulls	350	480	400	245	345	295
Continental Heifers	275	360	320	150	270	210
Friesian Bulls	100	200	120	40	95	65
Holstein Bulls	70	115	90	18	60	40

# SHEEP TRADE

## NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 25/11/19	Next Week 02/12/19
Lambs up to 22kg	375-380p	380-390p

## REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 09/11/19	W/E 16/11/19	W/E 23/11/19
NI L/W Lambs	333.7	355.6	360.8
NI D/W Lambs	350.5	373.7	378.2
GB D/W Lambs	390.0	407.3	421.5
ROI D/W	372.3	379.0	392.2

## Deadweight Sheep Trade

Base quotes from the plants this week for R3 grading lambs remained firm at 375-380p/kg with plants paying up to 22kg. Quotes of 380-390p/kg up to 22kg are expected next week. Lamb throughput last week increased by 864 lambs to total 9,357 head. This was 674 lambs above the 8,683 lambs killed locally in the same week last year. Lambs exported to ROI for direct slaughter last week increased by 1,607 head to 9,677 lambs. This is the highest weekly level of lamb export to date in 2019. In the same week last year 9,073 lambs were exported to ROI for direct slaughter. The deadweight lamb price in NI last week was up 4.5p/kg to 378.2p/kg while the ROI deadweight lamb price increased by 13.2p/kg to the equivalent of 392.2p/kg.

## This week's marts

Good numbers continue to pass through the marts with a steady trade generally reported this week. In Swatragh last Saturday 970 lambs sold from 320-376p/kg compared to 1,065 lambs the previous week selling from 325-376p/kg. In Massereene on Monday 946 lambs sold from 340-380p/kg compared to 968 lambs selling from 340-380p/kg last week. In Saintfield this week 824 lambs sold from 332-422/kg compared to 710 lambs last Tuesday selling from 322-422p/kg. In Ballymena this week a large entry of 2,745 lambs sold from 340-392p/kg (avg 352p/kg) compared to 2,349 lambs last week selling from 340-374p/kg (avg 350p/kg). The trade for cull ewes remains firm with top reported prices from £89-£120 across the marts.

## LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 22/11/19		Lambs			
To: 28/11/19		No	From	To	Avg
Friday	Newtownstewart	276	339	397	-
Saturday	Swatragh	970	320	376	-
	Omagh	1123	361	404	-
Monday	Massereene	946	340	380	-
	Kilrea	480	336	380	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	824	332	422	-
	Rathfriland	525	322	437	365
Wednesday	Ballymena	2745	340	392	352
	Enniskillen	455	358	405	-
	Armoy	392	317	390	-
	Markethill	1350	350	376	-

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