

# SOME IMPROVEMENT IN BEEF SIRE CALF REGISTRATIONS

**D**URING November 2019 there were 18,833 beef sired calves registered in Northern Ireland, taking the total for the year to date to 331,258 head. This is marginally higher than the corresponding 11 month period in 2018 but well behind the 349,074 beef calves registered in the same period in 2017.

Beef sired calf registrations were under significant pressure during 2018 and into the first half of 2019 but have shown some signs of recovery in the last few months. However much of this improvement has been due to an increase in beef calf registrations to dairy cows in Northern Ireland.

### Suckler cows

During the period January-November 2019 there were 216,284 beef calves registered to suckler cows in Northern Ireland. This was back by 3,083 calf registrations from the same period last year which represents a 1.4 per cent decline. This is the third consecutive year in which registrations to suckler cows have declined in Northern Ireland.

### Dairy cows

While calf registrations to suckler cows

have been declining the number of beef sired calves being registered to dairy cows has been steadily increasing. During January-November 2019 there were 114,974 beef calves registered to dairy cows in Northern Ireland. This was an increase of 4,280 head or 3.9 per cent from the same period in 2018.

**2019 YTD**

**Total beef calf registrations**  
331,258 +0.4%

**To suckler cows**  
-1.4 %

**To dairy cows**  
+3.9%

In the same period in 2014 there were 78,556 beef calves registered to dairy cows as outlined in Figure 1. This increase by 36,418 head between the five years represents a 46 per cent increase in registrations. Beef calf registrations to dairy cows now represent more than a third of total beef calf registrations in Northern Ireland.

### Breeds

The dairy herd is having an increasingly important role in the production of

calves for the Northern Ireland beef industry and this is being reflected in the breakdown of calf registrations by breed.

Traditional breeds such as Aberdeen Angus and Hereford are increasingly being favoured by dairy farmers as sires to be used on their dairy cows. The advantages of shorter gestations, smaller calves and a premium for these calves on the market have all contributed to this trend.

During 2019 to date there have been 77,313 Aberdeen Angus calves registered in NI, an increase of 5,348 head from the 71,965 Aberdeen Angus calves registered in the same period in 2018. Aberdeen Angus calves now account for 23.5 per cent of total beef sired calf registrations in Northern Ireland, up from 21.7 per cent from the same period in 2018. This makes Aberdeen Angus the second most popular beef sire used in Northern Ireland.

Limousin continues to be the most popular beef sire used in Northern Ireland with 84,016 calves registered during the first 11 months of 2019 and

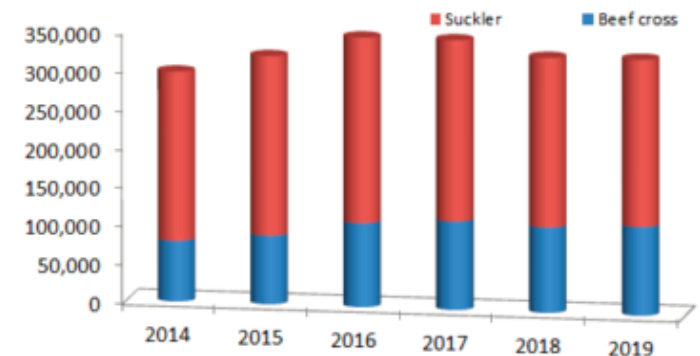
accounting for 25.5 per cent of total beef calf registrations. The number of Limousin calf registrations was back by 2,296 head from the same period in 2018 when 86,312 calves accounted for 26.1 per cent of total beef sired calf registrations.

### Dairy sired registrations

There has also been a slight improvement in the number of dairy

sired calves being registered in Northern Ireland. During 2019 to date 154,962 dairy sired calves were registered, up 2,164 head or 1.4 per cent from the same period last year. Heifer calves accounted for 59 per cent of all dairy sired registrations during 2019 to date. The proportion of heifer calves has been steadily increasing over the last few years.

**Figure 1: Breakdown of beef sired calves by source during January-November 2014-2019**



	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Suckler	219,124	232,406	240,402	234,462	219,367	216,284
Beef cross	78,556	88,900	108,676	114,612	110,694	114,974

# DEADWEIGHT CATTLE PRICES CONTINUE TO IMPROVE

THE deadweight cattle trade has continued to firm in NI. A tightening in prime cattle supplies for slaughter combined with steady demand from the major processing plants have contributed to the upward movement in the market.

The R3 steer price in NI last week was 336.1p/kg, up 3p/kg from the previous week. This is the seventh consecutive week in which R3 steer prices in NI have

recorded an increase and during this time the R3 steer price has increased by 13.2p/kg.

Despite the recent improvement in deadweight prices paid prices are still significantly lower than the corresponding week last year. In the week ending 01 December 2018 the R3 steer price in NI was 354.4p/kg, 18.3p/kg higher than current levels. In the corresponding week in 2017 the R3

steer prices was 360.4p/kg which is 24.3p/kg higher than current levels.

## Great Britain

The deadweight trade has also shown some signs of improvement in GB although at a slower rate than seen in NI. The average R3 steer price in GB last week was 336.8p/kg which was similar to the previous week and 0.7p/kg higher than the equivalent NI price. The R3 steer price in GB has increased by 6.7p/kg over the last seven weeks.

In the same week last year the R3 steer price in GB was 366.6p/kg, 29.6p/kg higher than current levels. In the corresponding week in 2017 the R3 steer price was 378.5p/kg, 41.7p/kg higher than current levels.

This strong decline in deadweight prices in GB year on year has eroded the price differential between NI and GB. As indicated in Figure 2 R3 steer prices in NI and GB are currently similar. In the same week last year R3 steer prices in GB were 12.2p/kg ahead of NI prices which equates to a differential of £43 on a 350kg carcasse. In the same week in 2017 the differential was 18.1p/kg

or £63 on a 350kg steer carcasse.

## Republic of Ireland

While deadweight prices have shown a recovery in all regions of the UK they continue to come under pressure in ROI in sterling terms. The R3 steer price last week the equivalent of 293.5p/kg. This was the seventh consecutive week in which deadweight prices declined in sterling terms with prices back by 17.2p/kg. Over this period the euro has

weakened against sterling from €1 = £0.89 to €1 = £0.85 which has contributed to the scale of the decline. In euro terms the R3 steer price was back 4.3c/kg.

The differential in R3 steer prices between ROI and NI was 42.6p/kg which equates to £149 on a 350kg carcasse. In the same week last year the differential was 28.3p/kg or £99 on a 350kg carcasse.

Figure 2: R3 steer prices in NI, ROI and GB during 2019 YTD

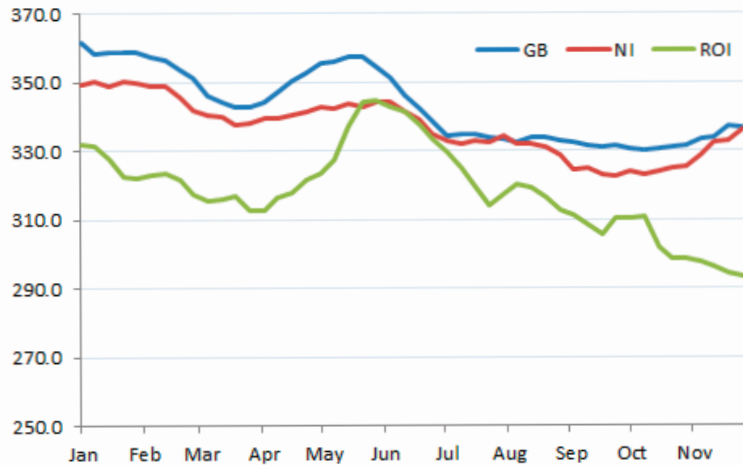


Figure 3: Weekly euro/sterling exchange rate 2017-2019 (Source ECB)



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# WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

## CATTLE TRADE

### NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 02/12/19	Next Week 09/12/19
<b>Prime</b>		
U-3	322 - 330p	322 - 332p
R-3	316 - 324p	316 - 326p
O+3	310 - 318p	310 - 320p
P+3	262 - 272p	262 - 274p
	Including bonus where applicable	
<b>Cows</b>		
O+3 & better	230 - 256p	230 - 250p
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 plants for in spec U-3 grade prime cattle remained steady this week ranging from 322-330p/kg with quotes for next week increasing slightly to 322-332p/kg. The majority of plants are quoting 328-330p/kg for steers and heifers. Base quotes for O+3 grade cows this week ranged from 230-256p/kg with quotes of 230-250p/kg for early next week.

The plants have reported good supplies of prime cattle coming forward for slaughter with a total of 6,904 head killed locally last week. This brings total throughput of prime cattle for 2019 to date to 320,960 head, a three per cent increase when compared to the 311,595 prime cattle killed in the same period in 2018. Cow throughput in NI recorded an increase last week to 2,297 cows. This brings the total cow throughput in local plants to 91,669 head during 2019 to date, a 5.2 per cent decrease when compared to the same period in 2018 when 96,729 cows were killed.

Imports of prime cattle for direct slaughter last week consisted of 310 prime cattle and 47 cows from ROI with eight steers and 88 cows imported from GB for direct slaughter in NI plants. Exports of cattle out of NI for direct slaughter to ROI last week continued at relatively similar levels to previous weeks with seven prime cattle and 33 cows exported. No cattle made the journey to GB for direct slaughter last week.

The average steer price in NI last week was up by 3.7p/kg to 327.2p/kg while the R3 steer price increased by 3p/kg to 336.1p/kg when compared to the previous week. Meanwhile the average heifer price recorded an increase of just over a penny 330p/kg with the R3 heifer price up by a similar margin to 337.5p/kg. The average young bull price last week increased by 3.4p/kg to 312p/kg while the R3 young bull price was up by 6.1p/kg to 324.6p/kg. The average cow price in NI last week decreased by 1.6p/kg to 223.9p/kg with the O3 cow price back by 2.2p/kg to 249.9p/kg.

In GB last week the average steer price in GB was up by 1.2p/kg to 327.9p/kg with the R3 steer price slightly back by 0.3p/kg to 336.8p/kg. The R3 steer price came back in Scotland (-1p/kg) and held steady across the other GB regions last week. The average heifer price in GB last week increased by 1.8p/kg to 326.9p/kg with the R3 heifer price holding steady at 335.8p/kg. There were variations across the regions in the R3 heifer price with increases reported in Scotland (+1.5p/kg) and Southern England (+0.6p/kg) and decreases reported in the Midlands (-1.4p/kg) and Northern England (-0.7p/kg).

The deadweight trade in ROI for prime cattle last week generally held steady in euro terms however with a weakening in the euro has meant steer and heifer prices were back in sterling terms. The R3 steer price decreased last week by the equivalent of 0.8p/kg to 293.5p/kg, while the R3 heifer price decreased by a similar margin to 301.2p/kg. The cow trade continued to come under pressure in ROI last week with the O3 price back by just under a penny to 221.9p/kg.

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

W/E 30/11/19	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB	
Steers	U3	339.5	300.6	350.1	336.6	335.4	336.3	339.5
	R3	336.1	293.5	348.0	338.4	332.4	328.7	336.8
	R4	332.9	291.0	347.6	344.6	332.8	332.8	341.0
	O3	326.0	277.6	333.0	323.6	309.5	306.3	318.6
	AVG	327.2	-	345.1	330.4	318.5	316.1	327.9
Heifers	U3	342.6	310.6	354.8	341.0	342.9	340.8	345.1
	R3	337.5	301.2	347.1	335.0	331.6	329.5	335.8
	R4	336.0	300.2	348.0	338.9	333.2	328.8	337.9
	O3	330.4	288.8	324.7	317.5	306.4	311.8	314.8
	AVG	330.0	-	344.5	328.6	318.8	314.1	326.9
Young Bulls	U3	322.9	286.1	335.1	329.9	314.9	327.8	325.0
	R3	324.6	275.7	332.5	324.6	324.0	316.8	325.4
	O3	307.7	262.8	299.5	298.4	298.2	259.3	294.2
	AVG	312.0	-	317.9	302.3	307.1	291.2	306.0
Prime Cattle Price Reported	5,736	-	7,371	7,306	8,017	5,063	27,757	
Cows	O3	249.9	221.9	231.0	233.6	230.1	223.7	229.6
	O4	248.3	221.9	234.8	233.0	231.0	219.6	229.9
	P2	208.4	193.9	195.7	186.2	186.2	183.7	186.7
	P3	226.2	208.5	194.7	201.1	205.4	199.8	201.9
	AVG	223.9	-	224.3	210.1	194.9	188.3	200.5

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=85.42p 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 30/11/19	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	338.6	342.1	323.3
R3	332.2	335.3	324.3
O+3	323.2	327.8	314.1

\*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

### REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 30/11/19	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	147.6	153.7	166.3	187.3
P2	164.9	189.6	205.7	221.7
P3	175.5	204.2	220.4	230.1
O3	-	229.6	239.1	251.0
O4	133.3	240.0	240.0	249.2
R3	-	-	-	270.6

### LATEST LIVELWEIGHT CATTLE MART PRICES NI

W/E 30/11/19	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
<b>Finished Cattle (p/kg)</b>						
Steers	203	213	206	170	200	185
Friesians	157	165	162	143	157	151
Heifers	200	211	204	165	199	182
Beef Cows	146	193	160	120	145	130
Dairy Cows	103	130	109	65	102	88
<b>Store Cattle (p/kg)</b>						
Bullocks up to 400kg	220	265	235	185	219	200
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	215	237	228	170	214	195
Bullocks over 500kg	195	205	200	170	194	180
Heifers up to 450kg	200	231	215	165	199	180
Heifers over 450kg	190	216	200	170	189	180
<b>Dropped Calves (£/head)</b>						
Continental Bulls	345	495	375	240	345	290
Continental Heifers	260	400	305	140	255	200
Friesian Bulls	115	140	130	45	85	65
Holstein Bulls	50	85	70	5	45	25

# SHEEP TRADE

## NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 02/12/19	Next Week 09/12/19
Lambs up to 22kgs	380-390p	390p

## REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 16/11/19	W/E 23/11/19	W/E 30/11/19
NI L/W Lambs	355.6	360.8	360.6
NI D/W Lambs	373.7	378.2	383.7
GB D/W Lambs	407.3	421.5	423.3
ROI D/W	379.0	392.2	396.7

## Deadweight Sheep Trade

Base quotes from the plants held steady this week for R3 grading lambs at 380-390p/kg up to 22kg. Lamb throughput in local plants increased to 9,791 head last week this brings the year to date throughput for lambs/hoggets to 358,200 head. This is a decrease of 2.4 per cent when compared to 367,134 lambs/hoggets slaughtered in the same period in 2018. Exports of lambs to ROI for direct slaughter last week increased to 10,374 head. This brings the total lambs/hoggets exported to ROI for direct slaughter to 299,115 to date in 2019, a decrease of eight per cent when compared to 325,506 lambs/hoggets exported in the same period in 2018. The deadweight lamb price in NI last week increased by 5.5p/kg to 383.7p/kg while the ROI lamb price increased by the equivalent of 4.5p/kg to 396.7p/kg.

## This week's marts

Many of the marts have reported a steady trade this week with good numbers of lambs passing through most of the sale rings. In Omagh last Saturday 1,402 lambs sold from 367-414p/kg compared to 1,123 lambs last week selling from 361-404p/kg. On Monday 370 lambs sold in Kilrea from 344-366p/kg compared to 480 lambs last week selling from 336-380p/kg. In Rathfriland this week 800 lambs sold from 332-402p/kg (avg 365p/kg) compared to 525 lambs last week selling from 322-437p/kg (avg 365p/kg). In Enniskillen this week 747 lambs sold from 340-387p/kg compared to 455 lambs last week selling from 358-405p/kg. The cull ewe price generally ranged from £90-140 across the marts.

## LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 29/11/19		Lambs			
To: 05/12/19		No	From	To	Avg
Friday	Newtownstewart	276	313	378	-
Saturday	Swatragh	1219	330	370	-
	Omagh	1402	367	414	-
Monday	Massereene	1030	350	380	-
	Kilrea	370	344	366	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	777	345	444	-
	Rathfriland	800	332	402	365
Wednesday	Ballymena	2000	330	405	352
	Enniskillen	747	340	387	-
	Armoy	659	330	400	-
	Markethill	1350	350	415	-

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## LMC SUPPORTING PHASE 2 OF THE LAND MOBILITY PROGRAMME

LMC has been confirmed as one of the sponsors, supporting Phase 2 of the Land Mobility Programme. "I feel it is important that industry is now actively contributing to an initiative that has tremendous potential moving forward," explained Commission Chief Executive Ian Stevenson.

"The programme was fully sponsored by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs during its two-year pilot phase." and according to Ian, "land mobility gets to the very heart of the succession challenge that confronts local farming."

He added: "It will act as a catalyst to kick-start a conversation within farming families on this crucially important issue. All too often this is a matter that is left until the very last minute within families. And, in some cases it was not discussed at all, prior to the death of the

person who was actively farming. Decisions were then taken in haste, many leading to the demise of what had once been very vibrant farming businesses."

**The land mobility programme has aimed to develop a culture of generational change and longer-term land leasing in Northern Ireland by helping farmers find successors and creating opportunities for new entrants**

Ian also believes that the scope of the land mobility programme can help to improve land productivity across Northern Ireland. "Obviously, this will very much depend on the strength of the individual arrangements that are arrived at," he explained

A report, covering the initial phase of the land mobility programme, has been published. It confirms that a total of 28 arrangements were facilitated during the pilot period. These arrangements covered approximately 4,500 acres. The average farm size involved in each arrangement was 161 acres.

Phase 2 of the programme will, again, be coordinated by the Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster (YFCU) in conjunction with the Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU). Funding will be provided by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, the Prince's Countryside Fund and agri-food sector sponsors. In this context the redmeat industry is represented by LMC and the Northern Ireland Meat Exporters Association (NIMEA).

Ian Stevenson again: "Redmeat supply chains are extremely concerned about

the issue of succession on beef and sheep farms. They want to ensure that the production base of the industry is

ring fenced for the future. The land mobility programme can play a key role in helping to achieve this objective."

**Attending the launch of the Land Mobility Report: I to r Neville Graham, Head of Farmer Services, Dale Farm; James Brownlee, Loughgall; John McCallister, Land Mobility Programme Manager and Ian Stevenson, CEO LMC.**



## FQAS GETTING TO THE HEART OF THE AMR CHALLENGE

LMC CEO Ian Stevenson believes that recently agreed changes to the Northern Ireland Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (NIBL FQAS) is helping farmers play their part in reducing the quantities of antibiotics used within the beef and sheep industries.

His comments follow in the wake of observations made by both Chief Veterinary Officer Robert Huey and British Veterinary Association President Daniella Dos Santos to the effect that tackling antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a One Health collaborative effort involving the human, animal and environmental health sectors.

Ian commented: "Antibiotics training is to become mandatory for beef and lamb farmers from next February, under the terms of NIBL FQAS. Through this mandatory training, we can build the knowledge of our NIBL FQAS members and encourage them to enhance their herd health planning in relation to antibiotic use. We're doing this to ensure that the industry moves forward and to build resilience for the future sustainability of the sector."

He continued: "It makes sense for livestock farmers to want to reduce their reliance on antibiotics. The introduction of improved management systems, designed to improve animal health and welfare standards will help achieve this.

A pilot antibiotics' training programme, facilitated by CAFRE and hosted by Ai Services' (Northern Ireland) Ltd, is currently underway. Ian Stevenson again: "I would encourage farmers to apply for the programme as it will allow them get the training they need at no cost. "Anyone who completes the

training prior to the introduction of the mandatory requirement coming into effect next year will still meet the standards of the scheme."

"Beyond February of next year, farmers who have not completed the required training course will be expected to confirm that they have applied to take part in one. Farmers will be expected to consult with their veterinarian on the subject of antibiotic usage as part of their health planning, in order to secure their ongoing quality assurance membership."



Ian confirmed that next year will also see new NIBL FQAS regulations introduced, where BVD is concerned. "Farmers who continue to keep BVD persistently infected animals on their farms beyond a defined period will be suspended from quality assurance membership until the PI issue is resolved," he stressed

"Great strides are being made to eradicate BVD. Persistently infected animals constitute a potent source of ongoing infection. Their presence is also adding to the need for antibiotics on those farms where they are being held. Given this reality the new BVD requirements make perfect sense."

## THE FIVE FREEDOMS ARE THE FUTURE CORNERSTONE OF THE LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY: RICHARD HALLERON

THE last number of years has seen beef farmers across Northern Ireland investing heavily in improved management and housing systems, all dedicated to better-meeting the welfare and behavioural needs of their animals. But it's still a work in progress. All this commitment has been underpinned by the recognition that herdowners must structure their business in ways that meet the five freedoms that relate to the care and well-being of their stock.

These are freedom from hunger and thirst; freedom from discomfort; freedom from pain, injury, or disease; freedom to express normal behaviour and freedom from fear or distress. The payback for farmers committed to meeting these standards are more contented animals, who will perform better. It's a win:win scenario.

Matters of this nature came up repeatedly during a recent visit I made to the United States (US). I would be the first person to admit that there's a lot wrong with the US livestock sector. A case in point is the beef industry's heavy reliance on synthetic hormonal growth promoters and in-feed antibiotics. Animal traceability doesn't count for much either. But, to their credit, our American colleagues do quite a number of things very well, when it comes to beef finishing. One of these is their commitment to feeding cattle well and having a very strong handle on individual animal's feed intakes on a real time basis.

One of the strongest drivers in this regard is their

policy of feeding animals four times daily. The issue of feeding animals well also goes to the very heart of beef production in this part of the world. Feed is the most expensive component of the finishing process and it's important that each animal receives the right levels of feed to match their potential to grow and maximise the efficiency of the finishing operation as a whole.

But putting a known quantity of feed in front of a pen of animals is only a small part of the challenge when it comes to finishing beef cattle. It is equally important for the farmer to know how much feed an individual animal within a group is consuming on a real time basis. In this context, ensuring that all stock have access to adequate feed space, so as to prevent bullying, is crucial. Providing sufficient water for each animal is also vitally important.

Small steps can be taken by beef finishers here in Northern Ireland to quickly improve the efficiency of their business. Weighing animals – even on arrival and departure from the farm – is another management practice that will help give farmers a greater insight into the level of performance their cattle ARE achieving.

The good news for beef farmers here is that it does not take major investment to secure real and sustainable improvements in the performance of their animals. In today's ultra-competitive world, farmers must have access to accurate performance-related data for their stock and this is one lesson that has not been lost on our American cousins!



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