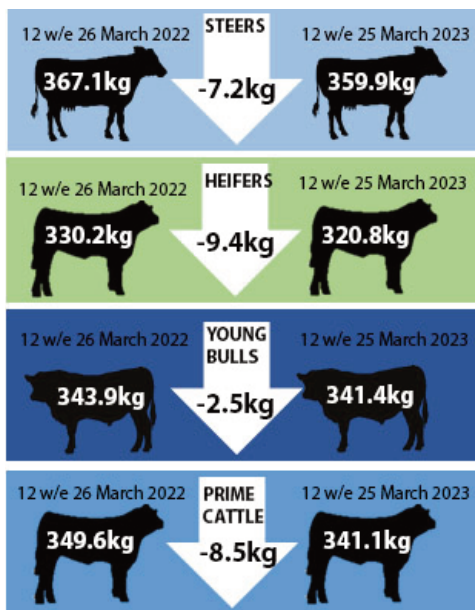


PRIME CATTLE CARCASS WEIGHTS DECLINE WHILE AGE AT SLAUGHTER REMAINS STEADY

During the 12 weeks ending (w/e) 25 March 2023 the average carcass weights across all prime cattle categories recorded a decrease in local beef processing plants, relative to the same period during 2022. During the last 12 week period the average prime cattle carcass weight in NI was 341.1kg which is a decline of 8.5kg when compared to the corresponding period last year when the average carcass weight was 349.6kg as outlined in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: Average carcass weights of prime cattle slaughtered in NI during the 12 w/e 25 March 2023 compared to the same period 2022
Source: DAERA.



Steers
The average steer carcass weight in NI during the 12 week period ending 25 March 2023 was 356.9kg, which was back 7.2kg from the same period last year when the average carcass weight was 367.1kg. There is however significant variation in the carcasses processed by local beef plants.

During the last 12 weeks ending 25 March 2023 60 per cent of deadweight price reported steer carcasses have been within the desired 280-380kg weight range. A further 13 per cent of steer carcasses were between 380-400kg during the same period while 22 per cent of steers had a carcass weight in excess of 400kg. Meanwhile six per cent of price reported steers had a carcass weight of less than 280kg.

The average age at slaughter of price reported steers in local plants during the last 12 week period ending 25 March 2023 was 25.1 months, this remains unchanged from the corresponding 12 week period last year as outlined in **Table 1** below.

Table 1: Average age (months) of prime cattle slaughtered in NI by category during the 12 w/e 25 March 2023 and the same period in 2022.
Source: LMC Deadweight Price Reporting

	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
2022	25.1	25.2	16.6
2023	25.1	25.2	17.2

Heifers
The average heifer carcass weight in NI during the last 12 weeks was 320.8kg, a 9.4kg decrease from the same period in 2022 when the average carcass weight was 330.2kg. As with the steers there is significant variation in the weight of carcasses produced by heifers killed in local plants.

During the last 12 weeks 73 per cent of price reported heifer carcasses were within the desired 280-380kg weight range with a further five per cent between 380-400kg and five per cent over 400kg. Meanwhile seven per cent of heifer carcasses were under 260kg while ten per cent were between 260-280kg.

The average age at slaughter of price reported heifers in Northern Ireland was 25.2 months old during the 12 weeks ending 25 March 2023 which as with steers has remained steady from the corresponding 12 weeks in 2022.

Young Bulls
The average young bull carcass weight during the 12 weeks ending 25 March 2023 also recorded a decline relative to the corresponding period last year albeit the smallest decline of all prime categories. During the last 12 week period the average young bull carcass weight was back 2.5kg year on year to 341.4kg.

Meanwhile, the average age at slaughter of price reported young bulls in Northern Ireland during the 12 weeks ending 25 March 2023 did not follow the same trend as that seen with heifers and steers. The average age at slaughter of young bulls was up to 17.2 months on average during the last 12 weeks. NI young bull finishers are reminded

that to meet processor specifications they must present young bulls for slaughter at less than 16 months of age.

The decreased carcass weights reported in the last 12 week period, coupled with increasingly tight beef supplies on NI farms are expected to continue positively influencing demand for beef, from a producer perspective, in the coming months.

Meanwhile, producers are encouraged to be as efficient as possible when getting animals to slaughter weights as this is a key indicator of productivity and is one of the main focal points that arises in discussions regarding beef supply chain sustainability.

Producers should aim to present prime cattle for slaughter that produce carcasses within the desired weight range with the major NI processors seeking animals that will provide a carcass in the 280-380kg weight range. Cuts from these carcasses meet the widest range of specifications from major retail and foodservice customers.

While processors can find customers for beef from carcasses outside this desired weight range potential market outlets are much more limited and tend to be of lower value.

It is however equally important that the processors give producers the correct market signal through best rewarding producers who are producing cattle that meet current market specifications.

DEADLINE SET FOR CONCLUSION OF FREE AMR TRAINING SESSIONS

Free training courses on the responsible use of antimicrobials on beef and sheep farms are nearing conclusion, with the Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) encouraging farmers who have yet to complete this course to register for an upcoming event.

These workshops which are currently free of charge under the Farm Family Key Skills Programme will be coming to an end on 31 August 2023.

Participants of the Northern Ireland Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (NIBL FQAS) are reminded that from 03 February 2020 it became a requirement for NIBL FQAS that 'at least one person responsible for administering animal medicines must be formally trained in the responsible use of antimicrobials'.

Over 10,000 farmers across Northern Ireland have undertaken the training with many very experienced farmers reflecting back to LMC that the knowledge gained was invaluable to their animal health planning. NIBL FQAS participants have shown tremendous leadership in building their knowledge to help address the one health approach to antimicrobial resistance, which is one of the great global challenges of the modern age.



The 'Responsible Use of Antimicrobials on Beef and Sheep Farms' training sessions are organised by CAFRE in partnership with AI Services. A mix of online and in person events are scheduled over the coming months and will be delivered by qualified Veterinary Surgeons.

LMC is encouraging NIBL FQAS participants who have not had a chance to partake in training to date to register for a free upcoming training session before the 31 August 2023 deadline.

Details on upcoming training dates for the responsible use of antimicrobials courses can be found on the CAFRE website at www.cafre.ac.uk/business-courses/responsible-use-of-antimicrobials-on-beef-and-sheep-farms or contact AI Services (028) 9083 3123.

Attendees must pre-register in order to attend a session. If registering for a webinar, it is recommended that a speed test is carried out on your broadband. Download and upload speeds of at least 2mb/second are needed to ensure that participants can participate fully and view the video in the presentation.

To successfully complete a webinar you will need to:

- Pre-register. Log in details are only provided if you are pre-registered.
- Be logged in to the webinar for at least 90% of the presentation.
- Complete the poll during the webinar, and
- Complete the evaluation at the end of the webinar.

Attendance certificates to meet NIBL FQAS requirements will be issued on successful completion of the training. NIBL FQAS participants must retain their certificate to be shown at each inspection.

FQAS Helpline

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

Answerphone Service

Factory base quotes & mart results
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WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 27/03/23	Next Week 03/04/23
Prime		
U-3	450 - 470p	450 - 470p
R-3	444 - 464p	444 - 464p
O+3	438 - 458p	438 - 458p
P+3	382 - 402p	382 - 402p
Including bonus where applicable		
Cows		
O+3	360 - 374p	360 - 374p

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 for in spec U-3 grading prime cattle this week held steady ranging from 450-470p/kg with the majority of plants quoting at the upper end of this scale. Base quotes for O+3 grading cows this week also held steady and ranged from 360-374p/kg with similar quotes expected for all types of cattle early next week.

The plants have reported tight supplies of cattle coming forward for slaughter with prime cattle throughput last week totalling 6,918 head. While this an increase of 800 head compared to the previous week, it is 798 head behind 2022 levels when 7,716 prime cattle were processed locally. Meanwhile cow throughput in NI last week totalled 2,265 head, an increase of 473 head from the previous week and an increase of 76 when compared to the 2,189 cows slaughtered in the same week last year.

Last week there was 236 prime cattle and 128 cows imported from ROI for direct slaughter in local processing plants. No cattle moved from GB to NI for slaughter last week. Meanwhile, exports to ROI from NI for direct slaughter last week included one steer and 52 cows. As has been the case during 2023 to date, no cattle were exported from NI to GB for direct slaughter last week.

Deadweight cattle prices in NI last week continued to strengthened across the majority of grades. The average steer price last week was up by 4.1p/kg to 477.2p/kg from the previous week while the R3 steer price increased by 3.8p/kg to 486.9p/kg. Last week the average heifer price in NI was up by 4.1p/kg to 476.8p/kg while the R3 heifer price increased by 3.2p/kg to 486.2p/kg. The average young bull price in NI last week recorded an increase of 2.4p/kg to 460.3p/kg while the R3 young bull price decreased by 2.5p/kg to 472p/kg. Last week the average cow price in NI recorded an increase of 3.7p/kg from the previous week to 361p/kg while the O3 cow price was up almost 4p/kg to 391.6p/kg.

In GB last week the deadweight trade for prime cattle improved across the majority of grades, with the average steer price up 2.5p/kg to 488p/kg while the R3 steer price increased by 2.9p/kg to 494.7p/kg. The differential in R3 steer prices last week between NI and GB was 7.8p/kg or £27.30 on a 350kg carcass. The average heifer price in GB last week was up by 3.5p/kg to 486.7p/kg while the R3 heifer price increased by 2.2p/kg to 494.6p/kg. This puts the differential in R3 heifer prices last week between NI and GB at 8.4p/kg or £26.88 on a 320kg carcass.

Last week the deadweight trade in ROI increased in both euro and sterling terms across all price reported grades. The R3 steer price in ROI was the equivalent of 466p/kg, up 2.5p/kg, which widens the differential between NI and ROI to 20.9p/kg or £73.15 on a 350kg carcass. The R3 heifer price was up 2p/kg to the equivalent of 469.1p/kg. This puts the differential between NI and ROI at 17.1p/kg or £54.72 on a 320kg carcass. The cow trade in ROI firmed last week with the average O3 cow price reported at 401.1p/kg, up 4.1p/kg from the previous week. This places the O3 cow price in ROI at 9.5p/kg ahead of the equivalent cow price in NI.

REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 25/03/23	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	491.5	492.7	481.2
R3	485.9	485.9	473.9
O+3	478.0	479.2	465.5

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 25/03/23	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	281.2	297.5	312.3	332.6
P2	301.3	331.1	356.7	367.9
P3	358.3	347.7	369.9	375.4
O3	296.0	385.0	383.9	392.8
O4	-	-	415.0	395.3
R3	-	-	-	410.5

SHEEP TRADE

NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 27/03/23	Next Week 03/04/23
R3 Hoggets up to 22kg	555 - 565p	565p

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 11/03/23	W/E 18/03/23	W/E 25/03/23
NI L/W Hoggets	504.2	505.1	507.1
NI D/W Hoggets	534.4	545.4	551.4
GB D/W Hoggets	506.4	522.5	548.2
ROI D/W	555.8	562.4	576.0

Deadweight Sheep Trade

Base quotes from the major NI processors for R3 grade hoggets ended this week in the region of 565p/kg with plants paying up to 22kg with similar quotes expected early next week. A total of 10,036 hoggets were killed in local plants last week, up 2,040 head from the 7,996 head killed locally the previous week. Exports of hoggets to ROI for direct slaughter totalled 7,953 head an increase of 2,837 head when compared to the previous week. The average deadweight hogget price in NI last week was 551.4p/kg, up 6p/kg from the previous week. In ROI last week the average deadweight hogget price was up by the equivalent of 13.6p/kg to 576p/kg.

Liveweight Sheep Trade

Good numbers of hoggets passed through local sale rings this week with stronger prices than last week. In Omagh last Saturday 457 hoggets sold from 495-551p/kg compared to 596 hoggets the previous week selling from 495-542p/kg. In Kilrea on Monday 750 hoggets sold from 510-554p/kg compared to 560 hoggets selling from 494-527p/kg last week. In Rathfriland this week 400 hoggets sold from 497-525p/kg (avg 509p/kg) compared to an entry of 300 hoggets last week selling from 488-530p/kg (avg 503p/kg). Small numbers of springs lambs are starting to become available with prices ranging from 580-700p/kg in the marts this week. The trade for cull ewes remains strong with top reported prices for well fleshed ewes ranging from £135-254 across the marts this week.

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

W/E 25/03/23	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	491.9	474.2	502.1	500.2	504.7	503.8
	R3	486.9	466.0	498.6	492.4	495.6	493.4
	R4	485.2	469.2	499.6	494.5	491.5	492.5
	AVG	477.2	-	496.7	486.3	486.0	482.5
Heifers	U3	493.3	480.8	504.8	498.4	509.9	503.5
	R3	486.2	469.1	498.7	491.3	496.7	492.3
	R4	483.9	471.7	499.8	494.9	494.7	491.2
	AVG	476.8	-	498.2	485.0	484.1	479.1
Young Bulls	U3	481.0	463.1	496.3	483.7	493.5	502.3
	R3	472.0	453.2	488.7	486.3	482.5	473.4
	O3	459.3	438.6	469.6	455.6	457.5	429.7
	AVG	460.3	-	481.2	465.4	463.3	465.2
Prime Cattle Price Reported		5,627	-	6,061	6,917	7,186	5,159
Cows	O3	391.6	401.1	414.6	409.2	410.3	406.7
	O4	395.5	399.1	421.9	412.4	408.5	406.6
	P2	354.9	364.4	365.3	374.4	365.0	364.8
	P3	372.9	384.5	378.8	391.5	382.5	387.3
AVG	361.0	-	410.7	391.2	379.1	371.4	

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=88.00p 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 LIVELWEIGHT CATTLE MART PRICES NI

W/E 25/03/23	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	290	330	300	220	289	245
Friesians	223	240	233	180	215	197
Heifers	285	318	296	220	284	240
Beef Cows	246	296	260	190	245	215
Dairy Cows	165	228	178	80	164	120
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	300	380	330	230	299	265
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	290	362	310	210	289	245
Bullocks over 500kg	250	304	275	180	249	220
Heifers up to 450kg	300	383	330	220	299	250
Heifers over 450kg	250	322	275	190	249	220
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	400	535	440	275	395	325
Continental Heifers	330	480	380	225	325	275
Friesian Bulls	120	210	150	20	115	70
Holstein Bulls	100	195	130	5	95	40

LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 25/03/23		Hoggets			
To: 30/03/23		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Swatragh	1140	505	565	-
	Omagh	457	495	551	-
Monday	Kilrea	750	510	554	-
	Markethill	1160	500	530	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	605	500	540	-
	Rathfriland	400	497	525	509
Wednesday	Ballymena	1206	485	600	520
	Enniskillen	806	490	536	-
	Armoy	303	535	605	-

Information supplied by LMC / DAERA/ AHDB/ DAFM

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IT'S SHAPING UP TO BE A BUSY YEAR FOR THE GLOBAL MEAT ALLIANCE

The start of 2023 has seen the Global Meat Alliance (GMA) focussing on key issues that will impact on the future development of the international beef industry.

COP 28

This year's United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP) 28 event will take place in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) over a two-week period, straddling the months of November and December. COP28 UAE is being billed as a milestone moment when the world will take stock of its progress on the Paris Agreement. The first Global Stocktake (GST), will provide a comprehensive assessment of progress since adopting the Paris Agreement. This will help align efforts on climate action, including measures that need to be put in place to bridge the gaps in progress.



It is anticipated that 198 countries will actively participate in this truly international event. And, in contrast to the proceedings that characterised COP 27, the debates held in 2023 are expected to have a clear focus on the sustainability, equity and health of food systems that are in operation around the world.

The GMA is highlighting the critical importance of industry representative groups across the world speaking to their country's governments to highlight COP and the delivery of sector messages as a priority.

The GMA has a 15-strong membership, representing a comprehensive cross section of the world's beef industry. One of the member bodies is the Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) with its chief executive, Ian Stevenson, extremely active in helping to formulate GMA policy.

Image 1: Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) Chief Executive Ian Stevenson.



Ian explained: "Over the next few months GMA will be formulating the important messages that need to be communicated to the key COP decision makers, where COP 28 is concerned. "The 2023 event takes place against a growing demand for high quality protein around the world.

"Beef and lamb must be allowed to play a key role in this context. But more than that, there must be a recognition coming out of COP that beef and sheep production can be allowed to continue in those regions with a fundamental natural advantage."

Ian continued: "Here in Northern Ireland beef and lamb can be produced in a highly efficient manner from grazed grass. "There are also numerous environmental and socio-economic reasons that favour the production of beef and lamb here". According to the LMC representative grassland beef production systems in the UK generate less than half the Carbon Dioxide equivalent emissions per kg of meat produced compared to the global average. "And it's important that the COP 28 decision makers are made fully aware of this fact".

Ian Stevenson makes no attempt to downplay the scale of the challenge in communicating with COP policy makers and influencers over the coming months and beyond. He further explained: "Our first task at GMA is to agree a series of clear and concise messages that reflect what the international meat sector has already achieved in tackling the threat of global warming and our plans for the future in this context. "After that, it's a case of communicating these messages on a consistent basis. This won't be easy.

"Part of the problem centres on the fact that we are not talking about a one-size-fits-all solution. "Different parts of the world have their own, bespoke, production-related advantages. And, of course, they also have their own specific sustainability challenges to confront. "So, in effect, what we are looking at is a series of local solutions that will combine to deliver a truly global response."

Ian Stevenson believes that the international meat industry must commit to playing the 'long game' when it comes to its participation in the global warming debate. "But the coming months will be particularly important," he stressed. "There is little doubt that global food production systems will come under intense scrutiny at COP 28. "So it is vitally important for the GMA to take the initiative where these issues are concerned, prior to the event getting underway. "And the meat industry has a very positive story to tell."

The LMC's Chief Executive concluded: "GMA provides a tremendous opportunity for the development of effective co-operation and corroboration between organisations that reflect the wide range of interests espoused by the international meat sector.

"Speaking with a consistent voice on behalf of industry is critically important given the myriad of other bodies that will be trying to influence COP policy makers." "Given all of this, it is vitally important that the local beef and sheep industry continues to have an effective say at the very heart of the GMA decision making process."

The Dublin Declaration

The first GMA networking session of 2023 also allowed members to discuss the outworking of the inaugural 'International Summit on the Societal Role of Meat'. The event was hosted by Teagasc in Dublin at the tail end of last year. It gave research scientists a bespoke platform to discuss their perspectives on the role of meat in the diet plus its impact on the environment and the socio economic infrastructure of rural communities.

The summit ended with agreement on the wording of the now widely recognised 'Dublin Declaration', which research scientists around the world have been asked to sign. Approximately 200 delegates attended the Dublin summit. However, it has been subsequently confirmed that many more academics working around the world (900 at latest count), have formally endorsed the final declaration that emerged from last October's event.

The declaration references five key principles. These are: the current challenges facing livestock production systems, the link between livestock and human health; the very strong link between livestock and our environment; the symbiotic relationship between livestock and rural socio economic infrastructure and, finally, the future role for livestock production systems.

The declaration also includes an explanation as to the rationale behind its inception. Put simply, scientists wanted to take the opportunity of stressing the need for livestock systems to be progressed on the basis of the highest scientific standards.

Scientists endorsing the declaration commit to formally recognising that these criteria are too precious to society to become the victim of simplification, reductionism or zealotry. Moreover, these livestock systems must continue to be embedded in and have broad approval of society. For that, scientists are asked to provide reliable evidence of their nutrition and health benefits, environmental sustainability, socio-cultural and economic values, as well as for solutions for the many improvements that are needed.

At a fundamental level, the declaration aims to give voice to the many scientists around the world who research diligently, honestly and successfully across a wide range of research and development-related disciplines, in order to achieve a balanced view of the future of animal agriculture.

LMC's Ian Stevenson commented: "The significance of the decisions taken at last October's Dublin summit was discussed at length by GMA members at our most recent networking session. "There was total unanimity within the attending group regarding the principles espoused by the agreed declaration. "Above all else, it puts an important foundation in place regarding independent scientists' total commitment to ensuring that proven principle,

rather than misinformation should guide current and future debate on the future development of the international livestock and meat sector."

Ian Stevenson believes that the principles contained within the Dublin Declaration should also set the framework within which all global and national policy decisions linked to the development of animal-based agriculture should be taken.



What the **SCIENCE** says

So what is actually meant by the term: The societal role of meat?

According to the findings of the Dublin summit, meat makes key contributions to human nutrition, the environment, and livelihoods globally. For example, livestock-derived foods provide a variety of essential nutrients and other health-promoting compounds, many of which are lacking in diets globally, even among those populations with higher incomes. Regular consumption of meat, dairy and eggs, as part of a well-balanced diet, is advantageous for human beings.

Farmed and herded animals are capable of using land not suitable for crop production and are irreplaceable for achieving circular agriculture, as they convert inedible biomass generated during the production of human food into high-quality, nutrient-dense food.

Well-managed livestock systems can contribute to carbon sequestration, soil health, biodiversity, watershed protection and other important ecosystem services. In addition, Livestock farming provides food, clothing, power, manure, employment and income for millions of people globally. Owning livestock is one of the most common private assets in the world and is the foundation for many rural economies, particularly impacting women's economic empowerment as one of the only assets women can hold in some societies.

The summit also concluded that dietary choice is a luxury not available to many people around the world, including those facing the ongoing problems of malnutrition and inability to access sufficient protein.

Debates on meat production and consumption must consider ethical dimensions, including the cultural and historical significance of meat, regional contexts and constraints on food production, access, equity, and autonomy.



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