LMC
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TIGHT SUPPLIES DRIVING A STRONG TRADE FOR STORE CATTLE THIS SPRING

High input costs have been a significant issue for beef producers over the course of the last two years. For those producers buying store cattle, weanlings or calves in 2023, the cost has also been significant, with these prices also up on previous years.

In the week ending 22 April 2023 the weekly beef mart prices reported to DAERA were signficiantly ahead when compared to the corresponding week last year. The report outlines prices have increased over the course of the last year, in direct contrast to the market last year when the value of store cattle was depressed by increased production costs, notably feed, fuel and fertiliser. This firming trade is unsurprising owing to the current tight beef supplies currently available in NI. Last week the price of lighter (150-300kg) store steers and heifers was around 10 per cent higher than the same week last year. Steers in that weight bracket are averaging £862/head liveweight, with heifers of the same weight averaging £739/head.

The average price of heavier animals is significantly higher than last year. **Figures 1 and 2** clearly illustrate the trends in forward store and heifer prices respectively (300-400kg) over the last three years. Steers between 300-400kg liveweight are now averaging around £1015/head with heifers averaging £927/head. In the case of steers this is £114 or 12.7 per cent more than the same time last year, with heifer prices up by nine per cent or around £78.00 year on year.

As outlined in the LMC slaughter forecast for 2023, and the article below, the number of cattle for slaughter in NI is back on previous years with improved demand driving the firm liveweight and deadweight trade.

Moreover, as mentioned the store cattle trade last year was impacted by high production costs with the trade this year being helped by the general softening in production costs in recent months, compared to the soaring prices experienced by NI farmers during 2022.

According to DAERA's most recent Weekly Market Report during January to the close of March 2023 the average cost of a tonne of barley delivered in NI was £245.80. This is back around £15/tonne from the same period during 2022 as outlined in **Table 1**, according to DAERA's Agricultural Market Report. In recent weeks the declining cost of fuel has also been welcomed.

While, the cost of straw and barley has eased, to date in 2023 the cost of a large round bale of silage in NI was over £4.50 more expensive on average compared to 2022. This is the result of reduced fertiliser usage last year and the drought conditions experienced during the growing period for second cut silage last summer which further depressed silage crops, producers will be hoping for favourable growing conditions this year.

Table 1: The average price of barley (£/tonne delivered) and a large bale of silage and straw (£) in NI during the first four months of 2023 vs 2021 and 2022. Source: DAERA.

	2021	2022	2023
Barley	197.42	260.20	245.80
Silage	16.93	23.18	28.05
Straw	20.73	22.22	20.75

Figure 1: The monthly average price of 300-400kg store steers in NI from January to April 2021-2023. Source: DAERA.

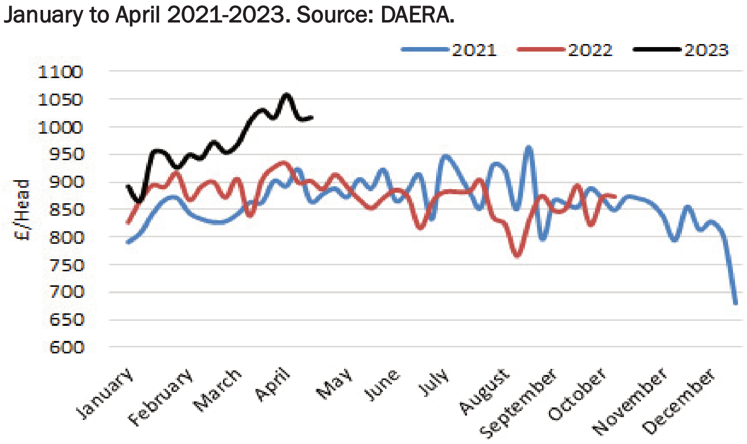
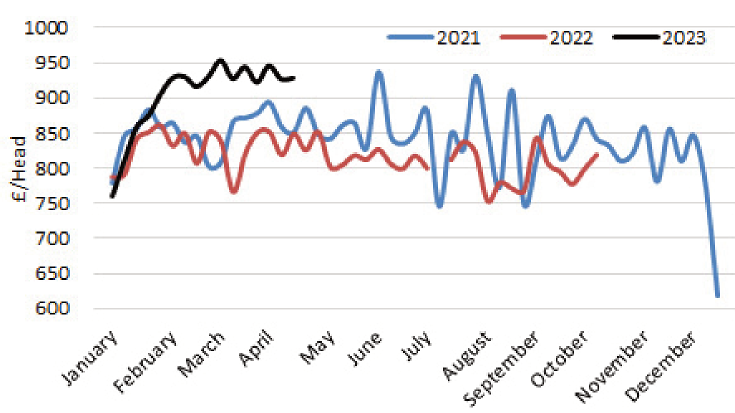


Figure 2: The monthly average price of 300-400kg store heifers in NI from January to April 2021-2023. Source: DAERA.



Producers purchasing store cattle for finishing are encouraged to assess their production systems and the type of cattle they can finish in a timely manner. While the current short supply conditions in the market favour the producer negotiating a higher price, producers are reminded current market specifications require prime cattle within a weight range of 280-380kg.

By presenting cattle for slaughter at an adequate weight and age producers can secure the greatest returns. Meanwhile, producers are reminded base quotes from the plants should be used as a starting point for negotiation, and with strong competition between the NI plants for cattle, producers should price around to ensure they get the best possible deal for their stock.

FQAS MART SUPPORT CLINICS: MAY 2023

LMC Farm Liaison Officer, Terry White, will be present at the cattle sales listed below to offer guidance and support to producers on the NI Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (FQAS).

Wednesday 17th May – Kilrea

Thursday 18th May – Enniskillen

Wednesday 24th May – Saintfield

Wether you require advice on rectifying non-conformances, or any other matter Terry will be happy to help you.

SLAUGHTER AGE CATTLE ON NI FARMS

According to the most recent data available from APHIS, the numbers of cattle coming forward for processing has depleted further. **Table 2** outlines the number of cattle on local farms at the end of April 2023 compared to the same period in 2022 and 2021. The figures include all beef sired male and female cattle and dairy sired males.

At 30 April 2023 there was a total of 443,003 cattle on NI farms aged 12-30 months. When compared to the levels available at 30 April 2022 (453,392 head), this is a decline of 10,389 head or 2.3 per cent. Meanwhile, this is 6,121 cattle fewer than at 30 April 2021, when there was 449,124 beef cattle and dairy males aged 12-30 months old.

By age category, at the end of April 2023 there were 139,280 cattle in the 18-24 month age category on local farms. This is a slight increase of 441 head from April 2022 levels and a decline of 654 head from 2021. These cattle will represent the bulk of prime cattle kill during the next six months.

In the 24-30 month age category there were 102,896 cattle at the end of April 2023. This is a 2.6 per cent decrease from April 2022 levels and a 0.3 per cent increase from 2021 levels. This brings the total number of cattle between 18-30 months to 242,176 head. This is a decrease of approximately one per cent or 2,252 head from April 2022 levels, and just 314 head behind 2023 numbers.

The number of cattle in the 12-18 month category has declined by 3.9 per cent from April 2022 levels and recorded a decline of 2.8 percent from April 2021 levels.

Figures suggest that cattle availability for slaughter will remain tight. This will have a direct impact on the deadweight cattle trade in NI going forward. The number of cattle on the ground between 0-12 months is also marginally up by 870 head or 0.2 per cent in April 2023 relative to 2022, and 7,439 head or 1.9 per cent behind the numbers available during the same time in 2021.

The number of cattle in the 6-12 month category is the only other category to record increased numbers over the two year period from April 2021 up by two and 0.7 per cent year on year respectively. This increase was driven by the increased numbers of calf registrations last year. Meanwhile, there are 520 fewer calves aged 0-6 months on NI farms at 30 April 2023 compared to last year and 11,238 less calves in NI than there was at 30 April 2021.

Table 2: Cattle on NI farms intended for beef production at 30 April 2023 vs 2022 and 2021, categorised by age. Source: APHIS.

Age (months)	2021	2022	2023	2022/2023 % change	2021/2023 % change
0-6	203,565	192,847	192,327	-0.3%	-5.5%
6-12	186,605	189,014	190,404	+0.7%	+2.0%
12-18	206,634	208,964	200,827	-3.9%	-2.8%
18-24	139,934	138,839	139,280	+0.3%	-0.5%
24-30	102,556	105,589	102,896	-2.6%	+0.3%
30 +	289,814	292,850	284,667	-2.8%	-1.8%

WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

LMC Livestock & Meat Commission

CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 01/05/23	Next Week 08/05/23
Prime		
U-3	460 - 482p	460 - 482p
R-3	454 - 476p	454 - 476p
O+3	448 - 470p	448 - 470p
P+3	392 - 414p	392 - 414p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3	370 - 386p	370 - 386p

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 29/04/23	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	499.2	500.0	487.9
R3	493.7	495.0	481.8
O+3	486.6	486.4	471.8

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 29/04/23	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	286.6	305.3	318.2	339.5
P2	305.3	335.1	360.3	373.1
P3	324.0	349.4	374.0	380.6
O3	-	390.3	395.9	398.6
O4	-	405.0	388.5	400.5
R3	-	-	363.1	416.2

Deadweight Cattle Trade

Base quotes from the plants this week for in spec U-3 grading prime cattle remained steady this week ranging from 460-482p/kg. Producers should use these quotes as a starting point for negotiation with higher prices available, The deadweight cow trade also remained steady this week with quotes ranging from 370-386p/kg for good quality O+3 grading cows. Similar quotes are expected for all types of cattle early next week.

Throughput of prime cattle in NI plants last week totalled 7,509 head. This brings total prime cattle throughput during 2023 to 126,669 a decrease of 4.4 per cent on the same period in 2022. Cow throughput in NI last week totalled 2,079 head taking throughput for the year to date to 38,311 head. This is a 1.7 per cent decrease on the corresponding period in 2022.

Imports of prime cattle from ROI for direct slaughter in NI plants last week totalled 352 head with 130 cows and one bull also imported. This brings total prime cattle imports from ROI during 2023 to date to 3,273 head, back 139 head from the same period in 2022. Meanwhile cattle exports from NI for slaughter in ROI plants consisted of one steer and 28 cows last week. A consignment of 44 steers left NI last week for slaughter in GB, the first direct slaughter exports to GB since October last year.

Last week an improvement in deadweight prices was recorded across the majority of grades. The average R3 steer and heifer price in NI last week both increased by 0.7p/kg from the previous week to 494.3p/kg and 495.7p/kg respectively. With the average steer price up just over a penny to 484.7p/kg and the average heifer price in NI last week up by half a penny to 485.7p/kg. The young bull trade has generally decreased in NI with an average price of 470.5p/kg last week, back by 1.7p/kg from the previous week. The NI O3 cow price increased last week by a penny to 398.2p/kg, while the average cow price was up by 2.4p/kg to 368.5p/kg when compared to the previous week.

The GB deadweight trade for prime cattle reported a mixed trade. The average GB steer price remained steady last week at 490.9p/kg with the R3 steer price marginally up by 0.2p/kg to 498.1p/kg. The R3 steer price remained relatively steady across the regions with marginal declines recorded in Scotland (-0.2p/kg) and Southern England (-0.1p/kg), holding steady in Northern England and an increase of a penny reported in the Midlands & Wales. The average R3 heifer price in GB last week reported an increase of a penny to 498.5p/kg from the previous week while the average heifer price up by 2.7p/kg to 490.7p/kg.

In ROI last week the R3 steer price was the equivalent of 469.5p/kg up 1.6p/kg from the previous week. The R3 heifer price was up by half a penny to the equivalent of 472.8p/kg, while the cow trade in ROI remained strong with an O3 cow price the equivalent of 401.3p/kg, despite recording a marginal decline of 0.8p/kg from the previous week.

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

W/E 29/04/23		Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	499.3	478.4	507.1	503.9	505.7	504.4	505.2
	R3	494.3	469.5	502.5	497.2	498.3	496.1	498.1
	R4	492.5	473.1	504.4	499.6	493.3	495.6	500.0
	O3	482.8	459.1	488.7	479.1	477.1	475.2	478.1
	AVG	484.7	-	500.9	491.2	487.7	485.3	490.9
Heifers	U3	500.4	485.0	512.7	504.3	510.1	508.9	509.3
	R3	495.7	472.8	505.8	494.9	499.3	496.2	498.5
	R4	492.3	474.7	506.5	500.2	497.2	495.0	501.1
	O3	482.7	465.1	486.8	477.3	473.8	471.5	475.0
	AVG	485.7	-	504.6	490.8	485.7	483.2	490.7
Young Bulls	U3	488.4	466.0	504.4	491.0	497.6	503.2	499.3
	R3	482.5	458.6	495.6	491.8	489.4	490.2	491.2
	O3	469.2	445.8	474.8	459.9	463.6	454.0	464.2
	AVG	470.5	-	492.9	478.1	476.5	474.7	480.4
Prime Cattle Price Reported		6,205	-	5,621	7,143	7,969	5,432	26,165
Cows	O3	398.2	401.3	423.2	409.8	411.1	406.9	411.1
	O4	399.9	401.9	426.4	413.1	408.9	405.5	410.7
	P2	358.3	361.8	383.5	373.9	366.9	363.7	368.0
	P3	376.7	389.1	390.0	391.9	386.9	384.4	386.9
	AVG	368.5	-	415.3	390.2	380.3	371.0	383.5

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=88.43p 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 29/04/23	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	302	337	313	225	301	252
Friesians	215	247	230	179	214	200
Heifers	270	301	284	220	269	242
Beef Cows	246	273	259	200	245	220
Dairy Cows	170	219	182	75	169	120
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	326	400	350	225	325	270
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	280	360	300	200	279	235
Bullocks over 500kg	265	345	295	200	264	230
Heifers up to 450kg	270	344	310	185	269	225
Heifers over 450kg	250	320	285	185	249	220
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	400	540	460	260	395	325
Continental Heifers	375	590	425	250	370	300
Friesian Bulls	150	250	180	70	145	100
Holstein Bulls	100	180	125	10	95	50

SHEEP TRADE

NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 01/05/23	Next Week 08/05/23
R3 Hoggets up to 22kg	585 - 590p	610 - 620p
R3 Spring Lambs up to 22kg	620 - 625p	650-670p

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 15/04/23	W/E 22/04/23	W/E 29/04/23
NI L/W Hoggets	DAERA did not publish prices	530.6	536.4
NI L/W Spring Lambs		602.1	615.9
NI D/W Hoggets		621.7	613.3
NI D/W Spring Lambs		644.0	638.8
GB D/W Hoggets	636.3	687.0	654.9
GB D/W Spring Lambs	-	726.9	-
ROI D/W	620.6	645.9	646.9

Deadweight Sheep Trade

Quotes for spring lambs continued to strengthen ending this week ranging from 640-650p/kg up to 21kg across the major NI plants. Quotes for lambs are expected to range from 650-670p/kg early next week. Hogget quotes also improved to 610-620p/kg this week with a similar trade expected early next week. Lamb/hogget throughput in NI plants last week totalled 6,841 head, back marginally from the previous week. Exports of lambs/hoggets to ROI for direct slaughter last week totalled 4,546 head, an decline of 732 head from the previous week. The deadweight hogget trade last week was back 8.4p/kg to 613.3p/kg while the spring lamb price in NI last week was back 5.2p/kg to 638.8p/kg. In ROI the combined lamb/hogget deadweight price was relatively steady at 646.9p/kg. up 1p/kg from the previous week.

Liveweight Sheep Trade

This week increasing numbers of spring lambs passed through the marts with prices improving compared to last week. In Markethill on Monday 410 spring lambs sold from 610-634p/kg. On Tuesday in Saintfield 205 spring lambs sold from 600-650p/kg compared to 170 spring lambs last week selling from 585-625p/kg. In Ballymena this week 449 spring lambs sold from 630-697p/kg (avg 655p/kg) compared to 387 spring lambs last week selling from 600-661p/kg (avg 620p/kg). In Enniskillen this week 148 spring lambs sold from 600-683p/kg compared to 122 spring lambs last week selling from 600-633p/kg. Top reported prices for cull ewes ranged from £140-270 across the marts.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 29/04/23		Hoggets				Spring Lambs			
To: 04/05/23		No	From	To	Avg	No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Swatragh	550	467	549	-	135	576	632	-
	Omagh	206	539	595	-	29	588	636	-
Monday	Kilrea	-	-	-	-	200	598	619	-
	Markethill	200	520	572	-	410	610	634	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	455	520	560	-	205	600	650	-
	Rathfriland	195	518	580	533	200	600	640	625
Wednesday	Ballymena	453	550	619	575	449	630	697	655
	Enniskillen	225	520	585	-	148	600	683	-
	Armoy	125	530	575	-	102	630	662	-

Contact us
T: 028 9263 3000
E: bulletin@lmcni.com
W: www.lmcni.com