

IT HAS BEEN AN EVENTFUL YEAR FOR BEEF AND LAMB IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The last 12 months have seen major changes wrought in the political, economic and legislative context within which Northern Ireland's beef and lamb industries operate. Brexit is now a reality and with it has come the additional complexity of the Northern Ireland Protocol. The challenges associated with climate change are now front and centre in terms of the political processes currently unfolding at Stormont. At the very heart of this unfolding dialogue is the need to deliver acceptable climate change legislation. Recent weeks have seen the completion of the COP26 negotiations in Glasgow. While farming was not a 'bespoke' item on the COP agenda, the downstream impact of the decisions taken at the event for livestock farming are pretty obvious.

Chief among these was the decision to reduce net global methane emissions over the next decade. And, of course, COP 27 is only 11 months away. The discussion to develop new, post-Brexit support measures for the beef and lamb sectors is now in full flow with policy instruments and schemes being devised that will shape livestock farming in Northern Ireland for the next generation. Farmers will be very aware of the more than positive developments in market prices that have characterised the year that was 2021. But as the year ends, the spectre of increased feed, fertiliser, energy and so many other input costs has reared its head to dampen the margins that can be achieved from the various beef and lamb production enterprises. And no doubt, this is a story that will continue to play out in 2022.

Throughout all of this the Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) has had a central role in framing the debates that have played out while also taking decisive action on behalf of Northern Ireland beef and sheep producers and processors when required. Earlier this week the Commission's chief executive Ian Stevenson took some time out to reflect on the year that was for beef and lamb in Northern Ireland. He specifically focussed on the impact these developments had made at farm and wider supply chain level while also giving his perspectives on how affairs may well further develop during the year ahead. As you will see, a selection of 'V' words has featured prominently in his thoughts.

Veterinary:

As Ian very astutely pointed out, 2021 has been a busy year for veterinary issues. He explained: "The new Trade and Cooperation Agreement reached by the EU and UK dominated much of the news agenda for the year with the practical implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol taking centre stage. "Throughout the period, the challenges posed by new export certification, customs and SPS requirements plus the sterling efforts of vets operating at Northern Ireland's ports to keep goods flowing in and out of Northern Ireland were issues that continually rose to the top of the news agenda." Ian continued: "TB was a major talking point during 2021 with Minister Poots consulting on a new TB strategy. If implemented, will see badgers being actively controlled in hot spot areas and new measures being taken to improve biosecurity and make greater use of blood testing."

Viruses and Variants:

The year started off with many businesses closed or operating at very limited levels due to high numbers of Covid-19 cases in the population forcing government to implement strict lockdowns on society after the 2020 Christmas period. Ian further explained: "This was a particularly challenging time for the hotel, hospitality and catering sectors which only really started to open up again in the spring time. A big challenge that has been faced by the sector since reopening is the shortage of available labour which is being felt in many sectors including agrifood. The year has ended with a new variant of Covid-19 called Omicron dominating the news agenda and many unknowns about its severity and implications." According to the LMC representative, Covid-19 wasn't the only

virus that created issues for the global meat industry. He commented: "African Swine Fever has posed major challenges not just in Asia but in several European Countries. ASF has been one of the main driving forces of global meat trade with China in particular importing huge volumes of all meats to make up protein shortfalls as a consequence of massive culls in their domestic pig herds. "Avian Flu is another challenging virus impacting the Northern Ireland poultry sector as we approach the end of 2021."

Vaccinations:

Very positive roll-outs of Covid-19 vaccines have been taking place right across the world. As a consequence, there has been a gradual reopening of global societies and economies. "But the situation remains very fragile as case numbers continue to rise during a fourth wave of infection," Ian Stevenson stressed.

Volatility:

Ian also confirmed that, whilst beef and lamb prices have been very strong for most of 2021, the volatility in global commodity markets has been driving up production costs at farm and factory level: enhanced labour, transport, fuel, fertiliser and feed costs are all eating into supply chain margins at the present time.

Living in a virtual world:

The use of technology continued to play an active part throughout the whole of 2021 with many LMC staff, and people across society as a whole, working remotely from home (where that has been possible). Ian commented: "Much of our day-to-day engagement with stakeholders was successfully achieved using Zoom, Teams, Webex or other technology platforms. "One of the real challenges posed by use of technology has been the relentless amount of meetings, events and engagements that have been scheduled during the year. "There are now real concerns about staff tiredness and wellbeing as work life and home life demarcations are blurred." He continued: "The importance of technology, however, was really emphasised by this pandemic. "In a world where everyone is connected by technology platforms, LMC has been upping its work on social media to engage with consumers regarding the importance of beef and lamb in healthy balanced diets and telling the true story about red meat and our industry values."

Value of face-to face engagement:

Balmoral Show 2021 kick started a resumption of face-to-face engagements with many meetings, conferences and dinners being held through the autumn and early winter of 2021. Ian Stevenson again: "It is very important to engage with people in a physical environment as so much more can be learned from each other than through a virtual call on the internet. "The City Meat Lecture in London was the only event I attended off the island of Ireland since February 2020 and it was great to reengage with so many colleagues from the UK meat industry and catch up on so many issues that we are all collectively working on."

Veganism:

Recent years have seen January being characterised as the 'so called' month of veganuary. In essence, this is a manifestation of the vegan lobby trying to up the ante to try and encourage consumers to switch away from livestock-based foods and products. But as Ian Stevenson pointed out, 2021 was marked by a significant reduction in the traction gained by the vegan movement throughout the year. He explained: "Meat was in good demand throughout the whole of 2021 as consumers cooked more at home and reignited their love affair with local quality assured beef and lamb."

Verification and Validation:

A large part of 2021 was dominated by climate change with the UN COP 26 event being held in Glasgow during November. Whilst

agrifood didn't feature heavily on the agenda at COP 26, it is now clear that the agriculture and food industries have a huge part to play in the road to Net Zero. The LMC chief executive commented: "What this means in practical terms is that our farming and food sectors must get much better at measuring, monitoring and improving on everything that we do from soil to plate to drive efficiency and productivity. "Verification and validation of our sustainability credentials is an absolute necessity in the months and years to come. Locally our politicians must focus on the science and evidence that they are being presented with to agree climate change legislation that enables our industry to meet the challenge and opportunity of climate change, not a bill that simply takes the rug from under our feet."

Volume:

It probably came as a great surprise to many people just how important the Northern Ireland agrifood industry is to the domestic food security of the UK and other neighbouring nations. "We produce enough food calories in Northern Ireland to feed 10 million people," said Ian Stevenson. "This must be protected as we move forward with new agriculture and environmental policies in Northern Ireland and as the Westminster government bends over backwards to secure international trade deals that so far have had little to offer the UK agriculture and food industry."

Variety:

As we approach the end of another year disrupted by Covid-19 it is important to reflect on the amount of important and varied work undertaken by LMC staff and stakeholders. Ian Stevenson further explained: "Everyone is working together to keep the nation fed, informed and engaged about everything that we do to support their nutritional, health, social, environmental and economic needs. "We are the biggest private sector industry in Northern Ireland supporting the livelihoods of over 113,000 people.

He concluded: "I greatly value the tremendous efforts of every staff member in LMC who has gone the extra mile to adapt to Covid-19 and for the support that everyone has shown to their colleagues through these challenging times. "Our levy payers and stakeholders are the lifeblood of LMC and we thank them for all their support and guidance throughout the year as we develop our services to support, examine and inform the marketing and development of the Northern Ireland beef and sheep industry."



LMC
Livestock & Meat Commission

LMC would like to wish all of our levy-payers and stakeholders a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year

Holiday Arrangements:
LMC's offices will be closed from 25th December-3rd January
We will reopen on Tuesday 4th January 2022

Answerphone & Text Service
There will be no answerphone or text message service during the Christmas and New Year period

LMC Bulletin
There will be no LMC Bulletin published on Saturday 25 December 2021 or Saturday 1st January 2022

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 base quotes & Mart results
Updated 5pm Daily
Tel: 028 9263 3011

Text Service

Free weekly base 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 13/12/21	Next Week 20/12/21
Prime		
U-3	388 - 394p	388 - 394p
R-3	382 - 388p	382 - 388p
O+3	376 - 382p	376 - 382p
P+3	320 - 332p	320 - 332p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3	260 - 290p	260 - 290p

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 11/12/21	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	407.0	410.8	395.2
R3	400.9	402.4	390.2
O+3	392.6	393.4	383.4

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 11/12/21	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	195.3	209.9	219.9	237.4
P2	218.6	234.1	257.4	273.3
P3	235.6	250.6	272.0	282.3
O3	-	274.1	286.5	298.6
O4	-	264.0	290.0	300.6
R3	-	-	-	320.2

Deadweight Cattle Trade

Base quotes from the plants this week for U-3 grading prime cattle remained steady ranging from 388-394p/kg, with similar quotes expected early next week for both steers and heifers. Quotes for good quality O+3 cows continued to range from 260-290p/kg with most plants quoting in the region of 280-290p/kg.

Throughput of prime cattle in local plants improved last week with 7,386 head processed, an increase of 458 head compared to the previous week when 6,928 head were processed. This was 757 head more than the 6,629 prime cattle processed in local plants during the same week in 2020. Cow throughput in NI last week was back slightly from the previous week to total 2,620 head.

Imports of cattle for direct slaughter from ROI increased last week to 228 prime cattle and 167 cows. Exports of cattle out of NI for direct slaughter have continued to operate at low levels with one prime cattle and 47 cows exported to ROI last week while no cattle were exported to GB.

Deadweight prime cattle prices in NI last week continued to report a mixed performance. The average NI steer price last week was up 0.7p/kg to 393.6p/kg with the R3 steer price up 0.3p/kg to 403.6p/kg. The average heifer price in NI last week was back 1.3p/kg to 395.0p/kg with the R3 heifer price back a penny to 403.2p/kg. The average young bull price in NI last week was up 0.3p/kg to 379.6p/kg while the R3 young bull price back 2.3p/kg to 390.0p/kg. In the corresponding week last year the R3 young bull price was 364.1p/kg, 25.9p/kg behind current levels. Meanwhile the average cow price in NI last week increased by 0.2p/kg to 270.9p/kg with the O3 cow price back 0.6p/kg to 297.0p/kg.

The deadweight trade for prime cattle in GB continued to come under pressure last week. The average GB steer price last week was back 2.7p/kg to 408.8p/kg while the R3 steer price was back 2.3p/kg to 416.5p/kg. The differential between the NI and GB R3 steer price last week narrowed from the previous week to 12.9p/kg. The average heifer price in GB last week was 406.5p/kg, back 1.7p/kg, while the R3 heifer price decreased by 2.5p/kg to 415.6p/kg. This puts the R3 heifer price in GB at 12.4p/kg above NI levels. Meanwhile the GB cow trade last week showed signs of improvement with the average cow price up 3.2p/kg to 255.1p/kg. The O3 cow price reported an increase of 0.4p/kg to 281.3p/kg, 15.7p/kg below the same price in NI.

In ROI last week the deadweight trade for prime cattle sharpened across all of the price reported grades from the previous week. The R3 steer price in ROI was up 3.6p/kg to the equivalent of 364.3p/kg while the R3 heifer price was up 2.8p/kg to the 367.3p/kg. The R3 young bull price was the equivalent of 348.8p/kg, up 2.8p/kg. Meanwhile the cow trade in ROI last week also improved with prices of reported grades up between 1-4p/kg. The O3 cow price reported an increase of 3.9p/kg to 299.9p/kg, 2.9p/kg above the O3 cow price in NI.

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

	W/E 11/12/21	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	405.5	371.9	415.7	424.1	421.6	415.7	419.1
	R3	403.6	364.3	415.9	424.2	415.4	408.8	416.5
	R4	399.8	365.3	417.7	427.0	414.4	413.4	420.0
	O3	390.0	351.3	399.9	407.7	391.5	390.6	396.6
	AVG	393.6	-	413.2	416.6	402.8	399.1	408.8
Heifers	U3	409.6	378.6	423.3	425.2	428.7	420.6	424.8
	R3	403.2	367.3	417.1	419.4	415.9	409.6	415.6
	R4	400.0	368.8	419.3	421.1	414.6	411.8	417.9
	O3	392.1	360.5	400.1	406.4	389.8	390.1	394.9
	AVG	395.0	-	415.4	412.6	401.1	394.7	406.5
Young Bulls	U3	395.5	356.6	405.1	414.5	406.5	402.0	407.9
	R3	390.0	348.8	402.2	399.5	411.1	406.0	405.0
	O3	374.9	338.4	373.1	377.0	378.8	388.6	376.9
	AVG	379.6	-	387.4	389.9	385.6	382.8	386.7
Prime Cattle Price Reported	4649	-	6143	6346	6463	4495	23447	
Cows	O3	297.0	299.9	279.3	284.5	280.1	280.3	281.3
	O4	300.1	298.4	286.1	287.6	282.5	281.2	284.3
	P2	259.5	264.7	232.5	229.3	237.7	237.6	235.9
	P3	277.5	285.6	251.3	251.8	255.5	257.2	254.9
	AVG	270.9	-	271.8	260.2	250.3	249.9	255.1

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=85.35p 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 11/12/21	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	251	269	255	215	250	230
Friesians	164	188	178	143	158	150
Heifers	221	260	234	180	220	200
Beef Cows	180	243	194	145	179	160
Dairy Cows	129	172	140	90	128	115
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	240	306	268	200	239	218
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	227	309	242	180	226	200
Bullocks over 500kg	221	273	239	175	220	195
Heifers up to 450kg	244	299	260	190	243	215
Heifers over 450kg	216	245	225	175	215	195
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	350	460	400	250	345	300
Continental Heifers	275	440	340	150	270	220
Friesian Bulls	140	250	190	50	135	95
Holstein Bulls	100	240	150	2	95	55

SHEEP TRADE

NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 13/12/21	Next Week 20/12/21
R3 Lambs up to 22kg	570-575p/kg	560p/kg

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 27/11/21	W/E 04/12/21	W/E 11/12/21
NI L/W Lambs	520.7	531.3	523.7
NI D/W Lambs	553.4	559.1	560.4
GB D/W Lambs	600.6	618.6	631.8
ROI D/W	584.1	594.9	605.3

Deadweight Sheep Trade

Quotes for R3 grade lambs remained firm this week ranging from 570-575p/kg up to 22kg. Quotes of 560p/kg up to 22kg are expected for early next week. Lamb throughput last week decreased by 569 head, with a total of 8,794 head processed locally. This is back 1,581 head when compared to the 10,375 lambs processed in the same week last year. Exports of sheep from NI to ROI increased by almost 10 per cent from the previous week to 7,883 head exported last week. The average NI deadweight lamb price increased slightly by 1.3p/kg to 560.4p/kg. In ROI last week the average deadweight lamb price was the equivalent of 605.3p/kg, up 10.4p/kg from the previous week.

Liveweight Sheep Trade

Good numbers of lambs passed through the sale rings this week. On Saturday in Swatragh 870 lambs sold from 470-545p/kg compared to 1000 lambs sold from 479-673p/kg the previous week. On Monday in Kilrea 730 lambs sold from 510-560p/kg compared to 730 lambs sold from 508-566p/kg last week. In Rathfriland on Tuesday 629 lambs sold from 515-575p/kg (avg 535p/kg) compared to 332 lambs sold from 500-550p/kg (avg 529p/kg) the previous week. A strong entry from Markethill on Thursday of 1560 lambs sold from 520-566p/kg compared to 1160 lambs sold from 530-570p/kg last week. The trade for cull ewes firmed this week with top reported prices ranging from £130-£277 across the marts.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 11/12/21		Lambs			
To: 16/12/21		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Omagh	772	526	557	-
	Swatragh	870	470	545	-
Monday	Kilrea	730	510	560	-
	Massereene	511	510	555	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	694	514	600	-
	Rathfriland	629	515	575	535
Wednesday	Ballymena	2606	500	547	514
	Enniskillen	789	500	555	-
	Armoy	574	495	540	-
	Markethill	1560	520	566	-

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Contact us

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

