

DEVELOPING GRASS AND CLOVER VARIETIES

April 2012 marks the beginning of the final year of research being undertaken on four exciting grass and clover 'Breeding LINK' projects at the Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences IBERS (Aberystwyth University). 'Breeding LINK' comprises four projects funded under the Defra Sustainable Livestock Production (SLP) LINK programme.

The projects, led by IBERS are supported by LMC, AHDB-DairyCo, AHDB-EBLEX, British Grassland Society, Germinal Holdings Limited, HCC and QMS, and seek to underpin the development of new varieties of grass and clover to enhance beef, sheep and dairy production whilst reducing the environmental impact of grassland agriculture in the UK.

The four projects are concerned with more efficient utilisation of phosphorus; enhancing nitrogen use efficiency from soil to plant; increasing the efficiency with which nitrogen is used in the rumen and; developing grass and clover better adapted to the future climate of the UK. Whilst the projects still have a year to run some valuable insight has been gained from the first four years of research and a summary of the projects' progress is outlined below:

Genetic improvement of forage grasses and white clover to improve phosphorous use efficiency (PUE) and reduce phosphorous losses to water from UK grasslands

The genetic control of phosphorus use in white clover and perennial ryegrass is now much better understood and this knowledge is being used to develop new varieties with lower P requirements. White clover varieties that perform well at moderate soil P with no added P fertiliser have been developed and will be entered for National List testing. White clover varieties from plants selected on soils with low P have been developed and will be entered for National List testing

Genetic improvement of perennial ryegrass and red clover to increase nitrogen use efficiency and reduce N losses from pastures and silo

The genetic control of the use of soil nitrogen by perennial ryegrass is now much better understood and this knowledge is being used to develop new varieties with enhanced nitrogen use efficiency. A new low nitrate leaching line of red clover has been developed and is being grown in field experiments to compare leaching propensity over a three year period in comparison with a typical red clover variety. Variation in activity of the

enzyme polyphenol oxidase (PPO), which protects protein molecules from breaking down, has been identified between and within red clover varieties which will enable selection of new red clover varieties with appropriate levels of PPO to reduce N losses.

Genetic improvement of perennial ryegrass and white clover to increase the efficiency of nitrogen use in the rumen

Three new AberHSG (High Sugar Grass) diploid perennial ryegrasses, currently undergoing National and Recommended List trials, combine the agronomic performance expected from Aber with enhanced protein use efficiency in the rumen. It is anticipated that the first AberHSG variety with this added benefit will be launched in 2014. The latest three diploid ryegrass varieties bred in 2011 at IBERS will further build on past successes plus provide even greater ruminant performance due to enhanced rumen nitrogen use efficiency. In the future this will mean more grass per kg of fertiliser plus even more meat and milk production from forage fed animals. A novel lower protein white clover has been developed and is currently being grown in field trials alongside a typical white clover to quantify impact of reduced protein content on feed intake, milk production and N excretion when

fed to ruminants with high sugar grasses.

Development of productive and persistent high quality forage grasses and white clover with increased water use efficiency and resilience to summer droughts

Despite recent wet summers in Northern Ireland, rainfall in the UK is now consistently lower than the 1961-1990 long-term average. Perennial ryegrass production is reduced by 1 tonne / hectare for every 50mm increase in soil water deficit (typically a reduction of 2-4 tonnes / ha / yr in the UK). Ryegrass x fescue species' hybrids combine forage production and quality with persistency and stress tolerance. Italian ryegrass water-use-efficiency (grams of dry matter produced per unit of water consumed) is increased significantly following the introduction of a limited number of selected genes for drought tolerance through conventional breeding from related fescue species adapted to Mediterranean conditions. New drought tolerant ryegrass provides forage production and quality equivalent to current ryegrass varieties under non-stress conditions but significantly greater yields and recovery under prolonged summer droughts. New ryegrass x North African or Mediterranean fescue species' hybrids

are fertile and highly productive with large extensive root systems and provide potential for sustained future grassland agriculture should water availability be reduced to levels significantly greater than are found in the UK today. Variation in water use efficiency and drought tolerance within white clover is closely associated with differences in root architecture providing valuable information that will enable incorporation of drought tolerant traits into new white clover varieties. New hybrids between white clover and the rhizomatous species Caucasian clover are more drought tolerant than white clover at comparable levels of soil moisture deficit providing options for sustainable forage production in periods of summer drought.

For more information on these projects please refer to the project website at <http://www.greener-grasslands.ibers.aber.ac.uk/index.html>

The Breeding LINK projects are sponsored by Defra through the Sustainable Livestock Production (SLP) LINK programme with support from AHDB-DairyCo, AHDB-EBLEX, British Grassland Society (BGS), Germinal Holdings Ltd, Hybu Cig Cymru, Livestock and Meat Commission of Northern Ireland LMC(NI) and Quality Meat Scotland (QMS).

CATTLE TRADE

CATTLE QUOTES

(P/KG DW)	This Week 26/03/12	Next Week 02/04/12
U-3	326 - 330p	326 - 330p
R-3	320 - 324p	320 - 324p
O+3	314 - 318p	314 - 318p
Cows	270 - 286p	270 - 286p

* Plus 8p/kg in-spec bonus where applicable.

LAST WEEK'S NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 24/03/12	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls	Cows
U-3=	335.1	340.6	327.8	307.4
U=3=	334.7	339.0	330.4	297.7
U=4=	330.0	337.3	324.0	300.0
R=3=	334.7	334.8	325.5	295.5
R=4=	333.2	332.0		298.7
O=3=	319.2	316.2	310.8	278.9
O+3=	331.2	326.6	317.2	297.7
O+4=	317.1	326.2		292.6
P+2=	298.9		297.4	253.1
P+3=	302.2	299.9	303.9	269.4
Average	327.3	329.8	316.2	258.8

Note: The table above shows prices for selected grades from the 15-point scale. The table below merges grades down to the 5-point scale for comparison with GB regions and ROI.

LAST WEEK'S CATTLE PRICES (UK / ROI)

W/E 24/03/12	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland
Steers						
U3	357.2	350.6	351.9	349.8	335.0	332.7
R3	352.3	344.4	341.5	337.9	334.2	325.6
R4	353.1	348.3	341.1	336.9	332.9	325.5
O3	341.0	325.0	321.6	316.3	321.7	312.5
Average	351.5	341.0	338.1	324.7	327.3	-
Heifers						
U3	358.2	355.1	353.6	348.1	340.9	348.2
R3	350.2	342.3	340.7	337.1	335.4	336.3
R4	350.8	344.7	341.1	335.8	332.6	336.0
O3	332.7	328.0	324.4	314.3	323.1	321.7
Average	350.1	341.9	338.3	328.1	329.8	-
Young Bulls						
U3	343.0	340.0	344.5	344.2	329.1	329.7
R3	337.1	328.6	330.0	320.4	325.1	324.2
O3	309.6	312.5	315.0	313.9	311.0	315.7
Average	324.4	319.5	319.9	312.2	316.2	-
Prime Cattle Price Reported	6,856	5,909	5,639	4,557	3,878	-
Cows						
O3	291.4	283.1	282.1	259.7	282.4	284.2
O4	292.0	285.4	282.7	260.7	285.1	287.8
P2	225.2	235.8	240.2	217.6	249.1	242.7
P3	240.8	254.8	256.2	238.1	268.3	279.1

Notes:

(i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=83.30p Stg.

(ii) Shading indicates a lower price than the previous week.

Deadweight Cattle Trade

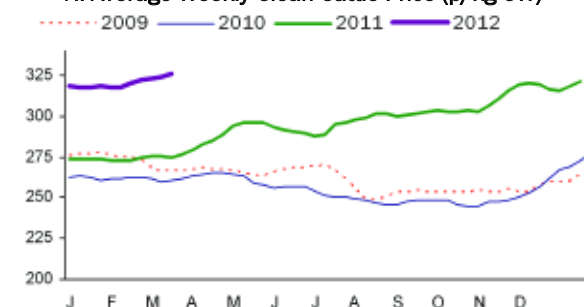
NEXT week we expect most factories to be quoting 328-330p/kg for U-3 grade prime cattle although it is possible that a further 2p/kg (332p) may be quoted for good loads of heifers. Two plants continue to quote 326p/kg for steers. Cow quotes remain firm with factories quoting as much as 286p/kg.

Last week, steer and heifer prices edged upwards again reflecting recent increases in quotes. The U3 steer price rose by 1p/kg while the U3 heifer price also increased by 1p/kg to 340.9p/kg, breaking the 340p/kg barrier. The average steer price was up by 2p/kg last week while the average heifer price was up by nearly 3p/kg.

The cattle kill remains under pressure. In total, fewer than 6,800 head were slaughtered last week, the lowest weekly kill of the year to date and 15 per cent lower than the previous week. So far this year the kill has been running about 14 per cent behind the same period last year. In a comparison of last week's kill with the corresponding week last year, the kill was 28 per cent lower year-on-year, a decline of 2,600 head. This is bound to present significant difficulty at processor level.

Last week the trade for steers and heifers in Scotland and North England was broadly steady, with prices under some pressure further south. Scottish prices were up by about 1p/kg with U3 heifer prices there now 358p/kg. In ROI the trade was firm last week and while U3 /R3 steer prices were more-or-less unchanged, U3 / R3 heifer prices were 2c/kg higher.

NI Average Weekly Clean Cattle Price (p/kg CW)



NI Clean Cattle Slaughterings ('000 head per week)



More detailed information on prices and explanations of these tables and charts are available from the LMC

Technical Department:
Call 028 9263 3000.

LATEST NI BEEF MARTS

Finished Cattle (£/100kg LW)		Store Cattle (£/100kg LW)		Dropped Calves (£/head)				
	from	to		from	to			
Steers			Store bullocks up to 400kg		Continental bull calves			
1st quality	203	220	1st quality	204	256			
2nd quality	185	202	2nd quality	180	203			
Friesians	156	181			1st quality	290	388	
			Store bullocks 400kg-500kg		2nd quality	220	288	
			1st quality	220	235			
Heifers			2nd quality	200	219	Continental heifer calves		
1st quality	190	214				1st quality	225	345
2nd quality	170	189				2nd quality	150	220
			Store bullocks over 500kg					
Beef Cows			1st quality	211	236			
1st quality	159	195	2nd quality	190	210	Friesian bull calves		
2nd quality	128	158				1st quality	200	290
			Store heifers up to 450kg			2nd quality	100	198
Dairy Cows			1st quality	203	234			
1st quality	129	145	2nd quality	180	202	Holstein Bull Calves		
2nd quality	105	128						
			Store heifers over 450kg					
			1st quality	200	212			
			2nd quality	180	199			

Taken from a sample of beef marts in the week ended 23/03/12

FQAS Recognised by Soil Association Food for Life Catering Mark

THE Food for Life Catering Mark is a Soil Association award scheme which supports caterers who deliver fresh food which is free from undesirable additives and better animal welfare standards. Caterers who have gained the Catering Mark use unprocessed, seasonal produce and a growing proportion of local and organic ingredients, high welfare meat and sustainable fish.

The main principles of the Catering Mark are: fresh food you can trust, sourcing of environmentally sustainable and ethical food, championing local food producers and making healthy eating easier. The Catering Mark award scheme works on a certain set of standards in order to be classified as a bronze, silver or gold certification.

All meat on the menu at these approved catering establishments whether they are hospitals, restaurants, nurseries, schools and universities must be from farms which satisfy UK welfare standards. As of January 2012, the Northern Ireland Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (FQAS) has been added to the list of accredited welfare assurance schemes where meat can be sourced from to

qualify for holding the Catering Mark. Red Tractor (AFS), Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) and Farm Assured Welsh Livestock (FAWL) are also approved welfare schemes for the Catering Mark.

The Northern Ireland Assembly has become the first organisation in the country to achieve the prestigious bronze Food for Life Catering Mark for all of the meals served in Parliament Buildings.



EU Deadweight Cattle Prices - Heifers R3 Equivalent (€ Cents)					
Position last Mth	Position this Mth	Country	Price last Mth (w/e 19.02.12)	Price this Mth (w/e 18.03.12)	Change on Mth (cents)
2	1	Greece	410.2	412.8	+2.6
3	2	Great Britain	404.8	409.4	+4.6
1	3	Sweden	413.4	405.8	-7.6
4	4	Spain	398.9	403.3	+4.4
7	5	Italy	389.9	401.1	+11.2
5	6	Northern Ireland	392.9	399.7	+6.7
6	7	Ireland	392.5	399.3	+6.8
8	8	Denmark	378.2	376.9	-1.3
9	9	France	373.0	375.0	+2.0
10	10	Luxembourg	359.7	360.9	+1.3
11	11	Germany	352.9	359.0	+6.1
12	12	Austria	336.4	333.2	-3.2
13	13	Slovenia	319.7	323.8	+4.1
14	14	Poland	305.0	305.3	+0.2
15	15	Belgium	301.5	304.0	+2.5
16	16	Czech Republic	276.2	287.1	+10.9
17	17	Lithuania	248.4	260.1	+11.8
EU 11 Average			380.6	385.4	+4.8
Exchange Rate - € worth			83.4p	83.4p	

Official prices reported to the EC Dressing Specification



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 Quotes &
Mart Results
Updated 5pm Daily

Tel: 028 9263 3011

Text Service

Free Price Quotes sent to your mobile phone weekly

Email - bulletin@lmcni.com
Tel: 028 9263 3000

Deadweight Sheep Trade

HERE was a wide range in deadweight hogget quotes this week with one plant quoting 440p/kg and another quoting 460p/kg. With this being the case, we understand that most stock was purchased at the higher price and expect quotes of 460p/kg next week although it remains to be seen. It is expected that the factories will be quoting 540p/kg for spring lambs on Monday morning, similar to prices this week.

SHEEP QUOTES		
(P/KG DW)	This Week 26/03/12	Next Week 02/04/12
Hoggets	450p*	460p*
Spring Lambs	500 - 540p	540p

All plants paying up to 22kgs for FQAS hoggets.

REPORTED LAMB PRICES - P/KG			
(P/KG)	W/E 10/03/12	W/E 17/03/12	W/E 24/03/12
NI Liveweight	402.1p	401.1p	403.5p
NI Deadweight	434.2p	432.6p	443.6p
GB Deadweight	440.7p	444.1p	458.6p

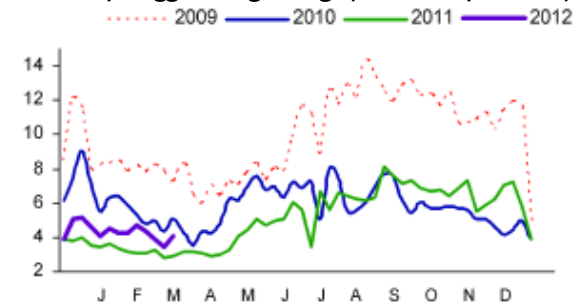
LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 24/03/2012 To: 29/03/2012		Hoggets (P/KG LW)				Spring Lambs			
		No.	From	To	Avg	No.	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Omagh	442	389	425	-				
	Donemana	524	-	-	440				
Monday	Kilrea	500	400	425	-				
	Masserene	1160	390	441	N/A	42	530	558	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	732	390	465	405				
	Rathfriland	-	-	-	409	142	512	642	-
	Armoys	232	400	427	415				
Wednesday	Ballymena	961	380	427	393	175	500	682	515
	Enniskillen	784	382	422	390	-	Upto 530	-	
	Markethill	1450	380	415	405		525	565	561

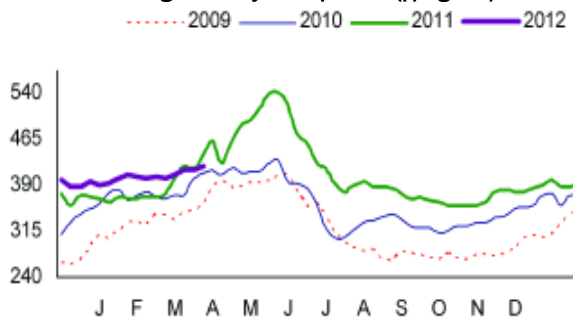
This week's marts

AN increasing number of marts reported spring lamb sales this week with 175 head through the ring on Wednesday in Ballymena. Prices in Ballymena averaged 515p/kg with a top price of 682p/kg reported. Hogget prices remain firm with average prices reasonably steady. The average hogget price of 405p/kg in Saintfield this week was similar to last week. Likewise in Ballymena the hogget trade was similar to last week.

NI Lamb / Hogget Slaughtering ('000 head per week)



NI Average Weekly Sheep Price (p/kg CW)



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