

INCREASED PENALTIES ON OVER 16 MONTH BULLS SINCE THE START OF 2014

LATE last year, several Northern Ireland meat plants indicated that from January 2014, they would be encouraging producers to slaughter bulls under 16 months by applying significantly higher penalties on overage bulls.

The young bull kill in Northern Ireland was 20 per cent higher in 2013 compared to the previous year. With over 50 per cent of these young bulls being slaughtered over 16 months of age in 2013 (see Figure 1), the increased number of these over-age bulls presents a problem for processors trying to market the beef from these animals. Overage bulls are unsuitable for many premium retail and foodservice contracts, given the reputation for the beef from older bulls being dark, firm and dry.

As a result, penalties on overage bulls were increased by several plants in the second half of the year. Factory buyers were quoting penalties of 10-20p/kg on over 16 month bulls in recent times. In the second half of 2013, these penalties were applied quite rigorously with the average price of an over 16 month old bull 15p/kg lower

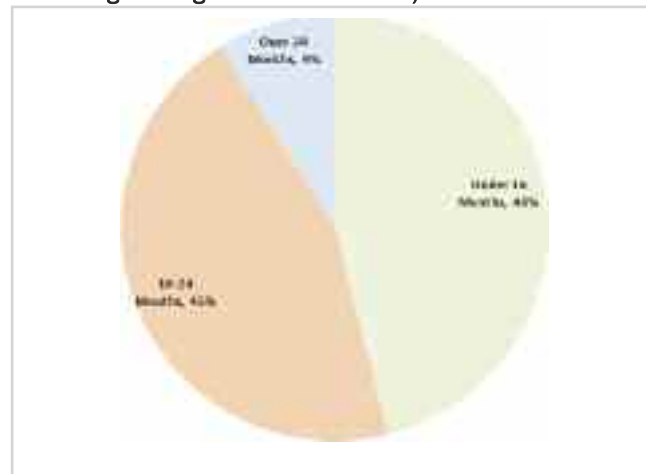
than under 16 month old stock.

Late last year, several beef processors indicated that they would be applying much stronger penalties on over 16 month young bulls in early 2014, in a bid to discourage the production of these out-of-spec cattle. In recent weeks, some buyers have indicated that they are applying penalties of 50p/kg.

It remains to be seen how stringently these penalties will be applied, particularly in the context of tight cattle supplies. However, the recent LMC Quarterly (Autumn 2013 Issue) demonstrated that even at penalties of 15p/kg, it does not make economic sense to feed bulls beyond 15 months of age.

These penalties will mean that some producers will need to consider a change to their finishing systems. The article below written by Dr Norman Weatherup from CAFRE provides some useful pointers on finishing bulls before the 16 month deadline.

Figure 1. Proportion of Bulls by Age Bracket (Based on all Bulls and Young Bulls aged under 30 months)



FINISHING SUCKLER BULL BEEF BEFORE THE 16 MONTH DEADLINE – CAN IT BE DONE?

AS deductions for overage bulls begin to be implemented at abattoirs across Northern Ireland, it is time to consider the production system to ensure that bulls are finished inside the current age limit.

What are the key steps involved?

Remember health and safety

Bulls can be more aggressive and boisterous than steers and care must be taken when handling them, especially after 8 months of age.

Put a health plan in place

Ensure cows are vaccinated against scour before calving and calves are vaccinated against pneumonia before housing. Any animal that has had a setback due to either of these diseases will be slower to finish. It is also highly recommended that farmers join the voluntary BVD eradication scheme and that any PI calves identified are slaughtered immediately.

Calculate the required growth rate

If a finished carcase of 360 kg is required (the NI average carcase weight for young bulls was 329kg in 2013 although this includes dairy bred bulls) by 450 days of age (15 months) then a final of live weight of 645kg is required. Assuming a birth weight of 45kg, the required average daily gain from birth is 1.33kg/day. This is not a very demanding target and all healthy suckler bulls should be able to meet it.

Select a cow with milk

A milky cow should be able to support a daily gain of 1.3-1.5kg/day in her calf. The key is to use a planned cross breeding programme and use milk EBV when selecting sires to generate replacements.

Select a terminal sire with high EBVs for growth

Progeny from these bulls grow more quickly

and reach market weight earlier.

Use fat depth EBV carefully

Some producers have difficulties with bulls classifying fat class 1 or 2. In this case, bulls with an EBV for fatness are required. In other cases, it may be necessary to select a leaner terminal sire where bulls are regularly classifying 4 or higher.

Manage grazing

It is important to have a grassland management programme in place to ensure cows have access to adequate supplies of fresh leafy grass to maintain milk supply to the calf. In addition, fresh leafy grass will help to maintain calf growth rates when calves commence grazing. Where bulls are autumn born, it may be tempting for producers to graze bulls later in the season. It is vitally important that autumn-born bulls are kept in stable groups, well away from heifers or any cow that could be on heat. Bulls should be fed at grass from late July/early August and should definitely be housed no later than September. This should permit a feeding period of at least 100 days before slaughter.

Introduce creep feeding early

Creep feeding performs three important functions.

- A. It will supplement energy intake as both milk yield and grass quality decline.
- B. It will help to break the cow-calf bond in preparation for weaning.
- C. It will provide an easy transition to the post-weaning diet.

Ensure there is no store period

While technically the target growth rate required of 1.33kg/d is not very demanding, there is no room for a store period in the bull's life. If a bull spends two months on a maintenance only diet, the required daily gain

increases from 1.33kg/d to 1.54kg/d (which would be challenging for many bulls). Growth rate and feed conversion ratio will deteriorate after 100 days of feeding in steers and heifers but bulls have a higher genetic potential for growth and have a lower body fat content so they will maintain growth rates over a longer period of feeding.

Use high quality rations.

While steers and heifers can be finished using lower quantities of straight barley and store cattle may be fed maize gluten as the sole concentrate, bulls will be offered concentrates at a much higher rate. In this case, rations will require a range of energy, protein and fibre sources to avoid the risk of acidosis and to maintain a high ME concentration.

Feed concentrates ad lib

It is possible to finish bulls on a silage based diet BUT the silage must be of EXCELLENT quality. It is much easier to manage bulls when they are offered concentrates and straw ad lib.

Ensure bulls have access to clean, fresh water

Ideally water points should be able to be checked from outside the pen and should be inspected at least once per day. It should be noted that bulls will require more water on an ad lib concentrate diet and water points should be sufficient for the number of bulls in the pen.

Loading and transport

Bulls should be kept in their groups for transport and slaughter and should not be mixed at the lairage. Contact your abattoir so that they know bulls will be arriving and can make any necessary arrangements.

Further information on managing suckler bulls contact your local CAFRE beef and sheep adviser on Telephone number 0300 200 7843.

SHEEP FARM WALKS FEEDING AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

A series of farm walks will be held on hill and lowland farms, organised jointly by AFBI, AgriSearch and CAFRE. The farm walks will start at 2 pm on the following dates:

Date	Farmers name and address
Tuesday 21-Jan-14	Mr Isaac Crilly 7 Fort Road Lislaird Castlederg BT81 7UL
Wednesday 22-Jan-14	Mr Samuel Wharry Harphall 42 Whitehill Road Carnlough BT44 OHG
Thursday 23-Jan-14	Mr John Martin Gordonall 93 Newtownards Road Greyabbey BT22 2QJ
Friday 24-Jan-14	Mr Joe Maginn 97 Ballagh Road Newcastle BT33 OLA

Each of the host farmers currently participates in on-farm research with AFBI Hillsborough, funded by DARD and AgriSearch, and thus the farm walks will provide an excellent opportunity to present and discuss research findings with the host farmer and staff from AFBI, AgriSearch and CAFRE. The main topics to be covered at the events include updates on the benefits of crossbred ewes for improved production efficiency, feeding strategies for indoor lambing systems and health aspects in late pregnancy including how to better diagnose and treat lameness. Staff from AFBI Veterinary Sciences division will be on hand to discuss how to tackle fluke and worm burdens. Finally, a simple recording scheme available from AFBI to select replacement ewes for prolificacy and easier lambing will be featured on the days.

A warm welcome is extended to all sheep producers to attend these events (all signposted from the nearest village/town). For biosecurity, please wear clean clothes and footwear.



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

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phone weekly

Email - bulletin@lmcni.com
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WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS



CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 13/01/14	Next Week 20/01/14
Prime		
U-3	346-350p	348-350p
R-3	340-344p	342-344p
O+3	334-338p	336-338p
* Plus 8p/kg in spec bonus where applicable		
Cows		
O+3 & better	225-250p	225-250p
Steakers	150-200p	150-200p
Blues	110-130p	110-130p

REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 11/01/14	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U-3=	364.5	369.3	316.5
U=3=	364.7	371.4	358.0
U=4=	350.7	362.0	-
R=3=	365.3	365.2	338.3
R=4=	361.7	359.6	340.0
O+3=	362.1	367.5	328.3
O=3=	345.1	345.9	299.1
Average	353.6	357.3	322.3

REPORTED COW PRICES NI W/E 11/01/14 (p/kg)

Grades	Wgt <220kg	Wgt 220- 250kg	Wgt 250- 280kg	Wgt >280kg
O+3=	-	-	248.4	247.4
O-3+	-	-	234.0	233.7
P+2+	-	194.9	204.3	211.1
P+3+	-	206.0	214.3	220.7
P-1-	122.1	122.7	128.3	145.0

COMMODITY PRICE

W/E 11/01/14	Price (£) per tonne / 1000litre	% weekly change
Barley	162.00	+0.3
Wheat	182.00	-1.6
Straw	17.20	-
Diesel	718-720	-

Deadweight Cattle Trade

QUOTES from the plants this week for U-3 grade prime cattle ranged from 346-350p/kg with 348-350p/kg being quoted for Monday. Bonuses of 8-14p/kg are available across the plants for in spec steers and heifers. Quotes for O+3 cows ranged from 225-250p/kg across the plants with the majority of plants quoting from 240-250p/kg.

With the introduction of increased penalties for young bulls over 16 months from the start of this year, and indications from some processors late last year that they would not handle overage bulls in the New Year, resulted in the young bull kill increasing in the last quarter of 2013 and recording a decline in the first two weeks of 2014. Last week 77 per cent of the price reported bulls were under 16 months of age compared to 29 per cent in the corresponding week last year.

Reports from the plants have indicated that prime cattle supplies are in line with demand for beef with a total of 5,766 prime cattle slaughtered in NI plants last week. In the corresponding week in 2013 prime cattle throughput in the NI plants totalled 6,769, representing a drop in throughput of 1,003 head or 15 per cent when comparing the two weeks. Imports from ROI for slaughter in NI plants last week consisted of 239 prime cattle and 6 cows while 150 NI origin cows were slaughtered in ROI plants. Exports to GB last week for direct slaughter consisted of 226 clean cattle and 46 cows.

The average steer price in NI last week was 353.6p/kg, back 4p/kg on the previous week while the R3 steer price increased by 1.4p/kg to 365.6p/kg. The average heifer prices in NI last week was 357.3p/kg, back 2.4p/kg from the previous week with the R3 heifer price almost unchanged at 364.4p/kg. The young bull price increased by 2.1 p/kg to 322.3p/kg last week with the R3 price up 6.5p/kg to 336.8p/kg. This increase is likely to have been driven by the increase in the proportion of young bulls slaughtered under 16 months. The average cow price in NI last week was 216.2p/kg, lower than all the GB regions with the exception of Southern England where the average price was 201.1p/kg.

In GB last week the trade remained under pressure with average steer prices back by 3.3p/kg to 380.9p/kg with prices in all the GB regions recording a decline. In Scotland last week the average heifer price remained steady at 400.2p/kg while it recorded a decline across the other GB regions. The average heifer price in GB last week was 380.9p/kg, back 3.6p/kg on the previous week. Young bull prices have come under pressure in GB with average prices recording a decline in all the GB regions. The average price young bull price in GB last week was back 7.5p/kg on the previous week to 342.4p/kg

In ROI last week the trade for steers and heifers was broadly similar to the previous week in euro terms but a weakening of the euro has meant prices were generally back in sterling terms. The R3 steer price last week was back by 2.6p/kg to 320.4p/kg while the R3 heifer price was within half a penny of the previous week at 337.6p/kg. The O3 young bull price has shown the most notable decline in ROI with prices back the equivalent of 9.7p/kg to 281.5p/kg last week.

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

W/E 11/01/14		Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	366.0	322.8	411.2	385.3	389.5	386.3	394.4
	R3	365.6	320.4	399.8	379.5	375.5	370.6	382.3
	R4	361.8	322.8	403.3	390.9	379.0	372.4	389.1
	AVG	353.6	-	401.0	380.8	372.0	363.1	380.9
Heifers	U3	368.2	349.1	410.6	386.5	388.7	385.9	394.5
	R3	364.4	337.6	401.5	373.8	377.4	373.7	383.3
	R4	360.7	337.6	401.2	383.1	377.9	370.4	384.7
	AVG	357.3	-	400.2	379.2	375.0	362.3	380.9
Young Bulls	U3	341.3	314.9	399.0	358.6	372.7	371.2	370.1
	R3	336.8	306.4	384.0	346.3	361.3	357.9	357.8
	O3	317.8	281.5	348.8	325.3	339.6	341.4	334.9
	AVG	322.3	-	357.6	336.9	346.1	338.4	342.4
Prime Cattle Price Reported		4541	-	6295	5682	5073	3850	20900
Cows	O3	237.1	244.1	241.2	244.9	242.1	227.1	238.4
	O4	241.2	246.3	251.4	247.6	241.7	235.2	244.3
	P2	188.0	211.5	193.9	190.1	192.6	170.9	184.3
	P3	215.9	230.8	208.2	224.4	213.3	193.4	208.1
AVG		216.2	-	237.0	231.0	227.3	201.1	223.2

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=82.86p 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 11/01/14	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Average	From	To	Average
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	210	230	215	150	209	180
Friesians	134	150	142	122	126	124
Heifers	205	228	212	140	204	170
Beef Cows	160	219	180	117	159	130
Dairy Cows	100	137	119	65	99	82
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	211	241	228	136	210	175
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	205	228	215	145	204	173
Bullocks over 500kg	211	213	212	196	202	199
Heifers up to 450kg	-	-	-	187	192	189
Heifers over 450kg	202	215	209	175	197	187
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	290	385	320	190	288	240
Continental Heifers	240	400	280	140	238	185
Friesian Bulls	70	135	100	20	68	45
Holstein Bulls	50	135	70	1	48	25

SHEEP TRADE

HOGGET QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 13/01/13	Next Week 20/01/14
NI Factories	370-380p > 22kg	380p > 22kg

REPORTED LAMB/HOGGET PRICES - P/KG

(P/KG DW)	W/E 28/12/13	W/E 04/01/14	W/E 11/01/14
NI Liveweight	-	359.7p	348.3p
NI Deadweight	387.9p	388.0p	387.1p
ROI Deadweight	372.2p	378.9p	363.4p
GB Deadweight	399.9p	406.2p	402.9p

Deadweight Sheep Trade

QUOTES from the plants for R3 grading hoggets came back early this week to 380p/kg with the plants continuing to pay up to 22kg. Similar quotes are expected for early next week. The plants have indicated lower demand in both GB and France, the two major markets for NI sheepmeat. A strengthening in sterling relative to the euro over the last few weeks has also made NI sheepmeat less competitive on the EU market. Sheep throughput in the NI plants last week totalled 9,384 head with a further 9,186 hoggets exported to ROI for direct slaughter. The deadweight price in NI last week was within a penny of the previous week at 387.1p/kg. The trade in GB has also come under pressure with the average price back 3.3p/kg to 402.9p/kg last week.

This week's marts

THERE were smaller shows in many of the marts this week with reports that the number of hoggets on the ground has started to tighten. The trade was back in the majority of the marts this week with several marts indicating that many of the hoggets going through the ring were heavy. In Massereene on Monday 867 hoggets sold from 340-377p/kg compared to 1,316 hoggets last week selling from 355-385p/kg. In Rathfriland on Tuesday 605 hoggets sold to an average price of 350p/kg compared to 745 hoggets last week selling to an average of 357p/kg. In Ballymena on Wednesday a similar trade to last week saw 808 hoggets selling from 330-387p/kg (avg 344p/kg).

LATEST SHEEP MARTS

From: 11/01/14 To: 16/01/14		Hoggets (P/KG LW)			
		No.	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Omagh	1317	329	368	-
	Swatragh	620	314	383	-
Monday	Massereene	867	340	377	-
	Kilrea	370	340	374	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	590	340	422	-
	Rathfriland	605	337	380	350
	Armoy	412	-	-	352
Wednesday	Ballymena	808	330	387	344
	Enniskillen	422	332	361	-
	Markethill	460	340	367	348

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