LMC BULLETIN

WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF THE LIVESTOCK AND MEAT COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Saturday 07 March 2015 Issue No. 2359

SUCKLER COW NUMBERS DECLINE FURTHER BUT CALF REGISTRATIONS IMPROVE

THE results of the December 2014 Agricultural Survey have just been released from DARD and have indicated a decline in suckler cow numbers in Northern Ireland for a second consecutive year.

In December 2014 there were 254,100 beef cows on NI farms compared to 258,400 beef cows in December 2013. This represents a two per cent decline in suckler cow numbers year on year. Beef cow numbers in the December 2014 census were 21,600 head lower than December 2012 when there were 275,700 beef cows on NI farms which represents an eight per cent decline over a two year period.

The number of beef heifers on NI farms in calf with their first calf, or intended for breeding, have also recorded a notable decline year on year. In December 2014 there were 46,400 in calf beef heifers on NI farms compared to 55,100 in the previous December. This decline by 8,700 head represents a 16 per cent decline year on year.

Increasing costs of production, problems with cow fertility following the difficult production conditions in 2012/2013 and tighter margins have all been cited as key drivers behind this decline in suckler cow numbers on NI farms. However the strong prices for good quality weanlings in recent months may encourage some more efficient beef producers to maintain suckler cow numbers. With this in mind the rate at which the NI suckler herd is declining has appeared to be slowing down in recent months with a drop in the proportion of suckler cows in the NI slaughter mix.

Figure 1 outlines the proportion of the price reported NI cow kill that were suckler bred from January 2014 to February 2015. The proportion of the NI cow kill sourced from the suckler herd peaked in February 2014 when 54 per cent of the price reported cow kill were suckler bred animals. However the proportion of suckler cows in the slaughter mix has recorded a general decline since May 2014. During February 2015 suckler bred cows accounted for 36 per cent of the price reported cow kill, a notable decline from year earlier levels.

While the proportion of suckler cows in the slaughter mix has declined in recent months the number of beef sired calves registered has shown an increase. During February 2015 a total of 18,545 beef sired calves were registered in NI bringing registrations for the year to date to 37,755 head. In the corresponding period in 2014 33,664 beef sired calves were registered on NI farms. This increase by 4,091 head year on year accounts for an 11 per cent increase year on year.

If we consider the six month period September 2014 to February 2015 there were a total of 105,536 beef sired calves registered on NI farms compared to 95,574 beef sired calves registered in the corresponding period from September 2013 to February 2014. This increase by 9,962 head between the two periods accounts for a 10.4 per cent increase between the two periods.

The improvement in beef sired calf registrations in the last twelve months has helped to increase the number of younger cattle on the ground year on year as indicated in Table 1. In February 2015 there were 82,977 beef sired cattle in the 0-6 month age category, a 12 per cent increase on the corresponding period in 2014. Meanwhile the number of beef sired cattle in the 6-12 month age category in February 2015 totalled 199,592 head, a four per cent increase on year earlier levels.

Table 1: Beef sired cattle on the ground in NI in February 2015

Age (in months)	2014	2015	% Change
0-6	73,970	82,977	+12%
6-12	191,618	199,592	+4%
12-18	111,461	106,143	-5%
18-24	156,982	153,801	-2%
24-30	73,210	69,076	-6%

Dairy Herd

The December 2014 Agriculture Survey has indicated a total of 306,300 dairy cows in NI, an increase of 24,500 head or nine per cent on year earlier levels. This increase has brought dairy cow numbers in NI to the highest level on record with dairy cows accounting for 55 per cent of all cows in NI in December 2014 compared to 50 per cent of the total cow herd in December 2012.

Figure 1: Proportion of the price reported NI cow kill sourced from the suckler herd from January 2014 to February 2015.

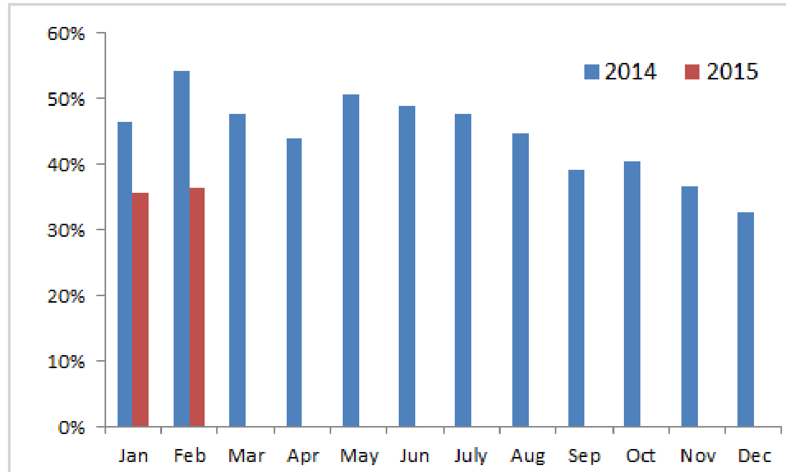
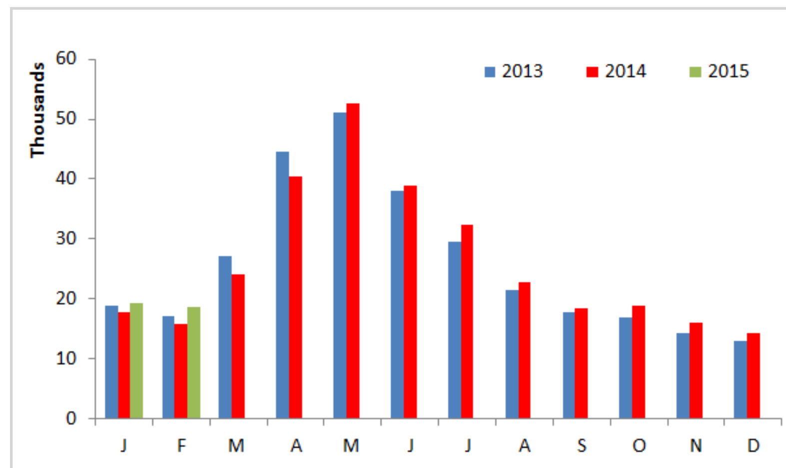


Figure 2: NI beef sired calf registrations January 2013 to February 2015.



The NI dairy herd has acted as an important source of cattle for beef production and during 2014 40 per cent of the price reported NI prime cattle kill were sourced from the dairy herd (dairy and beef sired). With the increase in dairy cow numbers in NI there is potential that this will increase further.

FQAS MART CLINICS MARCH

LOCATION	DAY	DATE
Markethill	Tuesday	10/03/2015
Saintfield	Wednesday	11/03/2015
Enniskillen	Thursday	19/03/2015
Kilrea	Wednesday	25/03/2015
Ballymena	Friday	27/03/2015

LMC's Farm Liaison Officer, Terry White, runs Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (FQAS) mart clinics at a range of Livestock Marts across Northern Ireland. Terry is present to assist members of FQAS with non-conformances, general scheme queries and any issues prior to or following an inspection.

Any farmers who wish to join the scheme can also do so through their local FQAS mart clinic. Terry will be available at the livestock marts listed above. For further information call (028) 9263 3024.

FARM QUALITY ASSURED NORTHERN IRELAND

FAO INDEX DECLINES IN FEBRUARY

The FAO Food Price Index is a measure of the monthly change in international prices of a basket of food commodities. In February 2015 the index averaged 179. 4 points, down 1.8 points from January 2015 with the prices of cereals, meat and sugar recording a decline between January and February 2015. The food index has been gradually declining since April 2014 and has now reached its lowest level since July 2010.

In February the FAO Cereal Price Index averaged 171.7 points, down 5.6 points from the previous month. While the price of rice and coarse grains both declined the most marked decline was for wheat. The decline in the index for wheat can be attributed to continued improvement in the 2015 wheat production prospects combined with already large world inventories.

The FAO Dairy Price Index averaged 181.8 points in February, up 8 points from the previous month and is the first gain since February 2014. A drop in milk production in New Zealand due to drought conditions combined with a drop in export supplies in Australia are key drivers behind the rise in world dairy prices. Additionally, milk production in the European Union as a whole is being curbed to avoid over-quota levies, as the April-March quota year draws to a close, also contributing to the renewed price strength.

The FAO Meat Price Index averaged 187.4 points in February, down 2.8 points from the January 2015 figure. This reduction has been caused by lower bovine and ovine meat quotations, while poultry meat prices were unchanged and those of pigmeat recovered after eight straight months of decline.

LMC

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

WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 02/03/15	Next Week 09/03/15
Prime		
U-3	352 - 356p	348 - 352p
R-3	346 - 350p	342 - 346p
O+3	340 - 344p	338 - 340p
P+3	292 - 306p	290 - 302p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3 & better	230-254p	230-254p
Steakers	140-170p	140-170p
Blues	120-130p	120-130p

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 28/02/15	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	362.8	363.2	341.1
R3	359.4	356.9	345.9
O+3	349.3	348.8	329.7

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

w/e 28/02/15	Wgt <220kg	Wgt 220-250kg	Wgt 250-280kg	Wgt >280kg
P1	138.6	148.2	162.7	176.9
P2	157.0	178.8	194.6	215.1
P3	194.3	195.5	217.9	228.8
O3	165.0	232.0	235.6	252.9
O4	-	-	243.3	254.0
R3	-	-	-	270.8

Deadweight Cattle Trade

QUOTES from the plants this week for U-3 grade prime cattle ranged from 352-356p/kg this week with quotes of 348-352p/kg expected in some plants early next week. Quotes for O+3 grade cows ranged from 230-254p/kg in the major plants this week.

The plants are reporting steady supplies of cattle coming forward for slaughter to meet demand with 6,967 prime cattle presented for slaughter in NI plants last week. This was an increase of 293 head from the previous week and was the second highest weekly throughput for 2015 to date. Imports of prime cattle from ROI for direct slaughter last week totalled 519 head, the highest level of import for the year to date, with 97 cows also imported. Meanwhile 75 prime cattle and 221 cows were exported from NI to ROI for direct slaughter. Exports of cattle to GB for direct slaughter remained very small with 30 prime cattle exported last week.

The average steer price in NI last week was 350.1p/kg, back 1p/kg from the previous week while the R3 steer price was relatively unchanged at 360.8p/kg. Meanwhile the average heifer price in NI last week was back by 2p/kg to 351.6p/kg with the R3 heifer price back in the region of 1p/kg to 357.7p/kg.

The deadweight cattle trade in GB last week also recorded a decline from the previous week. The average steer price in GB was 359.1p/kg last week, down 2.1p/kg from the previous week while the R3 heifer price was back by 1.4p/kg to 365.2p/kg. The R3 steer price in Southern England recorded an increase of 2.7p/kg to 362.7p/kg last week while the R3 steer price in all the other GB regions recorded a decline. The differential in R3 prices between NI and GB average last week was 4.4p/kg with the differential tending to widen as you move northwards. The differential between NI and Southern England last week was 1.9p/kg while the differential between NI and Scotland was 9.7p/kg.

The average heifer price in GB last week was 361.4p/kg, back 1p/kg from the previous week. The average heifer price in Southern England last week was unchanged from the previous week at 351.6p/kg while the average price in the Midlands increased by 1.4p/kg to 357.7p/kg. Meanwhile average heifer prices in Scotland and Northern England were back by 2p/kg to 369.6p/kg and 361.8p/kg respectively.

In ROI last week deadweight cattle prices were generally back in euro terms and a weakening of the euro against sterling resulted in prices showing a marked decline in sterling terms. The R3 heifer price in ROI last week was the equivalent of 307.1p/kg, back 4.6p/kg from the previous week while the R3 steer price was back by 3.9p/kg to 297.5p/kg. In euro terms the R3 steer and heifer prices were back in the region of 2c/kg. The prime cattle kill in ROI last week totalled 24,987 head bringing throughput for February 2015 to 99,543 head, a four per cent increase on February 2014.

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

W/E 28/02/2015		Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	363.1	306.8	378.1	372.7	372.2	374.7	374.5
	R3	360.8	297.5	370.5	362.8	363.5	362.7	365.2
	R4	358.0	297.5	372.8	371.9	363.0	363.4	369.0
	O3	343.0	283.1	353.8	336.5	336.8	333.7	340.9
	AVG	350.1	-	370.2	360.5	352.0	349.4	359.1
Heifers	U3	363.6	318.3	378.6	377.7	377.7	379.2	378.3
	R3	357.7	307.1	369.5	365.5	364.7	361.5	365.8
	R4	354.7	306.2	372.2	365.9	365.0	362.0	366.9
	O3	346.6	293.1	351.3	340.1	336.8	333.6	341.2
	AVG	351.6	-	369.6	361.8	357.7	351.6	361.4
Young Bulls	U3	341.1	298.0	368.2	352.7	358.9	372.6	359.6
	R3	346.5	290.8	364.1	339.0	354.0	356.4	349.0
	O3	325.7	277.9	323.5	305.3	318.8	313.6	313.7
	AVG	325.6	-	338.4	321.2	331.5	316.3	326.3
Prime Cattle Price Reported		5738	-	6188	5595	5120	3670	20573
Cows	O3	250.1	246.7	267.1	261.4	248.3	249.4	257.5
	O4	253.6	248.1	268.0	260.8	250.6	252.1	258.3
	P2	198.3	217.3	198.9	227.2	194.0	195.0	203.1
	P3	224.6	240.0	227.5	240.7	207.6	211.9	221.4
	AVG	226.7	-	253.3	242.2	219.4	217.1	234.5

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=73.21p 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

	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
W/E 28/02/15	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	190	205	196	142	189	165
Friesians	-	-	-	-	-	-
Heifers	204	237	218	170	203	186
Beef Cows	146	196	153	105	145	125
Dairy Cows	100	143	110	60	99	78
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	222	243	234	138	220	180
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	200	237	220	150	199	175
Bullocks over 500kg	202	228	210	148	200	178
Heifers up to 450kg	220	241	231	184	197	189
Heifers over 450kg	204	228	215	157	203	180
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	290	390	340	190	288	240
Continental Heifers	275	430	330	120	270	185
Friesian Bulls	115	195	150	50	112	80
Holstein Bulls	60	120	90	2	58	30

SHEEP TRADE

HOGGET QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 02/03/15	Next Week 09/03/15
Hoggets	405-410>22kg	405-410>22kg

REPORTED HOGGET PRICES - P/KG

(P/KG DW)	W/E 14/02/15	W/E 21/02/15	W/E 28/02/15
NI Liveweight	358.9	356.3	359.7
NI Deadweight	393.9	394.1	397.0
ROI Deadweight	377.8	378.7	377.2
GB Deadweight	424.4	425.7	428.1

Deadweight Sheep Trade

QUOTES for R3 grade hoggets this week were 405-410p/kg up to 22kg across the plants with similar quotes expected for early next week. Throughput in the NI plants last week totalled 5,089 head, down 376 head from the previous week and similar to throughput in the corresponding period last year. Exports of hoggets to ROI last week for direct slaughter totalled 5,974 head and accounted for 54 per cent of total NI output. The average deadweight price in NI last week increased by 3p/kg to 397p/kg while the average price in ROI was the equivalent of 377.2p/kg. In GB last week the average deadweight hogget price increased by 2.4p/kg to 428.1p/kg.

This Week's Marts

A steady trade has been reported across the marts this week with smaller numbers of hoggets passing through the sale rings. In Massereene on Monday a sharper trade saw 762 hoggets selling from 365-400p/kg compared to 762 hoggets selling from 350-382p/kg last week. In Saintfield this week 400 hoggets sold from 353-400p/kg compared to 325 hoggets last week selling from 350-390p/kg. In Enniskillen on Wednesday a similar trade to last week saw 628 hoggets selling to an average of 355p/kg. In Markethill this week 780 hoggets sold from 340-382p/kg (avg 360p/kg) compared to 620 hoggets last week selling from 340-380p/kg (avg 360p/kg). A firm trade has been reported for the small numbers of good quality ewes on offer across the marts with top prices of over £130 for well fleshed ewes in several of the marts.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS

From: 28/02/15		Hoggets (P/KG LW)			
To: 06/03/15		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Omagh	814	352	381	-
	Swatragh	523	349	414	-
Monday	Massereene	762	365	400	-
	Kilrea	560	356	373	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	400	353	400	-
	Rathfriland	727	347	384	363
Wednesday	Ballymena	1120	340	391	356
	Enniskillen	628	347	388	355
	Markethill	780	340	382	360
	Armoy	580	360	408	365

Contact us:

Website: www.lmcni.com

Telephone: 028 9263 3000

Fax: 028 9263 3001

FQAS Helpline: 028 9263 3024

Answerphone: 028 9263 3011

Comments: bulletin@lmcni.com