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EU LEAGUE TABLE: R3 HEIFER PRICES

WITH an equivalent R3 heifer price of 428.6c/kg in the week ending 16 February 2014 Northern Ireland was ranked in third place on the EU deadweight cattle price league table. This is the same position as the previous month (w/e 19 January 2014) despite a reduction in the R3 heifer price of 9.8c/kg between the two comparison weeks as outlined in Table 1.

Meanwhile GB has regained top spot on the EU league table with an equivalent R3 heifer price of 444.3p/kg in the week ending 16 February 2014. This is 10.4c/kg less that the R3 heifer price in the week ending 19 January 2014.

The most notable reduction in R3 heifer prices across the EU was recorded in Greece where prices were back by 25.5c/kg to 430.5c/kg in the week ending 16 February 2014. This reduction in the deadweight price moved it off the top spot in the league table and into second position.

R3 heifer prices have also come back in ROI between the two weeks tabulated. In the week ending 16 February 2014 the R3 heifer price in ROI was 398.7c/kg, back 4.5c/kg from the week ending 19 January 2014 when the R3 heifer price was 403.2c/kg. Despite the drop in average prices Ireland has maintained seventh position on the EU league table.

Chart 1 displays the R3 heifer price in the EU, GB, ROI and NI for the period January 2013 to February 2014. Since November the R3 heifer price in ROI has been just below the average EU price as indicated in the chart. The R3 heifer price in ROI during the week ending 16 February 2014 was 4.4c/kg below the average EU price of 403.1c/kg.

Meanwhile prices in GB and NI have remained well above the EU average as indicated in the chart. It is worth noting however that this differential has narrowed slightly in recent weeks as prime cattle prices in GB and NI have come under pressure. In the week ending 16 February 2014 the equivalent R3 heifer price in GB was 444.3c/kg, 41.2c/kg higher than the EU average price of 403.1c/kg.

In the same week the R3 heifer price in NI was the equivalent of 428.6c/kg, 25.5c/kg higher than the EU average while in the week ending 19 January 2014 the differential was 33.1c/kg. This is a narrowing in the positive differential between the NI and EU average price by 7.6c/kg over the course of the month.

The differential in R3 heifer prices between NI and ROI has also narrowed in euro terms between the two weeks outlined in Table 1. In the week ending 16 February 2014 the differential between R3 heifer price in NI and ROI was 29.9c/kg compared to 35.2c/kg in the week ending 19 January 2014.

Chart 1: R3 heifer prices in ROI, NI, GB and EU January 2013- February 2014

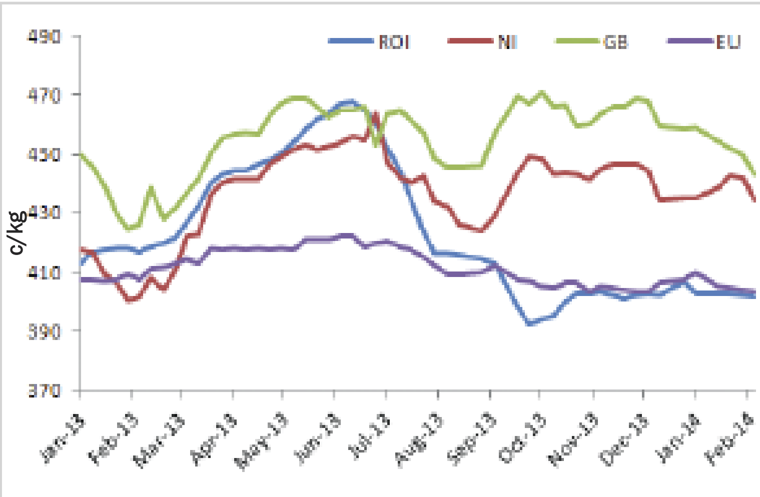

Table 1: EU Deadweight Cattle Prices - Heifers R3 Equivalent (€ Cents)

Position last Mth	Position this Mth	Country	Price last Mth (w/e 19.01.14)	Price this Mth (w/e 16.02.14)	Change on Mth (cents)
2	1	Great Britain	**454.7**	**444.3**	**-10.4**
1	2	Greece	456.0	430.5	-25.5
3	3	Northern Ireland	**438.4**	**428.6**	**-9.8**
5	4	France	424.0	419.0	-5.0
4	5	Italy	428.4	417.0	-11.4
6	6	Spain	415.0	416.1	+1.1
7	7	Ireland	**403.2**	**398.7**	**-4.5**
10	8	Sweden	358.4	397.8	+39.3
8	9	Luxembourg	391.2	391.6	+0.4
9	10	Germany	378.7	381.0	+2.3
11	11	Austria	356.5	359.3	+2.7
12	12	Denmark	354.2	349.2	-5.0
13	13	Belgium	341.5	338.8	-2.8
14	14	Slovenia	327.6	330.0	+2.5
15	15	Poland	307.5	308.8	+1.3
17	16	Czech Republic	264.1	261.3	-2.8
16	17	Lithuania	274.8	253.9	-20.9
EU Average			405.3	403.1	-2.3
Euro (€1=)			83.03	82.52	-

Official prices reported to the EC Dressing Specification

NORTHERN IRELAND ANIMAL FEED STATISTICS 2013

DURING 2013 458.4 thousand tonnes of concentrates were purchased by NI beef producers. This was an increase of 13.9 per cent on the 402.6 thousand tonnes purchased during 2012. Much of this increase in concentrate usage year on year stems from the prolonged cold weather early in 2013 combined with feed shortages and late spring grass growth. Figure 2 outlines the volume of beef concentrates purchased in NI during 2012 and 2013 broken down into quarters.

Concentrate usage in the first two quarters of 2013 were 25 per cent and 44 per cent higher than the corresponding periods in 2012 as indicated in the chart. As outlined above this increase year on year can be attributed to the fodder shortage and late spring experienced on many NI farms which resulted in many producers feeding increased levels of concentrates. In the third quarter of 2013 concentrate usage was 10 per cent below the levels recorded in the corresponding period in 2012.

The wet summer of 2012 resulted in many producers having to supplement cattle with concentrates at grass and to house stock early which led to an increase in total concentrate usage during the third quarter of 2012. Meanwhile during the third quarter of 2013 beef concentrate usage returned to more typical levels due to the warm dry summer and extended grazing season delaying the housing date and thus concentrate feeding on many beef enterprises.

Table 2: Sheep concentrate usage in NI during 2012 and 2013 ('000 tonnes)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
2012	33.1	15.9	9.8	16.5	75.3
2013	36.8	23.7	9.5	11.9	81.9
% Change	+11.2	+49.1	-3.1	-27.9	+6.6

The level of concentrates fed on sheep farms in NI during 2013 also recorded a marked increase in the first two quarters of 2013 as indicated in Table 2. In the first quarter sheep concentrate usage in NI totalled 33.1 thousand tonne, 11 per cent higher than the volume purchased during same period in 2012. Meanwhile in the second quarter of 2013 concentrate usage was 50 per cent higher than the same period in 2012 with 23.7 thousand tonne used by NI producers.

In the third quarter of 2013 the level of concentrate usage by NI sheep producers was similar to the previous year. However in the final quarter of 2013 concentrate usage was back by 28 per cent when compared to the same period in 2012. One factor in this marked decline in concentrate usage on sheep farms was the mild weather and prolonged grazing period reducing the need to supplement lambs at grass. Many producers may also have opted to try and finish lambs without concentrate feeding to help offset the higher feed costs incurred in the first half of the year.

Figure 2: Beef concentrate usage in NI during 2012 and 2013

WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

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CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY QUOTES FOR CATTLE		
(P/KG DW)	This Week 24/02/14	Next Week 03/03/14
Prime		
U-3	324-330p	322-326p
R-3	318-324p	316-320p
O+3	312-318p	310-314p
* Plus 8-14p/kg in spec bonus where applicable		
Cows		
O+3 & better	230-240p	230-240p
Steakers	130-180p	130-180p
Blues	110-130p	110-130p

REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG			
W/E 22/02/14	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U-3=	345.4	352.9	323.7
U=3=	343.0	359.2	310.9
U=4=	341.1	347.9	270.7
R=3=	347.6	351.8	319.5
R=4=	347.2	350.0	280.0
O+3=	340.2	342.2	301.7
O=3=	327.7	337.3	304.3
Average	336.3	344.1	301.8

REPORTED COW PRICES NI W/E 22/02/14 (p/kg)				
Grades	Wgt <220kg	Wgt 220-250kg	Wgt 250-280kg	Wgt >280kg
O+3=	-	-	252.0	250.6
O-3+	-	-	234.0	236.4
P+2+	143.6	209.0	202.1	217.7
P+3+	-	207.0	232.1	219.1
P-1-	129.6	121.2	135.5	-

COMMODITY PRICE		
W/E 21/02/14	Price (£) per tonne / 1000litre	% weekly change
Barley	155.50	-
Wheat	176.00	-
Straw	17.30	-
Diesel	710-720	-

*Latest available data

Deadweight Cattle Trade

QUOTES for U-3 grade prime cattle this week ranged from 324-330p/kg and base quotes for early next week range from 322-326p/kg. Quotes for O+3 grade cows ranged from 230-240p/kg this week with similar quotes for next week. The processors are reporting steady supplies of prime cattle to meet demand for beef.

Prime cattle throughput in the NI plants last week totalled 7,203 head, the highest weekly throughput since mid-December 2013. This brings prime cattle throughput for the year to date to 50,249 head compared to 54,009 in the corresponding period in 2013. This represents a seven per cent decline in prime cattle throughput year on year. The cow kill for 2014 to date has totalled 12,747 head, a 16 per cent reduction on the 15,189 cows slaughtered in the same period in 2013. Imports of prime cattle from ROI for direct slaughter last week totalled 312 head with 10 cows also imported. Meanwhile exports of cattle from NI to ROI for direct slaughter last week totalled 279 head and consisted of 259 cows and 20 prime cattle. Exports to GB for direct slaughter last week comprised of 118 prime cattle and 41 cows.

Average steer prices in NI last week were back by 7p/kg to 336.3p/kg with the R3 steer price back by 5.6p/kg to 348.1p/kg bringing it to its lowest level since the week ending 23 February 2013. The average heifer price in NI last week was back by 6.2p/kg to 344.1p/kg with the R3 heifer price back by 5.2p/kg to 350.7p/kg. Young bull prices showed the most marked decline in NI last week with the average price back by 9.8p/kg to 301.8p/kg and the R3 price back by 10.8p/kg to 310.5p/kg.

While trade continued to come under pressure in NI last week the deadweight trade in GB has shown signs of stabilising with reports of tighter cattle availability helping to steady the market. Average steer and heifer prices in GB last week were almost unchanged from the previous week at 367.3p/kg and 366.7p/kg respectively. This trend was evident across all the GB regions with average reported prices for steers and heifers within 1p/kg of the previous week in the majority of cases.

The average young bull price in GB last week was unchanged at 325.2p/kg but there has been a greater degree of variability in the prices reported across the regions. In Southern England the average young bull price increased by 11.3p/kg to 325.4p/kg while in Scotland the average young bull price increased by 6.1p/kg to 320.0p/kg. Meanwhile average prices in the Midlands and Northern England were back by 2.8p/kg and 5.3p/kg respectively. The average cow price in NI last week was back 6.4p/kg to 225.7p/kg and was the lowest reported average price in GB with the exception of Southern England where there was an average price of 203.9p/kg.

In ROI prime cattle prices continued to come under pressure last week with R3 steer prices back the equivalent of 2.4p/kg to 315.2p/kg and R3 heifer prices back by the equivalent of 4.8p/kg to 326.2p/kg.

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

W/E 22/02/2013		Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	343.8	323.3	389.4	376.4	377.3	374.8	380.2
	R3	348.1	315.2	378.6	371.2	367.3	360.6	369.9
	R4	347.6	316.0	381.8	380.4	370.8	360.5	375.9
	O3	329.5	301.5	352.5	351.0	341.7	341.4	347.1
	AVG	336.3	-	379.8	370.8	361.1	351.5	367.3
Heifers	U3	356.3	338.3	387.3	379.1	379.3	377.2	381.3
	R3	350.7	326.2	375.3	367.6	365.5	359.2	367.5
	R4	348.1	325.6	378.5	371.0	365.8	360.9	370.1
	O3	338.5	310.0	339.2	348.8	341.5	336.5	340.8
	AVG	344.1	-	377.2	369.1	362.1	353.1	366.7
Young Bulls	U3	314.5	289.0	378.4	344.0	368.8	373.0	359.6
	R3	310.5	283.1	364.8	330.5	353.4	349.3	344.8
	O3	304.6	262.1	320.0	304.7	324.7	336.8	318.1
	AVG	301.8	-	338.3	312.6	333.7	325.4	325.2
Prime Cattle Price Reported		5172	-	6224	5675	5137	3735	20771
Cows	O3	238.9	230.0	245.1	242.3	247.2	232.0	241.2
	O4	242.6	232.5	246.5	243.5	270.2	234.5	245.6
	P2	190.8	192.2	191.0	193.2	206.4	174.1	186.9
	P3	215.4	217.0	211.0	222.5	215.3	201.4	212.1
	AVG	225.7	-	237.9	228.2	258.6	203.9	228.5

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=82.22p 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 22/02/14	From	To	Average	From	To	Average
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	192	213	205	165	189	180
Friesians	143	169	151	124	142	136
Heifers	189	212	196	160	188	175
Beef Cows	144	178	159	110	143	126
Dairy Cows	100	129	108	50	99	70
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	210	246	224	143	197	170
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	205	221	214	150	204	175
Bullocks over 500kg	200	221	206	160	199	180
Heifers up to 450kg	190	216	200	164	189	176
Heifers over 450kg	184	216	200	152	183	176
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	270	395	305	160	268	215
Continental Heifers	215	330	260	100	212	160
Friesian Bulls	118	195	143	30	115	70
Holstein Bulls	55	108	75	1	54	28

SHEEP TRADE

HOGGET QUOTES		
(P/Kg DW)	This Week 24/02/14	Next Week 03/03/14
NI Factories	410-420p > 22kg	410-420p > 22kg
ROI Factories	400-410 > 22.5kg	410 > 22.5kg

REPORTED HOGGET PRICES - P/KG			
(P/KG DW)	W/E 08/02/14	W/E 15/02/14	W/E 22/02/14
NI Liveweight	349.8p	353.9p	366.8p
NI Deadweight	386.5p	387.3p	394.1p
ROI Deadweight	374.7p	374.9p	384.1p
GB Deadweight	406.4p	412.0p	422.4p

Deadweight Sheep Trade

THERE has been a firm trade for hoggets this week with the NI plants increasing quotes for R3 grading hoggets to 410-420p/kg and are continuing to pay up to 22kg. The availability of hoggets has started to tighten in line with normal seasonal trends with throughput last week totalling 5,971 head. This reduction by 850 head from the previous week represents a 12 per cent drop in throughput. Exports of hoggets to ROI for direct slaughter were also back last week with 8,028 head making the journey south compared to 8,418 head the previous week. The average deadweight price in NI last week increased by 6.8p/kg to 394.1p/kg while the average price in GB increased by 10.4p/kg to 422.4p/kg.

This week's marts

A good trade was reported across the marts this week particularly for well finished lots under 25kg. In Swatragh last Saturday 850 hoggets sold from 363-399p/kg compared to 550 hoggets the previous Saturday selling from 352-397p/kg. In Kilrea on Monday 495 hoggets sold from 370-398p/kg compared to 350 hoggets last week selling from 354-386p/kg. In Rathfriland on Tuesday a firmer trade saw 749 hoggets sold to an average price of 376p/kg compared to 728 hoggets last week selling to an average of 367p/kg. In Markethill this week 1,110 hoggets sold from 360-404p/kg (avg 379p/kg) compared to 1,010 hoggets last week selling from 340-390p/kg (avg 367p/kg). An improved trade for cull ewes saw a top price of £100 in Rathfriland on Tuesday for a pen of texel ewes with prices for good quality ewes generally ranging from £70-80 across the marts.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS					
From: 22/02/14		Hoggets (P/KG LW)			
To: 28/02/14		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Omagh	574	376	403	-
	Donemana	440	368	396	378
	Swatragh	850	363	399	-
Monday	Massereene	860	370	400	-
	Kilrea	495	370	398	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	540	355	385	-
	Rathfriland	749	338	414	376
Wednesday	Ballymena	1506	360	422	377
	Enniskillen	632	365	397	375
	Markethill	1110	360	404	379

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