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DEADWEIGHT HOGGET PRICES INCREASE AS NUMBERS TIGHTEN

THERE has been a strong demand for hoggets from both the local plants and processors in ROI in recent weeks. With the number of hoggets on the ground starting to tighten there has been increasing competition for the hoggets available and this has contributed to an increase in deadweight prices.

Firm consumer demand for lamb has contributed to this strong demand and with reports of lower numbers of hoggets on the ground and some indications of fewer early lambing flocks this year the trade is expected to remain firm in the weeks ahead.

The poor summer and wet autumn of 2012 resulted in a larger than usual number of hoggets carried into the first quarter of 2013. A smaller lamb crop in 2013 (-14 per cent year on year) and more favourable production conditions reduced finishing times and resulted in a much lower number of hoggets being carried over into 2014 with tighter numbers now as a result.

Slaughterings in NI plants during 2014 to date have totalled 72,924 head, 32 per cent higher than the corresponding period in 2013. This increase in throughput is due to an increase in demand for hoggets from local plants year on year and with added value taking place in NI there has been a drop in the proportion of hoggets being exported to ROI for direct slaughter.

Exports to ROI for direct slaughter during 2014 to date have totalled 86,772 head. This is 33 per cent lower than the corresponding period in 2013 when 129,917 hoggets were exported. Exports to ROI for direct slaughter during 2014 to date have accounted for 54.3 per cent of total hogget output from NI compared to 70 per cent during the corresponding period in 2013 as indicated in Figure 1.

This lower level of exports of hoggets from NI to ROI for direct slaughter combined with reduced domestic supplies south of the border has resulted in a 9.7 per cent reduction in throughput in the ROI plants during 2014 to date when compared to the corresponding period in 2013.

Figure 2 displays average deadweight prices in NI for the production period July 2013 to March 2014 and the corresponding periods in 2011/2012 and 2012/2013. Deadweight prices in NI during the 2013/2014 production period have remained above the levels recorded in the corresponding period in 2012/2013. The average deadweight price in NI last week was 10.3p/kg higher than the corresponding week in 2013 and was within half a penny of the same week in 2012.

The strong trade in hoggets resulted in the average deadweight price in NI last week to increase by 9.4p/kg from the previous week to 430.7p/kg. This is an increase of 42.5p/kg over the previous six week period and accounts for an 11 per cent increase in deadweight prices.

Meanwhile in GB prices have also increased by 11 per cent over the last six week period to 448.8p/kg last week. The availability of hoggets in GB has also started to tighten with throughput in the first two months of 2014 running 8 per cent lower than year earlier levels.

The results of the recently published December 2013 agricultural survey in NI have indicated a six per cent decline in the breeding flock between December 2012 and December 2013. This decline is a reflection of the hardships faced by many sheep producers during 2012/2013 with poor weather and rising input costs.

The number of ewes tupped in autumn 2013 was back by five per cent year on year to 803,500 head bringing mature ewe numbers to their lowest levels since 2008. In addition to this there was a 23 per cent reduction in the number of ewe lambs mated year on year. This decline in the retention of ewe lambs for breeding indicates that breeding flock numbers are expected to ease further in 2014.

Similar trends in terms of breeding flock numbers have been recorded in Scotland while ewe numbers in England and Wales have recorded an increase. As a result the UK ewe flock increased by four per cent between December 2012 and December 2013. Breeding ewe numbers in the UK have increased by more than 1 million head over the last three years to reach 14.9 million in December 2013.

Figure 1: Proportion of NI origin lambs slaughtered locally and exported to ROI for direct slaughter during 2014 to date and the same period in 2013.

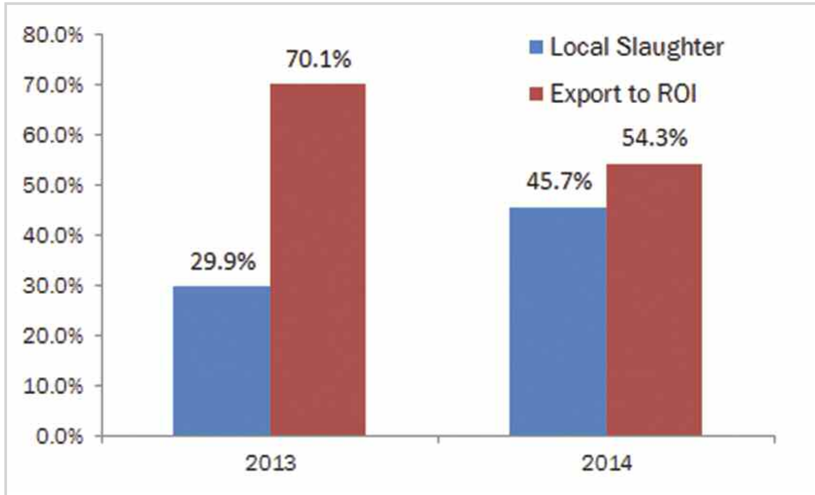
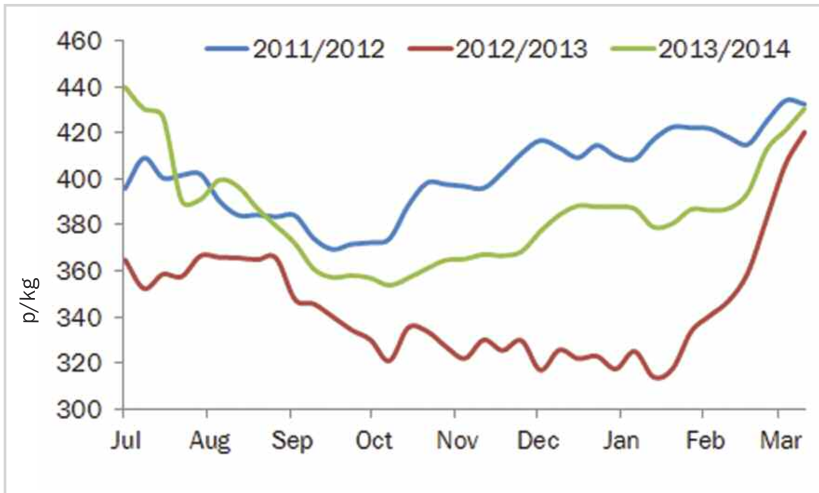


Figure 2: Average deadweight lamb prices for the period July 2013 - March 2014 and the corresponding production periods in 2012/2013 and 2011/2012.



LMC HOSTS HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS CONFERENCE AT TITANIC BELFAST

OVER 100 Home Economics teachers from across Northern Ireland gathered at the Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) teachers conference in Titanic Belfast to discuss health and nutrition in schools and receive an update from leading professionals on the upcoming HE skills agenda for 2014/15.

The conference organised in conjunction with 'Meat and Education' provided teachers with topical, relevant and factual information on diet, health and nutrition and included speakers from LMC, the British Nutrition Foundation, the Food Standards Agency and CCEA.

Exploring current and emerging issues and topics across the home economics curriculum, key note addresses included 'The Challenges of Producing Food in the 21st Century' and a nutrition and food update for all those in attendance.

Speaking at the event Cherrie Kenny, LMC, Education Services Manager said, "The conference offers a platform for teachers to gain additional information on topics relevant to the curriculum as well as an opportunity to network with their peers and other professionals.

"LMC's Education Services Department currently provides a range of resources to Home Economics Teachers through cookery demonstrations and our educational website food4life.org.uk. The event is an excellent way of learning best practice from professionals across Northern Ireland and Great Britain and we welcome the opportunity to meet with the teachers on the ground at our annual conference"

Image 1: LMC's Education Services Manager Cherrie Kenny with Nicola Wilde from AHDB Meat and Education at the recent Home Economics Teachers Conference which was held at the Titanic Centre Belfast.

WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

LMC

CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 17/03/14	Next Week 24/03/14
Prime		
U-3	320-326p	322-328p
R-3	314-320p	316-322p
O+3	308-314p	310-316p
* Plus 8-14p/kg in spec bonus where applicable		
Cows		
O+3 & better	230-244p	230-244p
Steakers	130-180p	130-180p
Blues	110-130p	110-130p

REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 08/03/14	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U-3=	338.0	346.4	325.7
U=3=	332.4	354.8	326.6
U=4=	314.8	343.8	-
R=3=	336.8	344.6	284.5
R=4=	331.8	335.4	-
O+3=	327.7	326.8	300.2
O=3=	316.5	311.1	290.0
Average	325.6	335.0	289.5

REPORTED COW PRICES NI W/E 08/03/14 (p/kg)

Grades	Wgt <220kg	Wgt 220-250kg	Wgt 250-280kg	Wgt >280kg
O+3=	-	-	-	249.3
O-3+	-	210.2	222.1	232.1
P+2+	190.0	-	200.9	216.0
P+3+	-	-	220.5	220.2
P-1-	126.5	136.2	-	130.4

COMMODITY PRICE

W/E 15/03/14	Price (£) per tonne / 1000litre	% weekly change
Barley	171.00	+3.3
Wheat	191.00	+3.2
Straw	17.30	-
Red Diesel	710-720	-

Deadweight Cattle Trade

QUOTES from the plants this week for U-3 grade prime cattle ranged from 320-326p/kg with the majority of plants quoting 324p/kg for steers and 324-326p/kg for heifers. There have however been reports of some producers securing better deals with reports of prime cattle numbers starting to tighten. The bonus payment continues to be available for cattle that fulfil the in spec requirements. Quotes for O+3 grading cows have remained steady at 230-244p/kg with the majority of plants quoting 240-244p/kg.

Prime cattle slaughterings in NI last week totalled 6,586 head, a reduction of 201 head from the previous week but 741 head higher than the corresponding week last year. Prime cattle throughput for 2014 to date has totalled 70,593 head, 2.5 per cent lower than the same period in 2013. Young bulls have accounted for 18 per cent of the prime cattle kill during 2014 to date with the remaining 82 per cent split evenly between steers and heifers. Imports of prime cattle for direct slaughter from ROI during 2014 to date has totalled 3,798 head and has accounted for five per cent of the total prime cattle kill in NI during this period. This compares to 4,271 clean cattle imported in the same period in 2013 when they accounted for 6 per cent of the prime cattle kill. Exports from NI to ROI last week for direct slaughter consisted of 4 prime cattle and 134 cows while exports to GB consisted of 137 prime cattle and 40 cows.

Average steer prices in NI last week were back 2p/kg to 325.6p/kg while R3 steer prices increased by 1p/kg to 338.4p/kg. Average heifer prices increased by a similar margin to 335p/kg while the R3 heifer price increased by 2.4p/kg to 341.8p/kg. Young bull prices have continued to come under pressure with an average young bull price of 289.5p/kg last week. There was however an increase in the proportion of young bulls over 16 months of age in the price reported slaughter mix. Last week 27 per cent of the young bulls slaughtered were over 16 months of age compared to 21 per cent the previous week.

Average steer and heifer prices in GB came back in the region of a penny last week to 366p/kg and 365.7p/kg respectively. Average steer prices were within a penny of the previous week in all the GB regions with the exception of Northern England where average prices were back by 3.2p/kg to 369p/kg. Average heifer prices were unchanged in the Midlands at 361.0p/kg while they came back by 1-2p/kg in the other GB regions. The differential in deadweight prices between NI and GB last week was 30p/kg for R3 steers and 25.9p/kg for R3 heifers. Young bull prices in GB increased last week by 7.1p/kg to 333.1p/kg with an increase recorded in all the GB regions.

There was a similar trade in ROI last week with R3 steer and heifer prices within a penny of the prices paid the previous week. A total of 24,260 prime cattle were killed in ROI plants last week with throughput of prime cattle for 2014 to date running 8.1 per cent ahead of the same period in 2013 due to reduced live exports in previous years. The differential between ROI and NI last week was 25.2p/kg for R3 steers and 19.1p/kg for R3 heifers.

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

W/E 15/03/2014		Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	335.0	320.5	388.7	379.0	377.1	376.2	380.8
	R3	338.4	313.2	378.2	365.9	364.8	361.9	368.4
	R4	336.3	315.0	380.3	379.1	366.3	361.5	374.0
	O3	321.0	300.0	353.1	343.8	340.7	341.3	345.1
	AVG	325.6	-	379.3	369.0	359.1	351.1	366.0
Heifers	U3	347.0	335.8	388.6	377.1	378.6	378.7	381.3
	R3	341.8	322.7	374.3	367.2	365.6	360.2	367.7
	R4	338.3	322.8	377.0	370.8	365.8	359.3	369.4
	O3	325.4	307.6	351.3	352.2	346.5	337.4	346.7
	AVG	335.0	-	376.4	368.8	361.0	350.5	365.7
Young Bulls	U3	312.0	289.8	370.9	348.3	360.8	369.4	357.8
	R3	303.2	282.5	344.9	335.5	341.6	349.1	339.9
	O3	291.8	259.7	312.2	311.8	326.4	339.4	324.7
	AVG	289.5	-	329.7	325.6	336.2	333.4	331.1
Prime Cattle Price Reported		5055	-	6195	5653	5098	3798	20744
Cows	O3	234.9	230.0	255.8	246.9	256.1	244.8	249.8
	O4	241.9	231.1	257.7	250.9	257.8	248.6	253.1
	P2	190.5	189.0	193.5	197.0	212.9	194.9	195.8
	P3	212.5	216.1	224.1	222.4	226.4	219.4	222.2
	AVG	221.8	-	246.7	231.8	248.3	219.8	234.6

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=82.52p 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 15/03/14	1st QUALITY From	To	Average	2nd QUALITY From	To	Average
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	200	223	208	170	199	184
Friesians	-	-	-	-	-	-
Heifers	193	216	207	144	186	178
Beef Cows	140	198	157	100	139	120
Dairy Cows	100	126	105	55	99	80
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	204	241	218	175	203	189
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	205	241	218	170	204	187
Bullocks over 500kg	211	227	217	160	210	185
Heifers up to 450kg	200	221	209	165	199	182
Heifers over 450kg	200	221	210	170	199	185
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	305	450	340	200	300	250
Continental Heifers	200	305	260	100	198	150
Friesian Bulls	120	275	175	50	118	80
Holstein Bulls	60	160	110	1	58	30

SHEEP TRADE

HOGGET QUOTES		
(P/Kg DW)	This Week 17/03/14	Next Week 24/03/14
NI Factories	430-440p > 22kg	-440p > 22kg
ROI Factories	435 > 22.5kg	435>22.5kg

REPORTED HOGGET PRICES - P/KG			
(P/KG DW)	W/E 01/03/14	W/E 08/03/14	W/E 15/03/14
NI Liveweight	376.2	383.9	389.8
NI Deadweight	412.9	421.3	430.7
ROI Deadweight	391.1	399.2	404.7
GB Deadweight	423.4	428.0	448.8

Deadweight Sheep Trade

QUOTES from the NI plants increased to 430-440p/kg this week for R3 grade hoggets with plants paying up to 22kg. Throughput in the NI plants increased by 820 head last week to 6,066 hoggets but reports have indicated a tightening in the availability of hoggets generally. Exports of hoggets to ROI for direct slaughter last week increased by 1,437 on the previous week to 9,036 head and this indicates the strong demand for hoggets in ROI as domestic supplies tighten south of the border. Deadweight prices in NI last week increased by 9.4p/kg to 430.7p/kg while prices in GB increased by 20.8p/kg to 448.8p/kg. Meanwhile prices in ROI increased by the equivalent of 5.5p/kg to 404.7p/kg.

This weeks marts

A firm trade and good demand for quality lots has been reported across the marts this week with throughput remaining similar to previous weeks in most of the marts. Many marts have reported a large proportion of heavy hoggets passing through the sale rings. In Massereene on Monday 1,126 hoggets sold from 390-430p/kg compared to 965 hoggets last week selling from 370-417p/kg. In Saintfield on Tuesday 676 hoggets sold from 378-425p/kg compared to 545 hoggets last week selling from 357-410p/kg. A good trade in Enniskillen on Wednesday saw 698 hoggets sell from 402-441p/kg compared to 443 hoggets last week selling from 391-430p/kg. An improved trade for cull ewes has seen top prices of over £90 in several marts with a top reported price of £105 in Markethill on Wednesday.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS					
From: 15/03/14		Hoggets (P/KG LW)			
To: 21/03/14		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Omagh	548	394	427	-
	Swatragh	650	377	415	-
Monday	Massereene	1126	390	430	-
	Kilrea	500	392	430	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	676	378	425	-
	Rathfriland	801	360	458	407
Wednesday	Ballymena	1402	370	461	403
	Enniskillen	698	402	441	-
	Markethill	920	370	432	-

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