LMC BULLETIN
WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF THE LIVESTOCK AND MEAT COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
Saturday 12 April 2014 Issue No. 2315

CALF REGISTRATIONS CONTINUE TO DECLINE

BEEF sired calf registrations during March 2014 totalled 24,080 head bringing registrations for 2014 to date to 57,744 head. In the corresponding period in 2013 there were 62,928 beef sired calves registered. This decline by 5,184 calf registrations accounts for an 8.2 per cent decline year on year.

This decline in beef sired calf registrations between 2013 and 2014 has followed on from declines in calf registrations between 2012 and 2013. In the first quarter of 2012 there were 69,443 beef sired calves registered on NI farms. This is a reduction of 16.8 per cent in beef sired calf registrations when comparing the first quarter of 2012 and the same period in 2014.

It is however worth noting that during the first quarter of 2013 beef sired calf registrations were 9.4 per cent behind the corresponding period in 2012 but for 2013 as a whole beef calf registrations were back by 6.3 per cent indicating that calf registrations showed some recovery as the year progressed. In fact during September, October and December 2013 beef sired calf registrations were actually higher than year earlier levels. This indicates that some cows that failed prove in calf in the spring of 2013 then calved down in the autumn. It remains to be seen if a similar trend will occur in 2014.

Due to the poor summer of 2012 followed by feed shortages in the first half of 2013 many suckler cows would have been in below optimum condition for breeding with reduced fertility as a result during April-June 2013. This is one potential reason for the drop in calf registrations recorded in the first quarter of 2014.

While some beef producers will have opted to cull cows that failed to get in calf other producers may have retained these cows to calf later this year. With relatively strong deadweight prices available for good quality cows beef producers are more likely to aggressively cull dry cows compared to dairy producers who have the option to extend the lactation period in times of strong milk prices.

The drop in beef sired calf registrations is a worrying development for the entire NI beef industry but is perhaps unsurprising given the six per cent decline in suckler cow numbers recorded in the December 2013 Agricultural Survey. The survey also identified a seven per cent decline in the number of beef heifers in calf with their first calf when compared to year earlier levels. During the first quarter of 2014 there were 33,233 heifers slaughtered in NI plants, a three per cent increase on the 32,259 heifers slaughtered in the same period in 2013.

The decline in suckler cow numbers combined with the decline in the number of heifers being retained for further breeding in NI can be attributed to production difficulties, increased costs of production and the volatility in the finished beef market encouraging producers to assess the scale and scope of their beef enterprise. Uncertainty over the future of the CAP support arrangements in NI will be a further factor in farmers' minds and urgent decisions are needed that give active farmers confidence to maintain and grow their businesses.

Problems with cow fertility and the number of calves produced have not been confined to the beef industry. The NI dairy herd acts as a valuable source of cattle for beef production in the form of dairy sired males but also of beef calves with a dairy dam so production difficulties in dairy enterprises will also impact the supply of cattle destined for beef production.

During the first quarter of 2014 52,721 dairy sired calves were registered on NI farms. This is four per cent lower than the 54,964 dairy sired calves registered in the same period in 2013. However as with the beef sired calves the number of dairy sired calves for 2013 as a whole was 2.8 per cent lower than the previous year indicating some recovery as the year progressed. The drop in total dairy sired calf registrations was despite dairy cow numbers increasing by 1 per cent during 2013 as indicated in the December 2013 Agricultural Survey.

During 2014 to date 24,182 dairy sired male calves have been registered in NI. This is 6.2 per cent lower than the 25,794 registered in the first quarter of 2013 and 11.4 per cent lower than the first quarter of 2012.

Table 1: Calf birth registrations during the period January to March 2012-2014

Jan-Mar	Beef calves	Dairy males	Dairy females
2012	69443	27289	29539
2013	62928	25794	29170
2014	57744	24182	28539
2012/13	-9%	-5%	-1%
2013/14	-8%	-6%	-2%
2012/14	-17%	-11%	-3%

NI BEEF INDUSTRY KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS: MARCH 2014

TABLE 2 outlines the key performance statistics of the NI beef industry for March 2014 compared to the corresponding period in 2013.

In March 2014 the average prime cattle price in NI was 327.4p/kg, a reduction of 31.9p/kg on the average steer price in March 2013 and represents a drop in the value of a 330kg carcase by £105 year on year. The R3 steer price was back 28.5p/kg between March 2013 and March 2014 to 339.8p/kg. This represents a 7.7 per cent decline year on year.

The R3 steer price in ROI was back the equivalent of 47.3p/kg over the course of the year to 315.3p/kg during March 2014, representing a decline of 13 per cent year on year. There has been a significant widening in the differential in R3 steer prices between NI and ROI between March 2013 and March 2014. In March 2013 R3 steer prices in NI were 5.7p/kg higher than the equivalent price in ROI which equates to £19 on a 330kg carcase. By March 2014 this differential had widened to 24.5p/kg or £81 on a 330kg carcase.

Meanwhile in GB the average R3 steer price during March 2014 was 367.5p/kg, down 20.5p/kg from March 2013. This represents a 5.3 per cent decline year on year. The differential in R3 steer prices between GB and NI has widened from 20p/kg in March 2013 to 28p/kg in March 2014.

Throughput of prime cattle in the NI plants during March 2014 totalled 24,571 head, an increase in throughput of 3.2 per cent between the two periods. Average clean carcase weights were back by 2.4kg between the two periods to 329.7 kg in March 2014.

Cow slaughterings in NI plants also increased year on year with 5,922 head slaughtered during March 2014. Beef bred cows accounted for 39.6 per cent of the price reported cow kill in March 2013 and this increased to 46.6 per cent in March 2014. The increase in the proportion of the cow kill sourced from the suckler herd has played a key role in an increase in average carcase weights from 292.5kg in March 2013 to 307.3kg in March 2014. An improvement in production conditions during March 2014 when compared to March 2013 will also have helped increase average cow carcase weights.

Imports of cattle for direct slaughter during March 2014 totalled 1,935 head, an increase of 30.9 per cent from the 1,478 head imported in March 2013. Meanwhile exports for direct slaughter have declined from 2,085 head in March 2013 to 1,395 in March 2014, accounting for a decline of 33 per cent year on year.

As outlined in the article above calf registrations have continued to decline during 2014 to date with beef sired calf registrations in March 2014 down by 10.9 per cent on the number recorded in March 2013. The decline in calf registrations over the last 18 months and a decline in imports from ROI for further production have resulted in a decline in the number of beef cattle on the ground. The number of beef cattle on the ground during March 2013 (beef sired cattle and dairy males aged 12-30 months) totalled 429,631 head and this declined by 16,177 head to 413,454 head in March 2014. This accounts for a 3.8 per cent decline year on year.

If we consider the number of beef cattle on the ground aged 12-18 months the figures are concerning. Between March 2013 and March 2014 the number of beef sired cattle and dairy males within this age bracket declined by 10.5 per cent (-21,596 head). The number of beef sired cattle was back by almost 9 per cent between March 2013 and March 2014 while the number of dairy sired males was back by 20 per cent year on year. This decline in the number of cattle on the ground combined with reduced level of imports from ROI for further production and lower level of calf registrations is currently an ongoing driver in strong store cattle prices.

Table 2: NI Beef Industry Key Performance Indicators (March Snapshot)

	Mar-13	Mar-14	% Change
Finished Cattle Prices (p/kg)			
Average Prime Cattle Price	359.3	327.4	-8.9%
Average Cow Price	265.0	221.8	-16.3%
Average R3 Steer Price (NI)	368.3	339.8	-7.7%
Average R3 Steer Price (ROI)	362.6	315.3	-13.0%
Average R3 Steer Price (GB)	388.0	367.5	-5.3%
Slaughterings			
Total Clean Slaughterings (Head)	23,812	24,571	3.2%
Total Cow Slaughterings (Head)	5,608	5,922	5.6%
Average Clean Carcase Weight (kg)	332.1	329.7	-0.7%
Average Cow Carcase Weight (kg)	292.5	307.3	5.1%
Trade (Head)			
Live Imports for Direct Slaughter	1,478	1,935	30.9%
Live Exports for Direct Slaughter	2,085	1,395	-33.1%
Availability (Head)			
No. Cattle on the Ground*	429,631	413,454	-3.8%
Beef Sired	379,733	367,704	-3.2%
Dairy Sired (Male Only)	49,898	45,750	-8.3%
Calf Births Registrations (Head)			
Calf Births	35,045	31,435	-10.3%
Beef Sired	27,035	24,080	-10.9%
Dairy Sired (Male Only)	8,010	7,355	-8.2%
Euro / Stg Exchange Rate (1€ / £)	86.00p	83.17p	-3.3%

* Aged between 12-30 mths (Beef + Dairy Male Only)

All NI Figures Unless Otherwise Stated

WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

LMC

CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 07/04/14	Next Week 14/04/14
Prime		
U-3	326-328p	326-328p
R-3	320-322p	320-322p
O+3	314-316p	314-316p
* Plus 8-14p/kg in spec bonus where applicable		
Cows		
O+3 & better	230-250p	230-250p
Steakers	140-170p	140-170p
Blues	120-130p	120-130p

REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 05/04/14	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U-3=	342.8	351.0	317.1
U=3=	346.2	349.1	321.1
U=4=	338.5	346.6	-
R=3=	346.4	349.4	309.4
R=4=	338.1	342.1	354.0
O+3=	339.1	333.9	317.0
O=3=	320.7	335.6	306.2
Average	334.8	340.7	304.2

REPORTED COW PRICES NI W/E 05/04/14 (p/kg)

Grades	Wgt <220kg	Wgt 220-250kg	Wgt 250-280kg	Wgt >280kg
O+3=	-	-	260.0	257.5
O-3+	-	226.0	238.4	240.1
P+2+	152.3	189.7	219.4	222.7
P+3+	-	187.4	198.8	233.3
P-1-	129.4	135.5	130.1	120.0

COMMODITY PRICE

W/E 05/04/14	Price (£) per tonne / 1000litre	% weekly change
Barley	166.50	-1.2
Wheat	184.50	-2.9
Straw	17.00	-
Red Diesel	675-690	-

Deadweight Cattle Trade

QUOTES from the plants for U-3 grade prime cattle have remained steady at 326-328p/kg this week although there have been reports of some plants offering a base price of 330-332p/kg. The bonus of up to 14p/kg continues to be available for steers and heifers that kill out in spec. Quotes for cows have remained steady at 230-250p/kg this week with the majority of plants quoting from 240-250p/kg.

Prime cattle throughput in the NI plants last week totalled 6,130 head, an increase of 441 on the previous week when 5,689 prime cattle were slaughtered. This accounts for an eight per cent increase week on week. Meanwhile cow throughput in NI last week totalled 1,322 head, back 169 head from the previous week. Imports of prime cattle from ROI for direct slaughter in NI plants last week were similar to the previous week at 361 head. A further 19 steers were also imported from GB for direct slaughter. Exports from NI to GB last week comprised of 99 clean cattle and 16 cows. This compares to 181 clean cattle and 25 cows the previous week. Exports from NI to ROI last week consisted of 145 cows.

There was a general improvement in deadweight prime cattle prices in NI last week with average prices for all classes of cattle up on the previous week. Average steer prices were up by 1.3p/kg to 334.8p/kg last week while R3 steer prices were up by 3.8p/kg to 346.6p/kg. Average heifer prices in NI last week were up by 1.9p/kg to 340.7p/kg while R3 heifer prices were up by 1.3p/kg to 347.0p/kg. Young bull prices were up by 5.4p/kg to 304.2p/kg last week with O3 young bull prices up by 8.9p/kg to 303.0p/kg.

Meanwhile in GB prices have continued to come under pressure with average steer and heifer prices back by 1.6p/kg to 360.4p/kg and 359.7p/kg respectively. The differential between R3 steer prices in NI and GB last week was 17p/kg. R3 steer prices in Southern England were 7.3p/kg above the NI price at 353.9p/kg and this differential widens as you move northwards to 28.2p/kg in Scotland where the R3 steer price was 374.8p/kg.

There was increased throughput in ROI plants last week with 23,988 prime cattle slaughtered. This is 6,206 head higher than the corresponding week last year. In sterling terms R3 steer prices were back in the region of 1p/kg to 313.9p/kg and 322.6p/kg respectively.

Deadweight Cattle Trade

FINISHED first quality steers sold to an average of 215p/kg liveweight this week with second quality selling to an average of 190p/kg. Finished first quality heifers sold to an average of 211p/kg with second quality selling to an average of 185p/kg. A firm trade was reported for good quality store cattle. Bullocks in the 400-500kg weight range sold to an average of 215p/kg for first quality and 185p/kg for second quality. Heifers over 450kg sold to an average of 212p/kg for first quality and an average of 183p/kg for second quality.

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

W/E 05/04/2013		Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	339.9	323.8	383.0	373.7	369.1	367.6	374.2
	R3	346.6	313.9	374.8	363.7	358.3	353.9	363.6
	R4	342.6	314.1	376.8	373.0	360.4	354.6	368.7
	O3	327.5	299.6	356.3	337.9	335.0	330.3	340.6
	AVG	334.8	-	375.9	364.2	351.6	342.8	360.4
Heifers	U3	351.3	337.2	383.3	371.8	371.2	369.3	374.8
	R3	347.0	322.6	371.7	361.0	358.6	352.8	362.2
	R4	344.3	322.3	374.3	367.7	357.4	352.1	364.3
	O3	330.1	307.0	348.2	344.6	338.5	331.9	340.8
	AVG	340.7	-	373.3	364.6	353.8	340.7	359.7
Young Bulls	U3	322.5	294.5	371.4	340.6	354.4	364.8	352.7
	R3	315.4	286.6	344.9	330.5	337.2	347.1	336.6
	O3	303.0	264.9	321.6	304.6	315.7	315.4	312.6
	AVG	304.2	-	331.4	316.9	328.4	319.3	322.7
Prime Cattle Price Reported		5335	-	6150	5615	5051	3783	20599
Cows	O3	242.2	233.1	253.9	245.3	262.5	246.7	249.9
	O4	247.9	235.5	257.2	252.4	259.1	247.6	252.9
	P2	197.3	193.5	198.8	204.1	219.4	196.3	200.0
	P3	222.2	223.6	222.3	223.4	235.9	220.3	222.5
	AVG	222.5	-	244.3	228.8	254.7	218.9	232.7

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=83.17p 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 05/04/14	1st QUALITY From	1st QUALITY To	1st QUALITY Average	2nd QUALITY From	2nd QUALITY To	2nd QUALITY Average
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	206	225	215	175	205	190
Friesians	152	157	155	140	148	144
Heifers	202	221	211	170	201	185
Beef Cows	149	207	170	120	148	132
Dairy Cows	103	130	110	65	102	85
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	208	258	220	165	207	188
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	203	236	215	160	202	185
Bullocks over 500kg	215	243	220	170	214	190
Heifers up to 450kg	190	224	214	170	189	180
Heifers over 450kg	201	226	212	160	200	183
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	245	360	300	140	240	200
Continental Heifers	210	390	270	100	208	160
Friesian Bulls	45	92	68	5	35	20
Holstein Bulls	10	90	50	1	10	5

SHEEP TRADE

LAMB/HOGGET QUOTES			
(P/Kg DW)		This Week 07/04/14	Next Week 14/04/14
NI Factories	Hoggets	460-470p> 22kg	460-470p> 22kg
	Spring Lambs	500-520p> 21kg	500-520p> 21kg

REPORTED HOGGET PRICES - P/KG			
(P/KG DW)	W/E 22/03/14	W/E 29/03/14	W/E 05/04/14
NI Liveweight	408.7	433.6	422.1
NI Deadweight	441.5	468.4	488.8
ROI Deadweight	409.7	458.4	467.0
GB Deadweight	468.0	477.0	480.9

Deadweight Sheep Trade

QUOTES for R3 grading hoggets came back to 460-470p/kg this week with plants paying up to 22kg. The processors are killing small number of spring lambs with quotes ranging from 500-520p/kg up to 21kg. Throughput in the NI plants totalled 4,640 head last week with a further 5,491 sheep exported to ROI for direct slaughter. This was a 25 per cent reduction on the previous week when 7,236 sheep made the journey south. Deadweight prices in NI last week were up by 20p/kg on the previous week to 488.8p/kg and were 8p/kg higher than the average GB price of 480.9p/kg. Deadweight prices in ROI increased by 8.6p/kg to 467.0p/kg.

This week's marts

PRICES came back across the marts this week with reports of reduced demand from ROI buyers around the rings this week. There have also been reports of a decline in the quality of the hoggets passing through the marts in comparison to previous weeks. In Massereene on Monday 1,303 hoggets sold from 400-460p/kg with 46 spring lambs selling from 500-532p/kg. In Kilrea on Monday 400 hoggets sold from 400-428p/kg compared to 540 hoggets last week selling from 430-464p/kg. In Enniskillen on Wednesday 782 hoggets sold from 408-438p/kg compared to 898 hoggets last week selling from 412-451p/kg. The trade for cull ewes was also back this week with more ewes on offer and top reported prices generally ranging from £90-£100. A pen of well fleshed ewes sold to a top price of £117 in Omagh last Saturday.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS					
From: 05/04/14		Hoggets (P/KG LW)			
To: 11/04/14		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Omagh	793	383	451	-
	Swatragh	1150	411	481	-
Monday	Massereene	1303	400	460	-
	Kilrea	400	400	428	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	445	400	481	-
	Rathfriland	1067	380	440	476
Wednesday	Ballymena	1201	360	472	380
	Enniskillen	782	408	438	-
	Markethill	880	360	410	380

LATEST SHEEP MARTS					
From: 05/04/14		Spring Lambs (P/KG LW)			
To: 11/04/14		No	From	To	Avg
Monday	Massereene	46	500	532	-
Tuesday	Rathfriland	256	433	526	476
	Ballymena	61	400	481	440
Wednesday	Enniskillen	68	502	529	-
	Markethill	100	450	513	-

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

LMC