DURING December 2015 the average deadweight lamb price in NI was £328.1/kg, 55.2p/kg lower than the corresponding month in 2014 when the average price was 383.3p/kg and accounts for a 14.4 per cent decrease. This is the equivalent of £12 per head on a 22kg carcass.

Deadweight prices have also come under pressure in GB and ROI although not to the same extent as recorded in NI. During December 2015 the average deadweight lamb price in GB was 396.5p/kg which was 50.2p/kg lower than December 2014 when the average price was 446.4p/kg. This accounts for a 12.2 per cent decline year on year or £11 on a 22kg carcass.

In ROI during December 2015 the average deadweight lamb price was the equivalent of 337.9p/kg, 37.9p/kg lower than the corresponding month in 2014 when the average price was 375.8p/kg. This accounts for a 10.1 per cent decline in sterling terms. In euro terms the decline in lamb prices in NI was much less pronounced. During December 2015 the average lamb price was 467.3c/kg, 8.5c/kg lower than December 2014 when it was 475.8c/kg. This decline by 8.5c/kg accounts for a two per cent decline year on year.

Sterling has continued to trade strongly against euro during December 2015 which has made NI origin lambs more competitive on the Eu market. The influence of the sterling euro exchange rate has been a key factor behind the decline in deadweight prices in NI in 2015 when compared to previous years.

A weakening in the value of euro against sterling has made NI origin lambs more expensive in euro terms and this has resulted in reduced demand for NI origin lambs from ROI processors and caused difficulties for NI processors when competing on the EU market. The proportion of u grade lambs in the NI lamb kill has increased during the last quarter has increased during the period October to December 2015 totalled 135,408 head (24.4 per cent) from 328,175 kg. This was an increase of 14.4 per cent to December 2014. The influence of the corresponding month in 2014 when 2,788 head were slaughtered. This was an increase of 21 per cent between year on year. Ewe and ram carcase weights followed a similar trend with an average carcase weight of 26.4kg in December 2015. This was a 0.6kg decline from 27kg in December 2014.

ROI continues to act as an important outlet for the NI sheep sector with 32,274 sheep exported from NI to ROI for direct slaughter during December 2015. This was a 6.1 per cent decrease from the 34,363 exported during December 2014. During December 2015 150 lambs were imported from GB for direct slaughter in NI plants. These were the first lambs imported from GB for direct slaughter since February 2015.

The proportion of u grade lambs in the NI slaughter mix has increased during the 2015 period to account for 37 per cent of the price reported NI lamb kill. This was an increase by seven percentage points from the previous year when 30 per cent of the lamb kill achieved a U grade as outlined in Figure 1.

While the proportion of U grade lambs in the NI lamb kill has increased the proportion of lambs awarded an R grade has decreased. During the 2015 period 61 per cent of price reported lambs achieved an R grade, a decline of seven percentage points from the corresponding period in 2014 when 68 per cent of lamb carcasses were awarded an R grade.

The current market specification is for lamb carcasses with a fat score of 2 or 3 and during the 2015 period 88 per cent of price reported lamb carcasses fulfilled this requirement. While this was a similar proportion to the corresponding period in 2014 there were notable changes in the proportion of lambs within each fat score.

During quarter 4 of 2015, 21 per cent of price reported lambs achieved a fat score of 2 while 67 per cent were awarded a fat score of 3. This is notable change from the corresponding period in 2014 when 10 per cent of lamb carcasses were awarded a fat score of 2 and 78 per cent achieved a fat score of 3 as outlined in Figure 2.

It is likely that the reduction in the overall fat scores achieved in the NI lamb kill is due to more challenging production conditions on NI farms this autumn/winter which will have negatively influenced lamb performance and thus fat cover. This may also be a factor in the reduction in average carcase weight from 22.1kg in the October to December period in 2014 to 21.7kg during the same period in 2015. A small number of lambs continue to kill out at a fat class 4L and 4H. During 2015 11 per cent of the price reported lamb kill were awarded a 4L for fat cover and 1 per cent were awarded a 4H, both figures unchanged from the proportion awarded a 4L and 4H respectively during 2014.

In addition to meeting market specifications for conformation and fat score producers should also be aware that the current market requirements are for carcasses under 22kg. Processors also have a strong preference for lambs/hoggets with FQ status. Bonuses are available in some plants while other plants will not handle non assured lambs.

Figure 1: Conformation scores of the NI lamb kill Oct-Dec 2014/2015

Figure 2: Fat scores of the NI lamb kill Oct-Dec 2014/2015
DURING December 2015 the average deadweight lamb price in NI was 328.1p/kg, 55.2p/kg lower than the corresponding month in 2014 when the average price was 383.3p/kg and accounts for a 14.4 per cent decrease. This is the equivalent of £1.2 per head on a 22kg carcase.

Deadweight prices have also come under pressure in GB and ROI although not to the same extent as recorded in NI. During December 2015 the average deadweight lamb price in GB was 369.5p/kg which was 50p/kg lower than December 2014 when the average price was 412.8p/kg. This accounts for a 2.2 per cent decline year on year. Ewe and ram carcass weights followed a similar trend with an average carcass weight of 26.4kg in December 2015. This was a 0.8kg decline from 27kg in December 2014.

In ROI during December 2015 the average deadweight lamb price was the equivalent of 377.9p/kg, 37.9p/kg lower than the corresponding month in 2014 when the average price was 375.8p/kg. This accounts for a 10.1 per cent decline in sterling terms. In euro terms the decline in lamb prices in NI was much less pronounced. During December 2015 the average lamb price was 467.3c/kg. 8.5c/kg lower than December 2014 when it was 475.8c/kg. This decline by 8.5c/kg accounts for a two per cent decline year on year.

Sterling has continued to trade strongly against euro with £1=72.6p during December 2015. This was 6.7p lower than the corresponding month in 2014. The influence of the sterling euro exchange rate has been a key factor behind the decline in deadweight prices in NI in 2015 when compared to previous years.

A weakening in the value of euro against sterling has made NI origin lambs more competitive in the export market. The proportion of NI origin lambs that were exported during December was 115,976 lambs or 32.3 per cent of the NI lamb kill. This was an increase of 32.3 per cent compared to the corresponding period in 2014.

There was a strong increase in lamb exports during December 2015 with 33,359 head slaughtered. This was an increase of 5,559 head (22.3 per cent) from December 2014 levels when 28,810 lambs were killed in NI plants. It should be noted however that slaughter figures for December 2014 included the reduced slaughterings associated with Christmas week but figures for December 2015 do not. Meanwhile ewe and ram throughput in the NI plants during December 2015 totalled 2,347 head, a decrease of 441 head on December 2014 when 2,788 head were slaughtered in NI.

The average lamb carcass weight in NI during December 2015 was 21.6kg compared to 22.3kg during December 2014. This decrease of 1.7kg in the average carcass weight by 0.7kg accounts for a 2.2 per cent decline year on year. Ewe and ram carcass weights followed a similar trend with an average carcass weight of 26.4kg in December 2015. This was a 0.8kg decline from 27kg in December 2014.

ROI continues to act as an important outlet for NI sheep sector with 68,004 sheep exported from NI to ROI during December 2015. This was an increase of 10.1 per cent compared to the corresponding period in 2014 when 61,990 sheep were slaughtered in ROI plants. These were the first lambs imported from GB for direct slaughter since February 2015.

The proportion of U grade lambs in the NI slaughter mix has increased during the 2015 period to account for 37 per cent of the price reported NI lamb kill. This was an increase by seven percentage points from the previous year when 30 per cent of the lamb kill achieved a U grade as outlined in Figure 1.

While the proportion of U grade lambs in the NI lamb kill has increased the proportion of lamb carcasses awarded a R grade has decreased. During the 2015 period 61 per cent of price reported lambs achieved an R grade, a decline of seven percentage points from the corresponding period in 2014 when 68 per cent of lamb carcasses were awarded an R grade.

The current market specification is for lamb carcasses with a fat score of 2 or 3 and the 2015 period 88 per cent of price reported lamb carcasses fulfilled this requirement. While this was a similar proportion to the corresponding period in 2014 there were notable changes in the proportion of lamb carcasses achieving each fat score. During quarter 4 of 2015, 21 per cent of price reported lambs achieved a fat score of 2 while 67 per cent were awarded a fat score of 3. This is notable change from the corresponding period in 2014 when 10 per cent of lamb carcasses were awarded a fat score of 2 and 78 per cent achieved a fat score of 3 as outlined in Figure 2.

It is likely that the reduction in the overall fat scores achieved in the NI lamb kill is due to more challenging production conditions on NI farms this autumn/winter which will have negatively influenced lamb performance and thus fat cover. This may also be a factor in the reduction in average carcass weight from 22.1kg in the October to December period in 2014 to 21.7kg during the same period in 2015.

A small number of lambs continue to kill out at a fat class 4L and 4H. During 2015 11 per cent of the price reported lamb kill were awarded a 4L for fat cover and 1 per cent were awarded a 4H. Both figures unchanged from the proportion awarded a 4L and 4H respectively during 2014.

In addition to meeting market specifications for conformation and fat scores producers should also be aware that the current market requirements are for carcasses under 22kg. Producers also have a strong preference for lambs/hoggets with FQ status. Bonuses are available in some plants while other plants will not handle non assured lambs.
Deadweight Cattle Trade

O\-UTES from the major NI processors this week for in spec U-3 grade prime cattle ranged from 310-321p/kg with the majority of plants quoting in the region of 310/p/kg. Similar quotes are expected for early next week. Quotes for good quality O+3 grade cows this week have remained fairly steady at 214-240p/kg with similar quotes expected for early next week.

A total of 5,888 prime cattle were slaughtered in NI plants last week which was an increase of 1,647 head from the previous week. Meanwhile cow throughput in NI last week totalled 1,837 head and this was an increase of 940 head from the previous week. In the corresponding week in 2015 a total of 6,543 prime cattle and 2,014 calves were slaughtered in NI.

Imports of prime cattle from ROI for direct slaughter in NI plants last week totalled 554 head, accounting for nine per cent of the total prime cattle throughput in NI. In the corresponding week in 2015, 321 head of prime cattle were imported from ROI. The prime heifer price in NI last week increased by 1.9p/kg to 314.8p/kg while the R3 heifer price was back by 4.0p/kg to 314.2p/kg.

The average steer price in NI last week decreased by 2.5p/kg to 304.2p/kg while the R3 steer price was back by 4.0p/kg to 314.2p/kg. The average heifer price in NI last week was up by 0.5p/kg to 312p/kg while the R3 heifer price decreased by 1.4p/kg to 315.5p/kg. The average cow price in NI last week recorded a strong increase of 5.6p/kg to 206.6p/kg while the O3 cow price increased by 4.5p/kg to 228.5p/kg. The O3 cow price in NI last week was the highest in the UK and was 10.3p/kg higher than the average GB price which was 218.2p/kg last week.

The average steer price in GB last week was back by 3.1p/kg to 334.3p/kg while the average R3 steer price was back by 3.0p/kg to 338.7p/kg. This puts the differential in R3 steer prices last week between NI and GB at 24.5p/kg which is the equivalent of £1.00 on a 330kg carcass. The average heifer price in GB last week decreased by 1.8p/kg to 334.3p/kg and the R3 heifer price was back by 2.1p/kg to 339.6p/kg. The differential in R3 heifer prices between NI and GB last week was 24.4p/kg which is the equivalent of £0.80 on a 330kg carcass.

In ROI last week deadweight prices for prime cattle held fairly steady in euro terms but firming in sterling terms. The R3 steer price in ROI was the equivalent of 283.8p/kg, up 1.5p/kg from the previous week while the R3 heifer price was up by almost a penny to 296.4p/kg. The O3 cow price in ROI last week recorded an increase of 2.0p/kg to 224.5p/kg which puts it 4p/kg lower than the equivalent price in NI.

Deadweight Sheep Trade

O\-UTES from the major NI processors for R3 grade hoggets this week strengthened to 345-355p/kg with plants paying up to 22kg. Quotes for early next week range from 355-370p/kg up to 22kg. The plants have reported steady supplies of hoggets coming forward for slaughter with throughput last week totalling 7,908 head. This was a difference of 692 head from the corresponding week in 2015 when 8,600 hoggets were killed in NI plants. Export of sheeps from NI to ROI for direct slaughter last week also strengthened with 8,645 head compared to 6,154 head the previous week. The deadweight hogget price in NI last week increased by 8.8p/kg to 341.4p/kg while the hogget price in ROI last week increased by an equivalent of 4.8p/kg to 360.8p/kg.

This week’s marts

A firm trade was reported across the marts this week with steady supplies of hoggets passing through many of the sale rings. In Omagh last Saturday a good entry of 1,575 hoggets sold from 312-357p/kg compared to 768 hoggets the previous week selling from 307-337p/kg. In Massereene on Monday 709 hoggets sold from 305-340p/kg compared to 802 hoggets last Monday selling from 305-338p/kg. In Saffron Walden 612 hoggets sold from 302-360p/kg compared to 771 hoggets last week selling from 295-332p/kg. In Ballymena on Wednesday, 1,714 hoggets sold from 300-372p/kg at an average of 330p/kg compared to 1,623 hoggets last week selling from 290-337p/kg. Reported prices for well fleshed cull ewes last week ranged from 282-310c across the marts.

Contact us:
FQAS Helpline: 028 9263 3024
Website: www.limconi.com
Telephone: 028 9263 3000
Comments: bulletin@limconi.com

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CATTLE TRADE

**Prime**
- U3: 310 - 312p/kg
- R3: 304 - 306p/kg
- O3: 296 - 300p/kg
- P3: 226 - 260p/kg

Including bonus where applicable

Cows
- O+3 & better: 214 - 240p/kg
- Steakers: 140 - 170p/kg
- Blues: 120 - 130p/kg

Weekly Beef & Lamb Markets

**Weekly BEEF & LAMB MARKETS**

**REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W/E 09/01/16</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>Avg</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
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**CATTLE TRADE**

**NI FACTORY PRICES FOR CATTLE**

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<tr>
<th>(P/KG DW)</th>
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<th>Next Week 18/01/18</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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**SHEEP TRADE**

**SHEEP PRICES**

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<tr>
<th>(P/KG)</th>
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<th>W/E 02/01/16</th>
<th>W/E 09/01/16</th>
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<tr>
<td>NL Lambs L/W</td>
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<td>312.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>NL Lambs D/W</td>
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<td>332.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>GB Lambs D/W</td>
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<td>374.5</td>
<td>380.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROI D/W</td>
<td>342.8</td>
<td>356.0</td>
<td>360.8</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Deadweight Sheep Trade**

O uses from the major NI processors this week for 3+ grade hoggets ranged from 312-315p/kg with the majority of cattle quoting in the region of 301p/kg. Similar quotes are expected for early next week. Quotes for good quality prime cattle which have remained fairly steady at 214-220p/kg with similar quotes expected for early next week.

A total of 5,888 prime cattle were slaughtered in NI plants last week which was an increase of 1,647 head from the previous week. Meanwhile cow throughput in NI last year totalled 1,837 head and this was an increase of 940 head from the previous week. In the corresponding week in 2015 a total of 6,543 prime cattle and 2,014 cattle were slaughtered in NI.

Imports of prime cattle from ROI for direct slaughter in NI plants last week totalled 554 head, accounting for nine per cent of the total prime cattle throughput in NI. The corresponding week in 2015, 395 prime cattle were imported from ROI for direct slaughter in NI and accounted for six per cent of the total prime cattle throughput. The number of cattle imported from ROI for direct slaughter in NI plants last week totalled 71 head compared to 32 head in the corresponding week in 2015. Meanwhile 51 cows were imported from ROI for direct slaughter in NI plants last week a decrease from the previous week when 94 cows were exported to ROI. Exports from NI for direct slaughter in GB last week consisted of 161 prime cattle and 41 cows compared to 25 prime cattle and 13 cows in the corresponding week in 2015.

The average steer price in NI last week decreased by 2.5p/kg to 304.2p/kg while the R3 steer price was back by 4.0p/kg to 314.2p/kg. The average heifer price in NI last week was up by 0.5p/kg to 312p/kg while the R3 heifer price was back by 1.5p/kg to 319.6p/kg. The price of heifers in NI last week recorded a strong increase of 5.6p/kg to 206.6p/kg while the O3 cow price increased by 4.5p/kg to 225.9p/kg. The O3 cow price in NI last week was the highest in the UK and was 10.3p/kg higher than the average gB price which was 218.2p/kg last week.

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