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NI CALF REGISTRATIONS REMAIN STRONG

Beef sired calf registrations during April 2016 totalled 48,437 head taking registrations for the year to date to 136,762 head. In the corresponding period in 2015 beef sired calf registrations in NI totalled 114,601 head, representing a notable 19 per cent increase in registrations year on year. Figure 1 provides an outline of beef sired calf registrations from January 2014-April 2016.

Beef sired calf registrations to suckler origin cows totalled 89,431 head during 2016 to date, a 15 per cent increase from the 77,576 beef sired calves registered to suckler cows during the corresponding period in 2015. While the total number of calf registrations has increased the type of beef sires used on suckler origin cows has remained relatively steady year on year.

Charolais is the most popular beef sire used on suckler cows and accounted for 33 per cent of beef calf registrations to suckler origin cows during 2016 to date. Limousin is a close second accounting for 32 per cent of registrations while Aberdeen Angus and Simmental accounted for 11 per cent and 9 per cent of registrations respectively.

The NI dairy herd continues to act as a valuable source of raw material for the NI beef herd and during the first four months of 2015 46,842 beef sired calves were registered to dairy cows. These calves accounted for 34 per cent of total beef sired calf registrations during the 2016 period. In the corresponding period in 2015 36,700 beef sired calves were registered to dairy cows, accounting for 32 per cent of total beef sired calf registrations.

Aberdeen Angus is the most popular beef sire used on dairy cows and accounted for 37 per cent of all beef cross calf registrations during 2016 to date. While this proportion was unchanged from year earlier levels the number of Aberdeen Angus calves registered to dairy cows has increased by 3,999 head year on year. Limousin is the second most popular beef bull used on dairy cows, accounting for 19 per cent of registrations while Hereford calves accounted for a further 17 per cent of registrations during 2016 to date.

Dairy sired male calves also act as a source of raw material for the NI beef herd. During the 2016 period 32,436 dairy sired male calves were registered in NI, almost unchanged from year earlier levels. During 2016 to date 6,796 dairy sired male calves were exported out of NI for further production, a 10 per cent increase from the 6,205 calves exported during the corresponding period in 2015.

More cattle on NI farms

The continued recovery in calf registrations in NI during 2015 and 2016 to date has resulted in an increase in the number of cattle for beef production on NI farms as outlined in Table 1. The number of beef sired cattle aged 0-6 months on NI farms at the end of April totalled 149,591 head, a 13.5 per cent increase from year earlier levels.

Meanwhile there has been a 6.7 per cent increase in the number of beef sired cattle aged 6-12 months and a 9 per cent increase in cattle aged 12-18 months. The number of cattle aged 18-24 months on NI farms at the end of April 2016 was 7.8 per cent higher than year earlier levels while the number in the 24-30 month age category has recorded a 4.8 per cent decline on year earlier levels.

This reduction in the number of cattle in the 24-30 month age category may go some way to explain recent reports from the plants of a tightening in prime cattle supplies in the short term. However it should be noted that as the year progresses the supplies of prime cattle for slaughter will increase and it is important that the entire beef industry works together to find market outlets for this increase in beef supplies.

Producers are encouraged to liaise directly with the procurement staff of individual plants to ensure they are presenting cattle for slaughter that meet current market requirements as this should provide the highest return to the entire NI beef industry.

Figure 1: NI beef sired calf registrations January 2014-April 2016

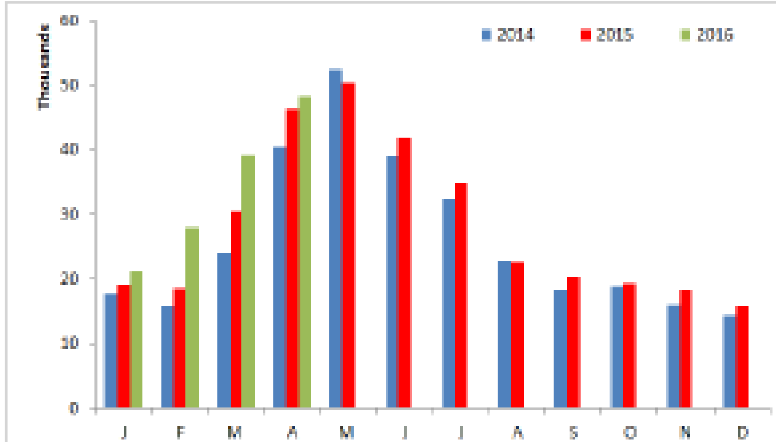

Table 1: Beef sired cattle on NI farms by age category April 2014-2016

	2014	2015	2016	2015/2016	2014/2016
0-6	108,188	131,855	149,591	13.5%	38.3%
6-12	125,573	135,857	145,014	6.7%	15.5%
12-18	176,424	173,828	189,485	9.0%	7.4%
18-24	101,863	99,915	107,689	7.8%	5.7%
24-30	110,595	105,446	100,429	-4.8%	-9.2%

NI BEEF INDUSTRY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS APRIL 2016

TABLE 2 outlines key performance indicators for the NI beef industry during April 2016 and provides a useful comparison with year earlier levels.

The average prime cattle price in NI during April 2016 was 298.7p/kg, a 9.4 per cent decline from the 329.6p/kg paid in April 2015. Meanwhile the average R3 steer price in NI was 308.3p/kg during April 2016 compared to 343p/kg during April 2015. This accounts for a 34.7p/kg decline between the two periods which is the equivalent of £115 on a 330kg carcase.

Meanwhile in GB the average R3 steer price during April 2016 was 320.5p/kg, back 27.2p/kg from 347.7p/kg in April 2015. The differential in R3 steer prices between NI and GB widened from 4.7p/kg in April 2015 to 12.2p/kg in April 2016. However while the differential has widened between the two periods tabulated the differential in R3 steer prices between GB and NI has actually been gradually narrowing since October 2015 when it peaked at 33.4p/kg, the equivalent of £110 on a 330kg carcase. Last week (w/e 7 May 2016) the differential in R3 steer prices between NI and GB was 5.3p/kg, the equivalent of £17.50 on a 330kg carcase.

In ROI the R3 steer price was the equivalent of 307.6p/kg during April 2016, an increase from April 2015 when the average R3 steer price was the equivalent of 297.4p/kg. The differential in R3 steer prices between ROI and NI narrowed considerably from 45.6p/kg in April 2015 to 0.7p/kg in April 2016. In monetary terms the differential in prices for a 330kg steer carcase narrowed from £150 in April 2015 to £2 in April 2016.

Prime cattle throughput in NI during April 2016 totalled 25,539 head, a 9 per cent increase from year earlier levels when 23,431 prime cattle were killed in NI plants. Cow throughput increased from 4,941 head in April 2015 to 6,754 head in April 2016. This accounts for a 36.7 per cent increase year on year.

In April 2016 the average prime cattle carcase weight in NI was 338kg, a 3kg increase from April 2015 when the average carcase weight was 335kg. Meanwhile the average cow carcase weight increased from 300kg in April 2015 to 306kg in April 2016. This increase by 6kg accounted for a 1.8 per cent increase in average carcase weights between the two periods.

Imports of cattle for direct slaughter in NI plants during April 2016 totalled 998 head, a 43.8 per cent decline from the 1,775 head imported for direct slaughter during April 2015. Meanwhile exports of cattle from NI for direct slaughter in ROI and GB totalled 2,308 head in April 2016, a notable increase from the 1,067 head exported in April 2015. This increase in exports was primarily due to an increase in cow exports to ROI for direct slaughter.

The number of cattle on NI farms intended for beef production aged 12-30 months on NI farms during April 2016 totalled 440,526 head, a 4.8 per cent increase on April 2015 levels. The number of beef sired cattle on NI farms increased by 4.9 per cent to 397,603 head in April 2016 while the number of dairy sired male cattle increased by 4.3 per cent to 42,923 during the same period.

Beef sired calf registrations during April 2016 totalled 48,437 head, a 4.4 per cent increase on April 2015 levels. Meanwhile the number of dairy sired male calf registrations during April 2016 totalled 6,480 head, back by 13.3 per cent from year earlier levels.

The value of euro against sterling increased from €1 = 72.11p in April 2015 to €1 = 79.22p in April 2016. This accounts for a ten per cent increase in the value of euro against sterling between the two periods.

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

	Apr-15	Apr-16	% Change
Finished Cattle Prices (p/kg)			
Average Prime Cattle Price	329.6	298.7	-9.4%
Average Cow Price	221.0	209.9	-5.0%
Average R3 Steer Price (NI)	343.0	308.3	-10.1%
Average R3 Steer Price (ROI)	297.4	307.6	3.4%
Average R3 Steer Price (GB)	347.7	320.5	-7.8%
Slaughterings			
Total Clean Slaughterings (Head)	23,431	25,539	9.0%
Total Cow Slaughterings (Head)	4,941	6,754	36.7%
Average Clean Carcase Weight	335	338	0.7%
Average Cow Carcase Weight (kg)	300	306	1.8%
Trade (Head)			
Live Imports for Direct Slaughter	1,775	998	-43.8%
Live Exports for Direct Slaughter	1,067	2,308	116.3%
Availability (Head)			
No. Cattle on the Ground*	420,332	440,526	4.8%
Beef Sired	379,189	397,603	4.9%
Dairy Sired (Male Only)	41,143	42,923	4.3%
Calf Births Registrations (Head)			
Calf Births	53,882	54,917	1.9%
Beef Sired	46,409	48,437	4.4%
Dairy Sired (Male Only)	7,473	6,480	-13.3%
Euro / Stg Exchange Rate (€ / £)	72.11	79.22	9.9%

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

All NI Figures Unless Otherwise Stated

WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

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CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 09/05/16	Next Week 16/05/16
Prime		
U-3	302 - 312p	302 - 312p
R-3	296 - 306p	296 - 306p
O+3	290 - 300p	290 - 300p
P+3	220 - 262p	220 - 262p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3 & better	228 - 240p	228 - 240p
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 07/05/16	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	312.2	314.4	310.1
R3	309.2	309.6	306.8
O+3	299.4	302.7	296.4

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

w/e 07/05/16	Wgt <220kg	Wgt 220-250kg	Wgt 250-280kg	Wgt >280kg
P1	140.2	150.7	155.0	179.8
P2	158.4	176.8	189.0	206.7
P3	168.9	199.9	211.9	218.6
O3	-	198.1	235.8	235.7
O4	-	-	224.0	238.0
R3	-	-	-	252.0

Deadweight Cattle Trade

QUOTES from the major NI processing plants for prime cattle have firmed this week with 310-312p/kg available for both steers and heifers however one plant continues to quote from 302-304p/kg. The plants have indicated tighter supplies of prime cattle as a key factor behind the firming of the trade with similar quotes expected for early next week. Meanwhile quotes for O+3 grade cows have firmed at the lower end with quotes now 228-240p/kg.

Prime cattle throughput in NI last week totalled 5,248, a reduction of 921 head from the previous week when 6,169 prime cattle were killed in local plants. Cow throughput also came under some pressure in NI last week with 1,293 cows killed compared to 1,716 cows killed during the previous week. Throughput of both prime cattle and cows last week were the lowest recorded throughputs since the first week of January 2016. The total volume of beef handled by NI processors last week totalled 2,232 tonnes, a 17 per cent reduction from the 2,676 tonnes processed during the previous week.

Imports of prime cattle from ROI for direct slaughter in NI plants last week totalled 152 head, a reduction of 35 head from the previous week. Meanwhile 83 prime cattle were exported from NI for direct slaughter in ROI with a further 32 exported to GB. Cow exports from NI to ROI for direct slaughter have continued at a similar level to previous weeks with 324 cows exported last week. Imports of cows from ROI for slaughter in NI plants last week totalled 29 head with a further 91 imported from GB.

The R3 steer price in NI last week increased by 3.3p/kg to 312.8p/kg and was the third consecutive week in which it recorded an increase. Meanwhile the average steer price in NI last week was up marginally to 301.5p/kg. The R3 heifer price in NI last week was unchanged from the previous week at 311.5p/kg while the average heifer price was back by half a penny to 303.3p/kg. The deadweight trade for young bulls firmed in NI last week with the R3 price up by 3.3p/kg to 305.1p/kg while the average young bull price was up by 4.2p/kg to 293.9p/kg.

In GB last week the deadweight trade showed some signs of stabilising with the R3 steer price within half a penny of the previous week at 318.1p/kg while the average steer price increased by 1.4p/kg to 312.2p/kg. The average steer price increased in Southern England and Scotland but was relatively unchanged in Northern England and the Midlands last week. The R3 heifer price in GB last week increased by 1.4p/kg to 321.7p/kg while the average heifer price was up marginally to 313p/kg.

In ROI last week a firming in the deadweight cattle trade in euro terms and an increase in the value of euro against sterling resulted in strong increases in reported prices in sterling terms. The R3 steer price in ROI increased by the equivalent of 5.7p/kg to 310.2p/kg while the R3 heifer price increased by the equivalent of 6.7p/kg to 321.1p/kg.

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

W/E 07/05/2016		Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	313.4	317.8	325.9	326.7	324.3	321.3	325.0
	R3	312.8	310.2	325.9	315.3	315.4	315.0	318.1
	R4	308.7	310.7	329.5	328.0	316.2	311.8	323.4
	O3	295.5	296.2	300.8	285.3	285.4	292.9	291.1
	AVG	301.5	-	324.7	313.8	304.1	301.7	312.2
Heifers	U3	315.2	332.7	338.9	327.5	331.8	326.6	332.3
	R3	311.5	321.1	329.7	317.6	320.3	317.2	321.7
	R4	308.0	320.0	329.6	321.6	318.2	312.5	321.5
	O3	300.2	304.3	298.3	289.0	289.2	290.7	291.9
	AVG	303.3	-	327.5	313.7	308.0	295.2	313.0
Young Bulls	U3	310.1	310.1	324.0	315.2	316.6	319.5	318.3
	R3	305.1	301.8	316.6	303.1	307.6	303.4	307.4
	O3	291.3	288.2	281.0	266.9	280.5	280.4	277.2
	AVG	293.9	-	309.6	293.1	294.2	296.5	296.8
Prime Cattle Price Reported		4638	-	6403	6614	5877	3551	22445
Cows	O3	235.1	249.8	237.6	222.8	227.6	216.3	225.6
	O4	237.1	251.2	238.0	226.3	226.4	215.9	225.6
	P2	189.6	222.0	178.4	179.1	173.2	168.5	173.7
	P3	214.7	244.1	205.1	196.6	192.9	191.3	194.7
	AVG	218.2	-	220.0	199.9	194.4	183.5	196.3

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=78.87p 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 07/05/16	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)						
Steers	181	191	185	165	180	172
Friesians	135	145	140	123	134	129
Heifers	185	203	190	160	184	172
Beef Cows	140	188	153	110	139	120
Dairy Cows	105	120	110	60	104	80
Store Cattle (p/kg)						
Bullocks up to 400kg	200	240	220	170	199	186
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	195	215	205	165	194	180
Bullocks over 500kg	185	198	190	160	184	175
Heifers up to 450kg	200	230	215	170	199	185
Heifers over 450kg	185	213	195	160	184	172
Dropped Calves (£/head)						
Continental Bulls	225	315	270	140	220	180
Continental Heifers	200	315	245	100	198	140
Friesian Bulls	70	165	105	35	68	50
Holstein Bulls	50	135	75	30	48	38

SHEEP TRADE

SHEEP QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 09/05/16	Next Week 16/05/16
Hoggets	350 - 360 >22kg	--
Lambs	420 - 425 >21kg	420 - 425 >21kg

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 23/04/16	W/E 30/04/16	W/E 07/05/16
NI Hoggets L/W	342.7	317.9	306.9
NI Hoggets D/W	410.2	388.3	362.0
GB Hoggets D/W	409.8	403.2	404.3
ROI D/W	414.1	388.9	403.1
NI Lambs L/W	397.6	372.2	391.7
NI Lambs D/W	432.9	414.7	403.8
GB Lambs D/W	500.5	481.1	451.3

Deadweight Sheep Trade

QUOTES for R3 grade spring lambs ranged from 420-425p/kg across the plants this week with similar quotes expected for early next week. The plants have reported steady supplies of sheep to meet demand with throughput last week totalling 4,644 head. Spring lambs accounted for 80 per cent of price reported lambs/hoggets in NI plants last week as the hogget season comes to an end. Exports to ROI for direct slaughter last week were similar to the previous week and totalled 4,013 head. The deadweight lamb price in NI last week was back by 10.9p/kg to 403.8p/kg while the deadweight hogget price was back by 26.3p/kg to 362p/kg. In ROI last week the combined lamb and hogget price increased by 14.2p/kg to 403.1p/kg, most likely due to an increase in the proportion of new season lambs in the kill.

This week's marts

THE trade in the marts this week for spring lambs strengthened as the week progressed while the trade for the small number of hoggets on offer was similar to the previous week. In Massereene this week 244 lambs sold from 400-439p/kg compared to 224 lambs last week selling from 380-400p/kg. In Saintfield this week a good trade saw 277 lambs selling from 390-437p/kg. In Rathfriland on Tuesday 338 lambs sold to an average of 431p/kg compared to 235 lambs last week selling to an average of 383p/kg. In Markethill this week a firm trade saw 650 lambs sell from 400-435p/kg compared to 350 lambs last week selling from 370-405p/kg. The trade for good quality cull ewes has remained steady with top prices in excess of £100 in several marts this week.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS

From: 06/05/16		Hoggets (P/KG LW)				Lambs (P/KG LW)			
To: 12/05/16		No	From	To	Avg	No	From	To	Avg
Friday	Newtownstewart	-	-	-	-	50	396	404	400
Saturday	Omagh	160	333	358	-	105	393	454	-
	Swatragh	265	331	367	-	170	374	400	-
Monday	Massereene	-	-	-	-	244	400	439	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	147	290	340	-	277	390	437	-
	Rathfriland	-	-	-	-	338	405	477	431
Wednesday	Ballymena	154	237	313	290	186	364	441	410
	Enniskillen	-	-	-	-	417	372	416	-
	Markethill	100	300	365	-	650	400	435	425
	Armoy	-	-	-	-	180	400	444	422

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