

## BEEF SIRED CALF REGISTRATIONS DECLINE

**D**URING April 2018 there were 49,451 beef sired calves registered on NI farms which brings the total for the year to date to 130,164 head. In the same period in 2017 136,419 beef sired calves were registered. This decline by 6,255 head accounts for a 4.6 per cent decline year on year.

There was however a difference in changes to beef sired calf registrations to suckler and dairy cows. The number of calves registered to suckler cows declined by nine per cent during 2018 to date when compared to 2017 levels while the number of beef sired calves registered to dairy cows declined by three per cent.

This has resulted in a larger proportion of beef sired calves in NI registered to dairy cows during 2018 when compared to year earlier levels. During 2018 to date beef cross calves accounted for 39 per cent of all beef sired calf registrations, up from 34 per cent in the same period in 2017 and 32 per cent in the same period in 2016.

During 2018 to date Charolais and Limousin have continued to be the most

popular beef sires used on suckler cows in NI. Charolais calves accounted for 32 per cent of registrations to suckler cows during 2018 to date while Limousin calves accounted for 31 per cent. Aberdeen Angus calves accounted for a further 13 per cent of registrations to suckler cows, Simmental for 8 per cent and Hereford for 4 per cent. These proportions were unchanged from year earlier levels.

Aberdeen Angus continues to be the most popular beef sire used on dairy cows and accounted for 41 per cent of registrations during 2018 to date. This was a two percentage point increase from 2017 levels when Aberdeen Angus accounted for 39 per cent of beef sired registrations to dairy cows. Hereford accounted for 17 per cent of registrations to dairy cows during 2018 to date, unchanged from year earlier levels.

Limousin calves accounted for 15 per cent of beef sired registrations to dairy cows during 2018 to date, back from 18 per cent in the same period last year. Belgian Blue calves accounted for 13 per cent of beef registrations to dairy cows during 2018 while Simmental

accounted for a further 6 per cent. These proportions were unchanged from 2017 levels. Dairy sired calf registrations in NI during the first four months of 2018 totalled 60,193 head, almost unchanged from the 59,771 dairy sired calves registered during the same period in 2017.

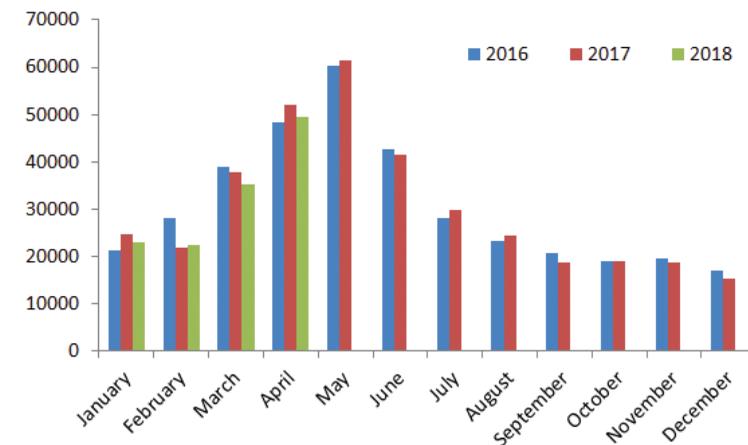
The DAERA Agricultural Survey in December 2017 recorded 258,400 suckler cows on NI farms, a two per cent decline from December 2016 when there were 263,500 suckler cows registered on NI farms. Meanwhile the number of dairy cows on NI farms held steady at 312,500 in December 2017. This led to a decline in the total cow herd in NI by one per cent to total 570,900 head.

Since the survey was conducted there has been an 11 per cent increase in cow throughput in local processing plants when compared to the corresponding period in 2016/2017. This combined with the decline in the cow herd recorded in the December survey will have contributed to the decline in calf registrations in NI during 2018 to date.

**Table 1: Proportion of beef sired calves by breed from the NI suckler and dairy herds during 2018 to date.**

Suckler Cows		Dairy Cows	
CH	32%	AA	41%
LIM	31%	HER	17%
AA	13%	LIM	15%
SIM	8%	BB	13%
HER	4%	SIM	6%

**Figure 1: Beef sired calf registrations in NI January 2016- April 2018.**



# CHANGES TO THE NI YOUNG BULL KILL DURING 2018

**D**URING 2018 to date there have been 11,950 young bulls killed in local plants and these accounted for 10.5 per cent of total prime cattle throughput in NI. In the corresponding period in 2017 there were 10,254 young bulls killed in local plants which accounted for 9.3 per cent of total prime cattle throughput.

Young bulls have a higher liveweight gain and better feed efficiency than steers and are therefore favoured by some producers. However there are more limited market outlets for the beef from these animals with young bull beef often used to supply commodity beef for value lines in the major retailers while beef from steers and heifers is used to fulfil higher spec premium lines.

The majority of local processors require young bulls to be under 16 months at point of slaughter to fulfil the specifications of major retail customers. During 2018 to date 74 per cent of young bulls slaughtered in local plants have fulfilled this requirement, a notable decline from the same period in 2017 when 84 per cent of young bulls were under 16 months at slaughter.

There has also been a notable change in the origin of young bulls being killed in local plants. During 2018 to date 38

per cent of young bulls slaughtered were dairy sired, back from 46 per cent in the same period in 2017 and 54 per cent in the same period in 2016.

Meanwhile the number of beef sired young bulls from the dairy herd accounted for 19 per cent of total young bull throughput in NI during 2018 to date. This was an increase from 16 per cent of the young bull kill in the 2017 period and 12 per cent in the 2016 period. Suckler origin young bulls accounted for 41 per cent of the young bull kill in NI during 2018 to date, up from 36 per cent in the same period in 2017 and 32 per cent in the same period in 2016.

The increasing proportion of suckler origin and beef cross young bulls in the slaughter mix may be a result of tighter fodder supplies on NI farms this winter. This will have encouraged some producers to go down the more intensive young bull production route to maximise animal performance.

The average R3 steer price in NI last week was 366.2p/kg while the average R3 young bull price was 355.5p/kg. This puts the differential between steers and young bulls at 10.7p/kg, a differential which can be partly offset by the increased feed efficiency of young

bulls. It should however be noted that production costs for young bulls are generally higher than steers due to the higher levels of concentrate input required.

The decreasing dairy influence on the young bull kill has contributed to an increase in the average carcass weight. During 2018 to date the average carcass weight was 324kg, up from 318kg in the same period in 2017 and 316kg in the same period in 2016.

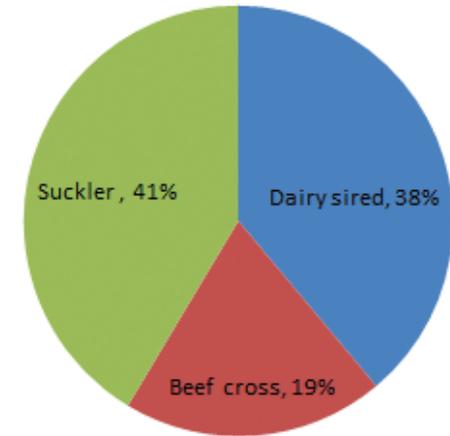
The conformation scores awarded to the NI young bull kill have also generally improved year on year in line with changes to the slaughter mix and the increase in average carcass weights as outlined in Table 2. U grading young bulls accounted for 17 per cent of the price reported young bull kill during 2018 to date, up from 15 per cent in the same period in 2017.

Meanwhile the proportion of R grading young bulls increased from 21 per cent of the kill in the 2017 period to 25 per cent during 2018 to date. O grading carcasses accounted for 39 per cent of the young bull kill in NI during 2018 to date, back from 45 per cent in the same period last year. The proportion of P grading carcasses in the NI kill was unchanged at 17 per cent year on year.

Producing young bulls for slaughter can create some challenges at farm level as they can be harder to manage, require a higher level of concentrate input to finish and they can also be more susceptible to meat quality issues such as dark cutting beef which is an issue for the processors. In addition there are

reduced market outlets for beef from young bulls so it is important that producers liaise directly with the procurement staff of the individual processors prior to finishing cattle to ensure there is a market for the animals they are producing.

**Image 2: Source of the price reported young bull kill in NI during 2018 to date**



**Table 2: Conformation scores awarded to NI price reported young bull kill during 2018 to date and corresponding period in 2017.**

Kill Year	E	U	R	O	P
2017	1%	15%	21%	45%	17%
2018	1%	17%	25%	39%	17%



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# WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS



## CATTLE TRADE

### NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 30/04/18	Next Week 07/05/18
<b>Prime</b>		
U-3	356 - 360p	356 - 360p
R-3	350 - 354p	350 - 354p
O+3	344 - 348p	344 - 348p
P+3	298 - 310p	298 - 310p
	Including bonus where applicable	
<b>Cows</b>		
O+3 & better	270 - 290p	270 - 290p
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.

## Deadweight Cattle Trade

**T**HE deadweight cattle trade in NI has remained firm with base quotes for U-3 grade prime cattle this week ranging from 356-360p/kg. The majority of plants are quoting from 358p/kg for in spec U-3 steers and heifers however with reports of higher prices available producers should use these quotes as a starting point for negotiation. Quotes for good quality O+3 grade cows ranged from 270-290p/kg across the plants this week. Similar quotes are expected for all types of cattle early next week.

Throughput of prime cattle in NI plants last week totalled 7,269 head, the highest weekly throughput during 2018 to date. This brings total prime cattle throughput during 2018 to 113,559 an increase of 3.5 per cent on the same period in 2017. Cow throughput in NI last week totalled 1,929 head taking throughput for the year to date to 34,955 head. This is an increase of 4,309 head from the corresponding period in 2017.

Imports of prime cattle from ROI for direct slaughter in NI plants last week totalled 64 head with 21 cows also imported. A further 2 steers and 58 cows were imported from GB for direct slaughter in NI plants last week. There were 20 prime cattle and 7 cows exported from NI for slaughter in GB plants last week while 66 prime cattle and 92 cows were exported from NI to ROI for direct slaughter.

The deadweight cattle trade in NI firmed last week with the average steer price up 1.7p/kg to 356.2p/kg while the R3 steer price was up 2.3p/kg to 366.2p/kg. The average heifer price in NI last week was 357.8p/kg, up a penny from the previous week, while the R3 heifer price was 366.0p/kg, up 1.5p/kg from the previous week. Reported deadweight prices for young bulls also improved in NI last week with the average young bull price up by 2.7p/kg to 342.8p/kg. The R3 young bull price in NI last week was 355.5p/kg, up 3.3p/kg from the previous week. The cow trade in NI has meanwhile remained fairly steady with the average cow price last week back slightly to 276.6p/kg.

In GB last week the average steer price was up by 1.4p/kg to 364p/kg. While the average steer price increased in Scotland, Northern England and the Midlands last week they came back in Southern England. The average R3 steer price in GB last week was 373.5p/kg, up by 1.9p/kg from the previous week. The average heifer price in GB last week was up by half a penny to 365.7p/kg while the average R3 heifer price was back by the same margin to 373.7p/kg. The average cow price in GB last week was back by 0.6p/kg to 259.7p/kg.

In ROI last week the deadweight cattle trade improved in both sterling and euro terms. The R3 steer price last week was up by the equivalent of 5.6p/kg to 351.4p/kg while the R3 heifer price increased by 4.7p/kg to 361.1p/kg. The cow trade also firmed in ROI last week with the O3 cow price up by 6.3p/kg to 298.2p/kg. This is 4.2p/kg higher than the equivalent price in NI. Prime cattle throughput in ROI last week totalled 24,238 head while 7,119 cows were also slaughtered.

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

W/E 28/04/2018	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB	
Steers	U3	368.8	362.0	384.7	376.4	373.5	379.8	378.1
	R3	366.2	351.4	384.9	369.9	369.4	369.9	373.5
	R4	364.5	352.3	384.8	376.0	370.2	372.4	376.2
	O3	355.1	335.2	361.4	341.6	340.7	343.5	346.7
	AVG	356.2	-	380.6	360.9	357.6	356.2	364.0
Heifers	U3	370.8	373.7	388.7	380.7	382.5	380.2	383.3
	R3	366.0	361.1	381.8	368.8	372.5	369.6	373.7
	R4	364.1	361.4	384.4	372.9	372.1	367.2	374.6
	O3	356.9	346.9	365.1	353.5	339.7	351.5	352.3
	AVG	357.8	-	382.2	363.6	359.4	355.8	365.7
Young Bulls	U3	360.2	354.7	378.4	361.3	365.0	371.1	367.3
	R3	355.5	346.1	367.2	356.0	358.8	359.6	359.6
	O3	339.9	330.4	321.1	316.6	322.1	336.8	322.6
	AVG	342.8	-	359.5	331.9	340.0	349.2	343.0
Prime Cattle Price Reported	6595	-	6251	7136	7194	4866	25447	
Cows	O3	294.0	298.2	301.7	282.6	286.9	287.5	287.7
	O4	298.0	298.8	300.3	285.9	285.7	282.7	286.8
	P2	255.6	262.2	245.0	241.7	235.8	251.2	241.4
	P3	273.1	287.7	259.1	264.3	252.0	270.5	258.3
	AVG	276.6	-	288.5	263.3	252.5	256.7	259.7

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=87.46p 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

## REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 28/04/18	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	367.6	370.3	360.2
R3	362.9	364.2	355.2
O+3	354.7	354.4	346.0

\*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

## REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 28/04/18	Wgt <220kg	Wgt 220- 250kg	Wgt 250- 280kg	Wgt >280kg
P1	194.2	210.0	221.2	229.7
P2	206.5	238.1	255.0	270.2
P3	214.0	249.6	269.8	277.7
O3	186.0	271.9	285.2	296.0
O4	-	283.0	297.5	298.1
R3	-	-	-	313.2

## LATEST LIVELWEIGHT CATTLE MART PRICES NI

W/E 28/04/18	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
<b>Finished Cattle (p/kg)</b>						
Steers	208	217	212	175	207	195
Friesians	143	162	150	122	142	133
Heifers	207	220	213	175	206	192
Beef Cows	155	204	170	120	154	135
Dairy Cows	115	139	125	65	114	95
<b>Store Cattle (p/kg)</b>						
Bullocks up to 400kg	235	281	255	200	234	218
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	220	255	230	190	219	200
Bullocks over 500kg	215	235	220	180	214	195
Heifers up to 450kg	215	239	225	175	214	200
Heifers over 450kg	210	233	220	170	209	185
<b>Dropped Calves (£/head)</b>						
Continental Bulls	300	400	340	200	298	240
Continental Heifers	220	300	265	120	218	175
Friesian Bulls	100	150	130	60	98	80
Holstein Bulls	75	110	95	32	72	50

# SHEEP TRADE

## SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 30/04/18	Next Week 07/05/18
Hoggets >22kg	530-550p	530-580p
Spring Lambs >21kg	560-580p	570-590p

## REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 14/04/18	W/E 21/04/18	W/E 28/04/18
NI L/W Hoggets	477.9	452.4	445.0
NI D/W Hoggets	546.5	559.6	545.4
GB D/W Hoggets	601.9	578.8	553.6
ROI D/W	515.7	526.4	524.0
NI L/W Spr Lambs	561.3	546.0	545.1
NI D/W Spr Lambs	580.6	578.3	563.5
GB D/W Spr Lambs	615.5	600.4	596.9

## Deadweight Sheep Trade

**Q**UOTES from the major processors for R3 grade hoggets this week ranged from 530-550p/kg up to 22kg with the plants quoting as far as 580p/kg to 22 kg for early next week. Quotes for spring lambs this week were in the region of 560-580p/kg up to 21kg with similar quotes expected for early next week. Hogget/lamb throughput in NI last week totalled 3,534 head while a further 5,681 sheep were exported to ROI for direct slaughter. The deadweight hogget price in NI last week was back 14.2p/kg to 545.4p/kg while the deadweight lamb price was back by 14.8p/kg to 563.5p/kg. In ROI last week the combined hogget/lamb deadweight price was back by 2.4p/kg to 524p/kg.

## This week's marts

**T**HE number of hoggets passing through the sale rings has continued to decline in line with normal seasonal trends while the number of spring lambs on offer has remained subdued across many of the marts. In Massereene on Monday 355 hoggets sold from 450-520p/kg while 151 spring lambs sold from 550-613p/kg. This compares to 831 hoggets selling from 450-528p/kg and 72 spring lambs selling from 550-598p/kg last week. In Rathfriland on Tuesday a quieter trade saw 169 spring lambs sold to an average of 535p/kg compared to 199 spring lambs last week selling to an average of 562p/kg. In Ballymena on Wednesday 342 hoggets sold to an average of 435p/kg while 176 spring lambs sold to an average of 510p/kg. The cull ewe trade remained steady with top reported prices generally ranged from £112-£130.

## LATEST SHEEP MARTS

From: 27/04/18		Hoggets (P/KG LW)				Lambs (P/KG LW)			
To: 03/05/18		No	From	To	Avg	No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Omagh	335	461	537	-	29	542	595	-
	Newtownstewart	-	-	-	-	55	545	584	-
Monday	Swatragh	400	438	559	-	-	-	-	-
	Massereene	355	450	520	-	151	550	613	-
Tuesday	Kilrea	300	478	505	-	-	-	-	-
	Saintfield	90	400	450	-	100	532	560	-
	Rathfriland	81	405	505	440	169	521	570	535
Wednesday	Ballymena	342	400	487	435	176	500	534	510
	Enniskillen	-	-	-	-	232	562	585	-
	Markethill	150	430	470	-	250	530	587	-
	Armoy	114	460	500	-	104	500	530	-

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## LMC HELPS TO HONE TEACHERS' BEEF AND LAMB SKILLS

**C**OURTESY of three innovative workshops the Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland (LMC) is helping to hone the skills of food and nutrition teachers, where the cooking of beef and lamb are concerned. "The participation in each of the events has been tremendously encouraging," confirmed LMC's Education Services' Manager Cherrie Kenny.

"They have attracted both existing food and nutrition teachers and those wishing to secure the skills they need to teach in a cross over capacity. Each of the daylong workshops was hosted by the LMC, in conjunction with staff from the British Nutrition Foundation (BNF). A key focus was placed on improving the practical skills required, when it comes to cooking beef and lamb while also

highlighting the nutritional value of including red meat in our diet."

Cherrie added: "The workshops represent an excellent investment of the LMC levy. Each workshop has three practical elements. The first is centred on the principles that must be brought to bear in cooking the perfect Irish Beef Stew. The second takes the same approach in creating the ultimate beef or lamb burger with the final challenge being that of cooking a Lamb Rogan Josh.

In each case, the development of the dish is brought through from first principles. The participating teachers are brought fully up to speed on the key skills involved and the nutritional principles enshrined with each recipe. Demonstrators, who go out into the

schools on LMC's behalf also attended the workshops.

"Working with schools has been a key target for the Commission for many years. During the period September 2017 to March 2018, we hosted a total of 327 school demonstrations. And, obviously, we want to build on this during the year ahead. This is a free service to the schools and, again, it represents an excellent investment of the farmer levy. In addition to allowing our demonstrators extol the virtues of beef and lamb to the students they meet, it also provides them with an opportunity to highlight the unique benefits of Northern Ireland's Farm Quality Assurance Scheme."

While LMC is committed to working with students from Year 8 right through to

those studying for 'A' Level qualifications, Cherrie confirmed that the cookery demonstrations are proving particularly attractive to Year 10 pupils.

She added: "This is working out very well as it is giving us an opportunity to interact with students who are about to make their subject choices for GCSE."

**Image 1: LMC is helping to develop the skills of food and nutrition teachers in cooking beef and lamb through three innovative workshops.**



# LMC TO HAVE RE-VAMPED PRESENCE AT BALMORAL 2018



Cookery demonstrations will be ongoing throughout the four days of the event, from noon onwards. A range of innovative beef and lamb recipes will be featured. The demonstrations always prove very popular with visitors to the stand. This year's event will also mark the launch of our new recipe book. Free copies will be available from the LMC stand throughout the show."

As was the case last year, health and safety on-farm will be another core theme associated with LMC's presence at Balmoral 2018. Helping to deliver enhanced farm safety standards, particularly where young people are concerned, is another priority for LMC. The organisation is actively involved with the Northern Ireland Farm Safety Partnership.

"The Commission fully supports the work of the Farm Safety Partnership in helping to make our farms safer places to live and work on," said LMC's Chief Executive Ian Stevenson. "Young people are particularly vulnerable in this regard. With this in mind we will be giving out a number of Farm Quality Assurance Scheme high viz vests to young people visiting our Balmoral stand. Numbers are limited, so they will be given out on a first-come: first served basis."

LMC is sponsoring four of the major livestock classes at Balmoral 2018. These include the Beef Champion of Champions competitions and the Sheep Young Handlers' event. The organisation's stand will be situated in its usual location, adjacent to the Main Arena.

THE Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland (LMC) will be attending this year's Balmoral Show with a new and fresh message for farmers and members of the general public. Themed - Farming is our Passion: Our Meat is our Pride, the new-look stand will serve to communicate a very clear and strong message regarding the exemplary quality of the beef and lamb produced locally.

"All visitors are welcome, with teas and coffee available to everyone coming on to the stand," confirmed the Commission's Education Services' Manager Cherrie Kenny. "Members of our various technical teams will be on hand throughout the show to discuss latest market trends and the recent changes agreed to the Farm Quality Assurance Scheme."

She added: "LMC board members will also be on the stand throughout the show. They welcome the opportunity of meeting stakeholders and discussing those issues that have a direct bearing on livestock farming businesses at the present time.

# NIFCC INSPECTORS GET TRAINED-UP ON NEW FQAS STANDARDS

THE past month has seen all Northern Ireland Food Chain Certification (NIFCC) inspectors attend training courses regarding the new Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (FQAS) standards. These come into effect on June 1st. "All those involved found the training to be both relevant and worthwhile," confirmed Livestock and Meat Commission's FQAS Manager, Gillian Davis.

"Assessment of the new standards will still fit within the format of the current inspections and therefore existing members will be familiar with the process. I can also confirm that the new arrangements will not require inspectors to spend any longer on-farm than is currently the case."

Gillian confirmed that a full FQAS review was undertaken during the latter part of 2017. "This constituted a line-by-line scrutiny of every measure contained within the FQAS code of practice. It should be regarded as a very positive development by producers, as the work is undertaken to verify that their businesses are operating to the highest possible standards and to provide assurances to customers of industry that they can have full confidence in the supply chain they are purchasing their products from. In light of this work a number of changes have been agreed to the FQAS codes.

Gillian added: "The scheme continually evolves in line with customer requirements and statutory responsibilities. This review sees renewed emphasis on animal health planning, responsible use of animal medicines and increased focus on care for the environment. Continued access to the GB market is vital for the NI industry and changes to the FQAS standards ensure equivalence with the Red Tractor standards."

Legislative changes are also reflected in the new FQAS measures. These include the need for FQAS-registered farmers to have a Certificate of

Competence for spraying purposes. "An alternative approach here is to use a fully certified contractor," Gillian explained. The new standards also reflect the need for farmers to conform fully, where the responsible use of rodenticides is concerned.

"The Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use, or CRRU, is leading an industry initiative to reduce the usage of second generation rodenticides. Studies have shown that these agents can have a detrimental impact on wildlife populations, barn owls being a case in point. The new FQAS standards are fully in line with the CRRU recommendations. Consequently, FQAS-certified farmers can continue to purchase rodenticides, when required."

Gillian drew particular attention to the enhanced focus on farm safety within the new FQAS measures. "There is now a specific section on farm safety within the new set of standards. By taking this approach, we hope to further increase producer awareness, where all aspects of health and safety are concerned. Keeping farmers and their families safe is one of the biggest challenges facing agriculture as a whole at the present time."

Turning to the amended animal health planning section with the new code of practice, Gillian said that steps had been taken to make this requirement less bureaucratic for farmers. "The template has been re-designed, making it more of a question and answer exercise for applicants. Up to this point, there was an onus placed on farmers to proactively describe the animal health plans which they had put in place. In contrast the new form allows applicants to follow a more structured approach."

Full details of the new FQAS inspection arrangements will be available on the LMC stand at this year's Balmoral Show. Staff will also be on-hand to answer any queries that producers might have.



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