

# FURTHER DECLINES IN NI SUCKLER HERD

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) have recently released the results of the June 2019 Agricultural Census and it has indicated a further contraction in Northern Ireland's suckler herd.



### Suckler cow numbers

In June 2019 there were 247,009 suckler cows registered on Northern Ireland farms, back 3.5 per cent or 8,895 head from June 2018 levels. This brings suckler cow numbers in Northern Ireland to their lowest recorded levels since 1988 when there were 231,105 suckler cows on local farms.

The number of beef heifers in calf has also continued to decline in Northern Ireland with 29,139 heifers recorded in June 2019. This number has been in steady decline since June 2011 when 42,100 beef heifers in calf were

recorded on Northern Ireland farms. Meanwhile the number of female beef cattle aged over 2 years and intended for breeding has remained similar to previous years at 9,378 head.

In June 2019 there were 14,156 farms in Northern Ireland with suckler cows. This was back from 14,438 farms in June 2018 and represents a two per cent decline year on year. There has also been a decline in the average number of suckler cows per herd from 17.7 head in June 2018 to 17.4 head in June 2019.

### Dairy cow numbers

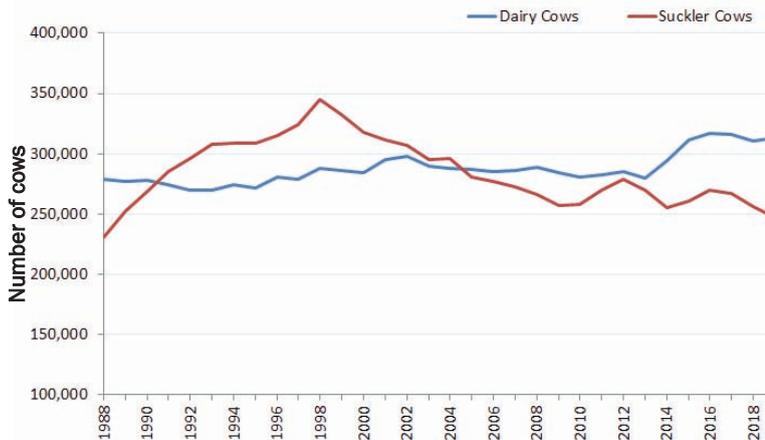
During June 2019 there were 313,549 dairy cows identified on Northern Ireland farms, a one per cent increase from June 2018 levels. This increase in dairy cow numbers reverses some of the decline in dairy cow numbers in Northern Ireland which had been recorded in the previous two agricultural censuses.

There has also been an increase in the

number of in calf dairy heifers on Northern Ireland farms with 60,310 cattle recorded in this category in June 2019. This was an increase from 59,042 in calf dairy heifers recorded in June 2018 and the highest recorded number of in calf heifers recorded since June 2015.

The number of farms with dairy cows meanwhile has held fairly steady with 3,296 farms with dairy cows in June 2019, back marginally from 3,311 farms in June 2018. There has also been a slight increase in the average dairy cow herd size from 93.8 cows in June 2018 to 95.1 cows in June 2019.

**Figure 1: Dairy and suckler cow numbers on Northern Ireland Farms in June 1988-2019. Source: DAERA Census data**



### Sheep Numbers

The number of sheep recorded on Northern Ireland farms also recorded a decline in the June 2019 Agricultural Census.

There were 813,964 breeding ewes recorded on local farms in June 2019, back almost 16,000 head from June 2018 levels. There was also a marginal decline in the number of other sheep retained for breeding on local farms, back by 2,419 head to 124,493 head in the June 2019 Agricultural Census. This puts the total breeding flock in Northern Ireland at 938,457 head in June 2019, back by 18,091 head or 1.9 per cent from June 2018 levels.

In June 2019 there were 9,694 farms in Northern Ireland with breeding sheep, back from 9,756 farms in June 2018. While the overall numbers of flocks has declined in Northern Ireland the average flock size has held fairly steady at 97 ewes during June 2019.

# UPDATE ON FARM RESIDENCES

Meeting factory specifications at point of slaughter for prime cattle has become increasingly important in recent times with penalties being applied to out of spec cattle by the major beef processing plants.

Current market specifications for beef from prime cattle include parameters on carcase weight, grade, age, FQ status, number of days on last farm and number of residences. Beef from prime cattle that meet all of these specifications is much more marketable as it can be used to service the widest range of customer orders.

One specification requirement that creates some confusion for producers is for cattle to have had four or less farm residences at point of slaughter. It is worth highlighting that it is the number of **different residences** an animal has had in its lifetime that is counted and **not the number of movements**.

When calculating the number of residences on a particular animal you need to identify the number of distinct herd numbers in the animal's movement history, which includes the herd it was born into.

It is important that producers are aware that trading premises herds are included as a farm residency but agricultural shows, marts and meat plants are not. It should also be highlighted that if an animal is moved

to a mart but does not sell and is taken home again there is no change to the number of farm residences.

During 2019 98 per cent of all price reported steers met the requirement for four farm residences or less. The average number of farm residences for price reported steers was 2.4 residences during 2019. Analysis of the price reported heifer kill has shown a similar trend with 98 per cent of heifers meeting the four farms or less requirement during 2019. The average number of farm residences for heifers was 2.2 residences during 2019.

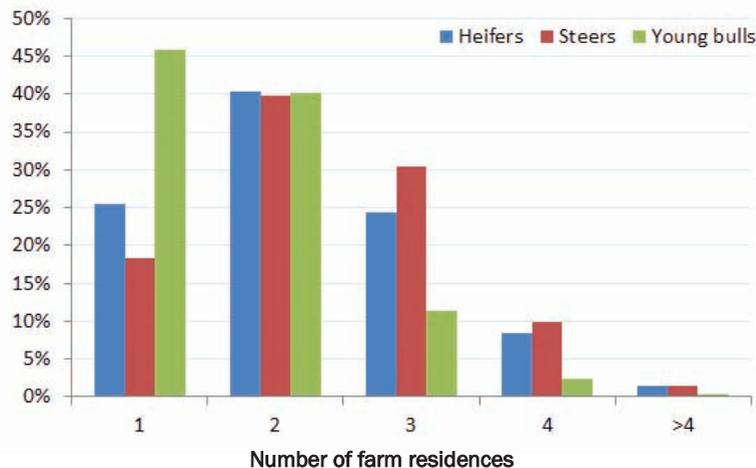
Meanwhile 100 per cent of price reported young bulls met the four farms

or less requirement with an average number of residences of 1.7 farms during 2019.

Producers in Northern Ireland can check the residency status of cattle in their herd by accessing their herd list using APHIS online. Any producer who does not have access to APHIS online can get a herd list from their local DVO office which lists all the cattle in the keeper's herd on the day it is printed, along with their full movement history so far.

Anyone with queries regarding the number of farm residences on individual animals should contact their local DVO office for further clarification.

**Figure 2: Breakdown of the price reported prime cattle kill in Northern Ireland in 2019 by number of farm residences**



# CAFRE FARMING FAMILY KEY SKILLS PROGRAMME

As part of the CAFRE Farming Family Key Skills Programme, its latest offering includes a series of workshops focusing on coping with the pressures of farming. These are being delivered at various locations across the province until the end of March 2020.



Rural Support's mission is to provide practical and professional support to farmers, farm families and farm businesses. This free training provides practical support and guidance with the specific aim of helping participants identify stress points, both in themselves and others, and learn how to deal with them. The training focuses on how to recognise the symptoms of excessive stress, exploring ways to build resilience and develop strong mental wellbeing. It will also focus on how to access specialist support when it is needed. Participants also learn how to support family, friends and neighbours who may also be struggling with certain issues.

Upcoming dates and locations of the workshops include:

Date	Location
24 February	St Eugene's Hall, Dregish (Newtownstewart) at 7.30pm
25 February	Glarryford Farmers Hall, Glarryford at 7.30pm
03 March	The Market Yard, Larne at 10.30am
03 March	Ardstraw Presbyterian Church at 7.30pm
10 March	The Wildflower, Greyabbey at 7.30pm
11 March	Glenavy Hall, Glenavy at 7.30pm

Workshops are open to both men and women, as well as young people over the age of 16 years old. If you would like to take part or would like more information please register with Rural Support by phoning 028 8676 0040 or email [info@ruralsupport.org.uk](mailto:info@ruralsupport.org.uk). This programme is funded under the EU Rural Development Programme therefore registration is recommended to secure your space.

## FQAS Helpline

If you have had a recent inspection and need help and advice to rectify any non-conformances, contact the FQAS helpline:  
Tel: 028 9263 3024

## Answerphone Service

Factory Quotes & Mart Results  
Updated 5pm Daily  
Tel: 028 9263 3011

## Text Service

Free weekly price quotes sent to your mobile phone  
Email - [bulletin@lmcni.com](mailto:bulletin@lmcni.com)  
Tel: 028 9263 3000

# WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

## CATTLE TRADE

### NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 17/02/20	Next Week 24/02/20
<b>Prime</b>		
U-3	324 - 334p	324 - 334p
R-3	318 - 328p	318 - 328p
O+3	312 - 322p	312 - 322p
P+3	264 - 276p	264 - 276p
	Including bonus where applicable	
<b>Cows</b>		
O+3 & better	240 - 250p	240 - 250p
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 15/02/20	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	340.4	346.8	325.9
R3	337.1	340.3	329.2
O+3	329.7	331.2	320.5

\*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

## Deadweight Cattle Trade

Base quotes from the major beef processing plants in Northern Ireland for U-3 grading steers and heifers have been holding fairly steady and ranged between 324-334p/kg this week. The majority of plants are quoting from 330-334p/kg. The deadweight cow trade is also holding steady with base quotes for O+3 grading cows of 240-250p/kg this week. Similar base quotes for all types of cattle are expected for early next week.

The plants have been reporting a steady supply of cattle for slaughter to meet demand for beef. Prime cattle throughput in local plants last week totalled 6,940 head, back 163 head from the corresponding week in 2019 when there were 7,103 prime cattle killed in local plants. While throughput was lower last week than the corresponding week last year average carcass weights were higher. The average prime cattle carcass weight last week in NI was 348kg, up from 345kg in the same week last year.

Imports of cattle from ROI for direct slaughter in local plants last week included 180 prime cattle. This is the fifth consecutive week in which imports of prime cattle for direct slaughter from ROI have declined, back from a peak of 309 prime cattle in the w/e 11 January 2020. There were also 97 cows imported from ROI for direct slaughter last week which is similar to previous weeks. There were 14 prime cattle and 97 cows imported from GB last week for slaughter in local plants. Exports of cattle out of NI for direct slaughter have continued at relatively low levels with 10 prime cattle and 55 cows destined for processing plants in ROI last week. There have been no cattle exported from NI to GB for direct slaughter during 2020 to date.

The deadweight trade for prime cattle held relatively steady in NI last week with average steer and heifer prices up in the region of half a penny to 332.7p/kg and 335.7p/kg respectively. The R3 steer price in NI last week was back by 1.3p/kg to 340.1p/kg which puts it 7.7p/kg behind the same week last year. The R3 heifer price in NI last week was back by almost a penny to 341.6p/kg which puts it 6.8p/kg behind the same week last year. The average young bull price in NI last week was 313p/kg, back 3.5p/kg from the previous week. The cow trade improved slightly in NI last week with the O3 cow price up by 1.3p/kg to 259.4p/kg with the average cow price up by the same margin to 240p/kg.

In GB the deadweight trade for prime cattle has also held steady with average steer and heifer prices within half a penny of the previous week at 333.4p/kg and 335.5p/kg respectively. The cow trade in GB has shown signs of improvement with average prices up in all of the regions. The average GB cow price was up 1.9p/kg to 232.4p/kg last week which places it 7.6p/kg behind the equivalent price in NI.

Deadweight cattle prices continued to firm in ROI last week in euro terms however a strengthening sterling has meant prices for all classes of cattle were back in sterling terms. The R3 steer price was back the equivalent of 2.4p/kg to 309.4p/kg while the R3 heifer price was back by 3.3p/kg to 313.6p/kg.

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

	W/E 15/02/20	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	340.6	317.6	349.5	341.4	346.4	344.1	346.3
	R3	340.1	309.4	350.9	340.9	338.2	334.4	340.4
	R4	340.3	311.5	350.0	346.0	339.5	334.6	345.3
	O3	330.2	295.9	330.6	318.6	317.0	313.9	317.9
	AVG	332.7	-	346.9	333.2	327.9	323.9	333.4
Heifers	U3	346.9	324.9	357.2	349.8	350.6	345.0	351.4
	R3	341.6	313.6	351.3	342.4	338.1	337.2	341.0
	R4	339.3	314.9	349.9	341.8	340.1	333.2	343.8
	O3	330.8	299.9	323.1	321.5	316.5	319.3	319.1
	AVG	335.7	-	347.5	334.9	330.7	324.4	335.5
Young Bulls	U3	325.9	299.1	342.9	332.4	340.4	335.0	338.2
	R3	328.8	289.2	336.1	324.7	327.6	330.0	329.4
	O3	311.1	277.4	305.5	300.2	300.3	288.5	300.9
	AVG	313.0	-	319.8	306.6	307.1	303.2	309.8
Prime Cattle Price Reported	5,887	-	7,303	6,650	7,843	4,870	26,666	
Cows	O3	259.4	245.6	257.1	257.3	255.0	251.1	255.1
	O4	261.1	246.1	258.6	257.2	254.9	243.9	253.7
	P2	220.5	224.1	214.2	214.1	208.4	213.1	210.9
	P3	240.1	237.2	233.6	229.8	227.6	231.6	229.1
	AVG	240.0	-	250.6	243.4	227.2	223.8	232.4

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=83.91p 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 15/02/20	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
<b>Finished Cattle (p/kg)</b>						
Steers	202	212	205	170	201	190
Friesians	162	180	167	147	162	154
Heifers	203	209	206	170	200	185
Beef Cows	140	196	156	115	139	128
Dairy Cows	109	126	113	70	108	90
<b>Store Cattle (p/kg)</b>						
Bullocks up to 400kg	225	264	240	200	224	212
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg	215	245	228	190	214	200
Bullocks over 500kg	200	214	207	160	198	182
Heifers up to 450kg	215	253	232	170	214	192
Heifers over 450kg	190	205	195	165	189	180
<b>Dropped Calves (£/head)</b>						
Continental Bulls	325	460	360	210	320	265
Continental Heifers	270	400	320	150	250	190
Friesian Bulls	120	185	150	35	65	50
Holstein Bulls	60	90	75	15	55	35

# SHEEP TRADE

## NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 17/02/20	Next Week 24/02/20
Hoggets up to 22kgs	445-455p	475-480p

## REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 01/02/20	W/E 08/02/20	W/E 15/02/20
NI L/W Hoggets	412.5	416.9	428.0
NI D/W Hoggets	435.0	436.9	447.0
GB D/W Hoggets	471.0	496.6	522.8
ROI D/W	431.0	446.5	454.0

## Deadweight Sheep Trade

Quotes from the local processing plants for R3 grading hoggets continued to firm this week with quotes towards the end of the week of 460-470p/kg with all plants paying up to 22kg. Quotes for Monday are expected to range from 470-480p/kg up to 22kg. Tighter supplies of hoggets have contributed to the uplift in the deadweight trade with local plants killing 5,660 hoggets last week. This was back by 824 head or 13 per cent from the previous week. Exports of hoggets to ROI last week for direct slaughter increased slightly to total 6,904 head and accounted for 55 per cent of total output from the NI sheep flock. The average deadweight price in NI increased by 10.1p/kg last week to 436.9p/kg, while the average liveweight price increased by a similar margin to 428p/kg.

## This week's marts

The marts have reported a firm trade for hoggets passing through the sale rings this week and have indicated that hoggets are generally of good quality. In Massereene on Monday a sharper trade than the previous week saw 606 hoggets selling from 425-478p/kg. In Saintfield this week a larger entry of 707 hoggets sold from 400-459p/kg compared to 431 hoggets last week selling from 409-450p/kg. In Enniskillen on Wednesday 602 hoggets sold from 439-488p/kg, up from 352 hoggets last week selling from 408-466p/kg. In Ballymena this week a larger entry of 1,563 hoggets sold from 410-486p/kg compared to 902 hoggets last week selling from 400-457p/kg. The trade for well fleshed ewes has remained firm with top reported prices ranging from £100-154.

## LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 14/02/20		Hoggets			
To: 20/02/20		No	From	To	Avg
Friday	Newtownstewart	125	375	445	-
Saturday	Swatragh	800	395	466	-
	Omagh	689	423	459	-
Monday	Massereene	606	425	478	-
Tuesday	Kilrea	320	416	454	-
	Saintfield	707	400	459	-
Wednesday	Rathfriland	514	403	473	422
	Ballymena	1563	410	486	430
	Enniskillen	602	439	488	-
	Markethill	1420	420	471	-

Information supplied by LMC / DAERA/ AHDB/ DAFM

LMC does not guarantee the accuracy or completeness of any third party information provided in or included with this publication. LMC hereby disclaims any responsibility for error, omission or inaccuracy in the information, misinterpretation or any other loss, disappointment, negligence or damage caused by reliance on third party information. Not for further publication or distribution without prior permission from LMC

## Contact us

T: 028 9263 3000  
E: bulletin@lmcni.com  
W: www.lmcni.com

