

CALF REGISTRATIONS INCREASE IN 2020

During 2020 there was a total of 528,950 calves registered on Northern Irish farms. This was a marginal increase of 6,478 head or 1.2 per cent from 2019 levels when 522,472 calves were registered.

Beef calf registrations

Beef sired calf registrations on Northern Irish farms in 2020 totalled 358,334 head, up 9,487 head or 2.7 per cent from 2019 levels.

Beef sired calf registrations accounted for 68 per cent of the total calves registered in Northern Ireland while the remaining 32 per cent were dairy sired. This is similar to figures from the previous year when 67 per cent of calf registrations were beef sired and the remaining 33 per cent were dairy sired.

Beef sired calf registrations to suckler cows during 2020 increased by 1.5 per cent from 2019 levels. This was the first year since 2016 that beef sired calf registrations to suckler cows increased year on year. Registrations to suckler cows accounted for 63 per cent of total beef sired calf registrations.

Beef sired calf registrations to dairy cows in 2020 also increased over 6,000 head from the previous year. These accounted for the remaining 37 per cent of beef sired registrations.

During 2020 Aberdeen Angus was the most popular beef sire, accounting for 25.4 per cent of total beef sired calf registrations. This is slightly higher than 2019 levels when 23.7 per cent of beef sired calf registrations were Aberdeen Angus. It should also be noted that Limousin was the most popular beef sire in 2019.

The second most popular beef sire in 2020 was Limousin which accounted for 24.7 per cent of beef sired calf registrations. This is back slightly from the previous year when 25.1 per cent of beef calf registrations were Limousin.

Charolais continued to be the third most popular beef sire, accounting for 21.6 per cent of calves registered. This is similar to 2019 levels when Charolais sire accounted for 22 per cent of beef sired calf registrations.

There have also been slight changes in the proportion of other breeds of beef sired calves registered. Belgian Blue accounted for 6.7 per cent of beef sired calf registrations in 2020 which is up marginally from 2019 levels.

The proportion of Hereford beef sired calves registered has dropped slightly from 8.3 per cent in 2019 to 7.9 per cent in 2020.

Dairy calf registrations

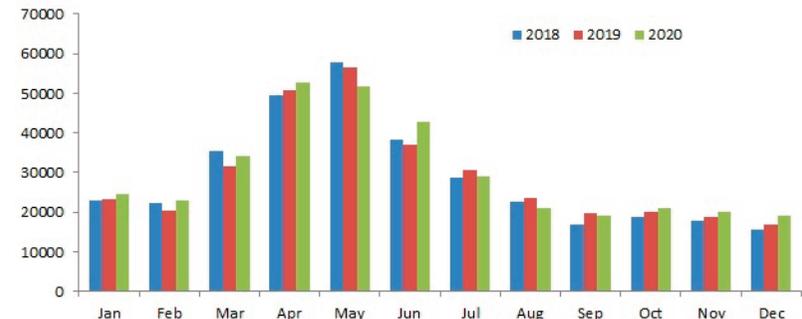
Dairy sired calf registrations in Northern Ireland totalled 170,616 head in 2020, down 3,009 head from 2019 levels. This accounted for 32 per cent of total calf registrations in 2020 on NI farms.

During 2020, dairy sired male calf registrations totalled 62,777 head. This accounted for 37 per cent of the total dairy sired calf registrations, down 12 per cent or 8,853 head from 2019 levels. This is the fifth consecutive year in which the number of dairy sired male calves decreased. This decline in proportion of male calves indicates greater results from sexed semen to breed replacement heifers.

Image 1: In 2020 Aberdeen Angus was the most popular beef sire, accounting for 25.4 per cent of total beef sired calf registrations



Figure 1: Monthly beef sired calf registrations in Northern Ireland 2018 to 2020
Source: APHIS



CATTLE ON THE GROUND UPDATE DECEMBER 2020

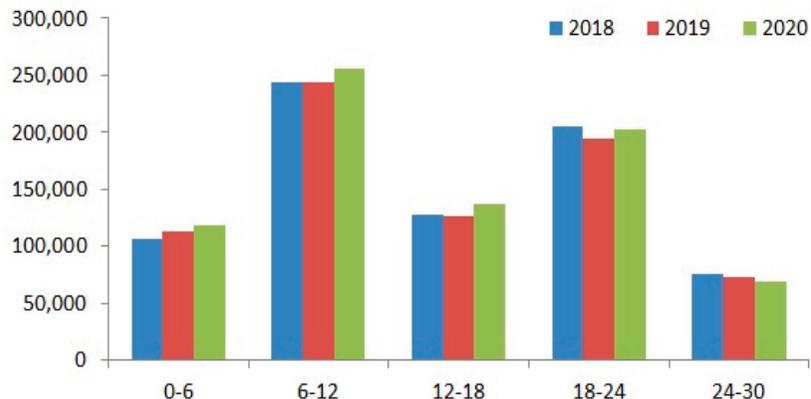
Table 1: Cattle for beef production on NI farms December 2018, 2019 and 2020 categorised by age.

Source: APHIS

Age (months)	2018	2019	2020	2019/2020	2018/2020
0-6	105,951	112,371	118,371	+5.3%	+11.7%
6-12	243,862	243,490	255,428	+4.9%	+4.7%
12-18	127,943	127,023	136,636	+7.6%	+6.8%
18-24	205,533	194,899	202,376	+3.8%	-1.5%
24-30	75,800	72,589	69,150	-4.7%	-8.8%
30 +	319,800	302,598	300,524	-0.7%	-6.0%

Figure 2: Cattle for beef production on NI farms December 2018, 2019 and 2020 categorised by age.

Source: APHIS



The latest available data on local cattle populations from APHIS has indicated some tightening in the number of slaughter ready cattle when compared to December 2019 levels.

At the end of December 2020 cattle for beef production in Northern Ireland (all beef sired cattle and dairy males) totalled 69,150 head in the 24-30 month age category. This is a reduction of almost 3,500 head or 4.7 per cent from the previous year. Additionally, this is an 8.8 per cent reduction from December 2018 levels.

NI cattle for beef production

December 2020 vs December 2019

18-24 months: +3.8%
24-30 months: -4.7%

Cattle for beef production in the 18-24 month category saw an increase in numbers from December 2019 levels. Cattle in this age category totalled 202,376 at the end of December 2020, up almost 7,500 head. This equates to an increase of 3.8 per cent year on year. This increase is encouraging and compensates for the decline in cattle within the 24-30 month category.

It should also be noted, although the increase in numbers is encouraging within the 18-24 month category, these levels show a 1.5 per cent decline from 2018 levels.

Cattle in the 12-18 month category totalled 136,636 head in December 2020. This is an encouraging increase in cattle numbers, up 9,600 head or 7.6 per cent from 2019 levels. Similarly, the number of cattle in this age category has increased 6.8 per cent from 2018 levels.

An improvement in beef sired calf registrations in Northern Ireland during the first half of 2020 has contributed to an increase in the number of cattle for beef production in the 6-12 month age category. Cattle in this category is up almost 12,000 head or five per cent from year previous levels.

Similarly, cattle in the 0-6 month category are up 6,000 head from 2019 December levels. This equates to a 5.3 per cent increase from 2019 levels and up 11.7 per cent when compared to 2018 levels.

The number of dairy sired male cattle in all age groups up to 30 months has increased in December 2020 from 2019 levels. However these number are very small in comparison to the number of beef sired cattle on local farms.

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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

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Tel: 028 9263 3000

WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 04/01/21	Next Week 11/01/21
Prime		
U-3	360 - 368p	362 - 370p
R-3	354 - 362p	356 - 364p
O+3	348 - 356p	350 - 358p
P+3	294 - 306p	296 - 308p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3 & better	240 - 265p	240 - 268p
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

Base quotes from the major beef processing plants in NI ranged from 360-368p/kg for in spec U-3 grading prime cattle this week with quotes expected to range from 362-370p/kg early next week. This week last year the major processors were quoting 326-334p/kg for in spec U-3 grading steers and heifers. The cow trade is holding steady with quotes from the local plants ranging from 240-265p/kg for good quality O+3 grading cows. The majority of local processors are quoting in the region of 250-265p/kg with quotes expected to range from 240-268p/kg early next week.

Due to the Christmas and New Year holidays there was a reduced cattle kill last week with 4,688 prime cattle processed. This brings the total prime cattle throughput for 2020 to 345,640 head, a marginal increase from 2019 levels when 344,671 prime cattle were processed locally. This slight increase in prime cattle throughput has coincided with an increase in average carcase weights. During 2020 the average prime cattle carcase weight was 345.7kg, up 2.2kg from 2019 levels.

The cow kill in local plants last week was 1,045 head which takes total throughput for 2020 to 104,506 head. This is an increase of 5,185 head or five per cent from 2019 levels. There has also been an increase in the average cow carcase weight in NI during 2020 with the average cow carcase weight up 4.8kg to 312.6kg from 307.8kg in 2019, a 1.6 per cent increase year on year.

The deadweight trade for prime cattle continued to firm in NI last week with an R3 steer price of 380p/kg, up 1.8p/kg from the previous week. This brings the R3 steer price to its highest recorded level since July 2013 and puts it 3p/kg higher than the GB R3 steer price. The R3 heifer price followed a similar trend in NI last week, increasing by almost a penny to 378.5p/kg. This brings the R3 heifer price to its highest recorded level since October 2013 and puts it at a penny higher than the GB R3 heifer price of 377.5p/kg. There was a small price reported kill of young bulls in NI last week with the R3 young bull price back 1.8p/kg from the previous week to 366.7p/kg.

The deadweight cow trade last week has also reported stronger prices in NI with the average cow price increasing by 7.3p/kg to 257.9p/kg from the previous week. Meanwhile the O3 cow price in NI reported an increase of 4.2p/kg to 276.6p/kg last week. The O3 cow price in NI remains higher than all the regions in GB last week and is 17.5p/kg above the average GB O3 cow price of 259.1p/kg.

The R3 steer price in ROI last week was the equivalent of 342.4p/kg. This is 37.6p/kg behind the equivalent price in NI which puts the differential in the value of a 350kg carcase at £132. The R3 heifer price in ROI last week was the equivalent of 346.8p/kg which was 31.7p/kg behind the equivalent price in NI. This puts the differential on a 320kg heifer carcase between the two regions at £101. Meanwhile the O3 cow price in ROI last week recorded an increase of 2.2p/kg to the equivalent of 268.2p/kg, 8.4p/kg below the O3 cow price in NI.

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

	W/E 02/01/21	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	383.2	350.7	382.9	379.1	379.1	381.7	380.7
	R3	380.0	342.4	383.8	375.6	376.3	372.0	377.0
	R4	376.9	345.0	382.1	378.0	375.8	369.2	378.6
	O3	366.7	328.3	369.4	363.6	356.0	353.3	358.9
	AVG	371.3	-	379.9	370.8	368.6	361.6	371.0
Heifers	U3	384.7	359.2	384.4	383.1	386.6	387.4	385.2
	R3	378.5	346.8	383.9	379.7	376.6	371.6	377.5
	R4	375.8	348.3	382.2	378.1	376.5	372.0	378.7
	O3	369.4	337.0	366.8	367.0	352.6	357.2	359.0
	AVG	371.7	-	380.8	374.8	367.8	363.0	372.5
Young Bulls	U3	369.6	331.0	363.3	372.4	380.7	368.0	368.4
	R3	366.7	323.5	361.6	372.2	368.9	-	367.8
	O3	349.3	312.8	332.8	345.7	337.1	305.0	339.6
	AVG	352.7	-	356.3	351.8	359.5	328.1	355.1
	Prime Cattle Price Reported	3988	-	4483	4967	4926	2752	17128
Cows	O3	276.6	268.2	259.8	267.6	257.1	250.1	259.1
	O4	277.6	266.7	262.8	270.0	251.5	251.9	258.2
	P2	232.3	238.5	217.3	215.4	207.7	215.8	210.9
	P3	255.0	254.5	230.0	236.6	231.0	229.7	231.1
	AVG	257.9	-	257.0	258.3	232.0	221.5	236.5

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=90.37p 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

Figure 3: Prime cattle throughput in Northern Ireland 2018 to 2020
Source: DAERA



REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 02/01/21	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	382.3	384.0	369.6
R3	377.8	376.8	368.0
O+3	367.7	368.9	353.7

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 02/01/21	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	156.3	170.8	183.8	188.3
P2	177.5	212.0	228.7	243.2
P3	193.2	243.7	253.2	257.5
O3	-	-	279.6	276.4
O4	-	-	268.5	277.8
R3	-	-	-	296.7

SHEEP TRADE

NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 04/01/21	Next Week 11/01/21
R3 Hoggets up to 22kg	475p	490 - 495p

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 19/12/20	W/E 26/12/20	W/E 02/01/21
NI L/W Hoggets/Lambs	445.9	-	457.0
NI D/W Hoggets/Lambs	465.2	466.9	473.7
GB D/W Hoggets/Lambs	479.1	471.9	487.0
ROI D/W	483.1	492.5	-

Deadweight Sheep Trade

The deadweight sheep trade in NI has strengthened over the Christmas and New Year holidays. Base quotes from the plants for R3 grading hoggets ended this week ranging from 475-490p/kg up to 22kg with quotes expected in the range of 490-495p/kg early next week. This week last year the local plants were quoting 415-420p/kg for R3 grading hoggets up to 22kg. Lamb throughput in NI last week totalled 5,560 head due to the reduced processing days. This takes the total lamb/hogget throughput in NI for 2020 to 443,141 head. This was up almost 15 per cent from the 385,694 lambs/hoggets processed locally during 2019. The average lamb/hogget carcass weight in NI during 2020 was 21.8 kg, a 0.5kg decrease from 22.3kg in 2019. The average deadweight lamb price in NI last week was 473.7p/kg, up 6.8p/kg from the previous week.

Liveweight Sheep Trade

The liveweight marts have reported a sharper trade this week due to smaller numbers of hoggets on offer. In Omagh last Saturday 347 hoggets sold from 445-484p/kg with Swatragh reporting 440 hoggets selling from 425-461p/kg. On Monday in Massereene 526 hoggets sold from 440-486p/kg. In Rathfriland this week 308 hoggets sold from 432-500p/kg with an average price of 450p/kg. In Ballymena on Wednesday a large sale of 2,044 hoggets sold to an average price of 482p/kg, while in Markethill this week 800 hoggets sold from 470-531p/kg. The cull ewe trade remains strong with top reported prices ranging from £118-175 across the marts.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 02/01/21		Hoggets			
To: 07/01/21		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Omagh	347	445	484	-
	Swatragh	440	425	461	-
Monday	Massereene	526	440	486	-
	Kilrea	500	448	497	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	412	440	502	-
	Rathfriland	308	432	500	450
Wednesday	Ballymena	2044	470	547	482
	Enniskillen	338	436	480	-
	Armoyle	468	470	515	-
	Markethill	800	470	531	-

Strict Covid - 19 restrictions are in place across all of the livestock marts

Information supplied by LMC / DAERA/ AHDB/ DAFM

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2020 - A YEAR OF STAKEHOLDERS COMING TOGETHER



clear and discernible recognition amongst the vast majority of consumers that food production underpins almost everything that we do. Production agriculture is now, quite rightly, recognised as a key driver within our society."

Ian highlighted a number of key projects undertaken by LMC, which underpinned the beef and sheep sector's specific response to the challenge of both Covid-19 and Brexit during 2020.

He commented: "Cattle and sheep prices fell significantly during the early weeks of the pandemic. In response to this LMC commissioned an independent assessment of the losses incurred by the beef and sheep industry at that time. Working closely with the Ulster Farmers' Union and the Northern Ireland Meat Exporters' Association, these figures were then made available to the Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister Edwin Poots and his DAERA officials.

"The subsequent £7 million Covid-19 support package for beef farmers and the £230,000 fund for sheep farmers secured by Minister Poots from the NI Executive can, to a large extent, be attributed to the efforts made by the LMC in helping to define the scale of the losses incurred by farmers."

Later in the year, LMC commissioned the Andersons Centre to undertake a review of how NI's cattle and sheep sectors can best be supported in a post-Brexit world. Ian Stevenson: "Again, this work was undertaken with the full support of the Ulster Farmers' Union and the Northern Ireland Meat Exporters' Association. The recommendations emanating from the report will be discussed amongst all relevant stakeholder groups over the coming weeks and months."

But, above all else, 2020 will go down in the history books as the year that local consumers really did show their support for home-produced, farm quality assured beef and lamb. And,

as Ian is quick to point out, we have social media to thank for this. He explained: "Our Taste the Summer campaign went viral on Facebook during the months of July and August. A total of 1.8 million consumer engagements with the initiative were recorded over this period.

"It was all about getting back to basics. And the end result can only be described as a resounding success." Such was the impact of the Taste the Summer campaign that the Commission has now committed to using social media as a central platform in its mainstream advertising work. This approach kicked off with last autumn's campaign, themed: The Truth About Beef.

The project entailed the commission working with scientists, chefs and nutritionists to dispel the myths surrounding red meat while focusing on the nutritional and environmental credentials of NI farm quality assured beef.

But there were lots of other positive developments impacting on the beef and lamb sectors in 2020. September was marked by two local red meat processors being certified to export beef to the United States. Ian Stevenson again: "The work done over the past five years with the US authorities should eventually provide opportunities for all our local beef processors to avail of this vastly diverse and meat loving consumer market."

But it's hard to get away from the everyday impact that Covid-19 is having on farming families across Northern Ireland. "The pandemic has exacerbated the impact of rural loneliness and the effect this has on farmers' mental health. Throughout 2020 LMC has worked closely with a range of organisations, including Rural Support and the Farm Safety Partnership, to help alleviate these problems. This resolve on the part of LMC will be further strengthened as we look towards 2021."

Despite the challenges of Brexit and Covid-19, Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) Chief Executive Ian Stevenson looks back on the year that was 2020 with a lot of positivity.

He said: "The last 12 months have seen stakeholder groups from across the entire spectrum of agriculture coming together in a very constructive and cohesive manner with the aim of defining the role that farming and food plays within our society and, at the same time, seeking the support from government to ensure that businesses can remain sustainable."

He continued: "There is now a very

WILL 2021 BE A YEAR OF POSITIVE CHANGE FOR BEEF AND LAMB IN NORTHERN IRELAND?

LMC Chief Executive Ian Stevenson expects 2021 to be a busy year for farmers, processors and all associated stakeholder organisations as agriculture moves into a post Brexit and, hopefully, a pandemic-free world. He commented: "Helping to secure sustainable support arrangements for the beef and lamb sectors will be a key priority for LMC in 2021.

"Sustainability and the livestock industry's response to climate change must be considered in the same context. The reality is that beef and sheep production must be seen as an integral part of the solution, where climate change is concerned, and not part of the problem."

Ian continued: "LMC will continue to communicate the facts concerning the production of farm quality assured beef and lamb in NI. Social media will be used to help drive these messages home with consumers. Our experience, in this regard, during 2020, confirmed that the public want to know more about the ways in which farm quality assured beef and lamb are produced. They also want to know a lot more about the inclusion of beef and lamb in the meals they prepare in their own homes.

"The Commission led the way in making all of this information available, courtesy of our beefandlambni.com website in 2020. We intend building on all of this good work in 2021."

LMC's Chief Executive firmly expects the term PGI

Image 1: Research carried out by LMC has shown meat lovers in NI want to know more about the inclusion of beef and lamb in home cooked meals



(Protected Geographical Indication) to become firmly embedded within our vernacular in 2021. Some weeks ago, ROI's farm minister Charlie McConalogue submitted a formal application to Brussels, to formally register a PGI status for 'Irish Grass Fed Beef'.

Ian Stevenson takes up the story. "Minister McConalogue has also submitted an accompanying letter to the Commission, requesting that NI can be included in the geographical area covered by the PGI at a later date. This is based on the expectation that NI can verify that it meets the criteria laid down within the original application.

"In response, LMC has established a working group, which includes representatives from key stakeholder bodies within the local beef industry, government and support organisations to help address these issues".

He added: "We have many processing businesses operating in NI who for many years have marketed our beef to customers as Irish Grass Fed Beef and it is imperative that any registration of the name Irish Grass Fed Beef as a PGI must not lead to the exclusion of our locally produced beef which can readily meet the same specification and description."

Commenting specifically on the impact of the new Brexit trading arrangements, the LMC Chief Executive said that a key priority for industry was communicating to all food retail, manufacturing and catering outlets in GB that it is very much business as usual, where beef and lamb supplies from NI are concerned.

Looking further down the road, Ian is mindful of the fact that the UK now has the opportunity to enter new free trade arrangements with countries around the world.

He commented: "Countries such as Brazil and the United States must be expected to meet the same food production standards as that is expected of farmers in the UK. Currently, this is not the case. It's all about ensuring a level playing field. "Here in Northern Ireland, farmers will be expected to address the challenge of meeting both UK and EU food production standards. Despite the complicated operating environment, this should be made to work to our advantage in the long term."

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic served to delay the export of beef products from NI to China last year. But Ian is confident the first consignments of beef can be cleared for export in 2021.

He explained: "Hong Kong has been a major market for local beef exports going back over a number of years. But getting a foot hold in mainland China will represent a major boost for Northern Ireland's beef industry. China has a huge import demand for all types of meat and as its economy quickly rebounds after the worst effects of Covid-19 a direct route to market for quality, safe and trusted product from UK suppliers will be an important milestone.

"New export markets for locally produced beef and lamb should open up over the coming years. But it will take a sustained marketing push to allow us to avail of these opportunities in full."

Image 2: LMC will continue to promote the health and environmental benefits surrounding NI Farm Quality Assured beef and lamb in 2021



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