NFU Beef and Sheep News – No 5 (07/03/13)

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Market Information

### Deadweight Cattle Prices

**Week ending 02/02/2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight Range</th>
<th>Average 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 - 16kg</td>
<td>364.5*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.5 - 21.5kg</td>
<td>370.0*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Deadweight Lamb Prices (Combined)

**Week ending 02/02/2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight Range</th>
<th>SQQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 - 16kg</td>
<td>370.2*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.5 - 21.5kg</td>
<td>373.2*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figures are for England & Wales**

Dressing Specifications - UK

1 Average price across all grades

*Prices quoted in p/kg for all tables

**Figures are courtesy of AHDB/EBLEX.**

For more detailed market information visit the EBLEX website ([Click Here](http://www.blex.co.uk))
The impact of the fall in lamb price is being felt by farmers across Europe and it is essential that EU farming organisations act as one to tackle it.

Speaking at NFU Conference last week, livestock board chairman Charles Sercombe told delegates at a special livestock session, that sheep prices and margins on sheep farms have been put under severe pressure due to the disrupted marketing season brought on by the weather and the challenge of cheap imports.

“This challenge is not just a UK issue, it is putting sheep farmers all over Europe under pressure and we are committed to standing with our European counterparts to address it,” said Mr Sercombe.

He also outlined that following a UK farming unions summit, the organisations have called for European wide meetings in early March.

“We must promote lamb around the EU. But we must also look at the New Zealand lamb quota situation. The last real change to the quota was back in 1994 and the processing industry has made significant changes since then. It’s important the Commission looks at the value of imports coming into the EU and not just the tonnage.

“We’re calling on the European Commission to help promote lamb across the EU and address our concerns regarding the outdated quota regime.”

Ramsgate Report, Questions Still Remain
The publication of AHVLA’s report into the incidents that led to the deaths of over 40 sheep last year is well overdue but still leaves several crucial questions unanswered. The report details the events at Ramsgate Port on 12 September 2012 that resulted in the deaths of the sheep that were due to be transported to France.

NFU Deputy President, Meurig Raymond said: “We have been calling for this report to be released since the events in September, having sent over 150 questions to AHVLA which we believed needed to be addressed. The report gives an insight into the events of that day but still leaves many questions to be answered, by both AHVLA and the RSPCA, who it appears exerted significant influence over government officials on the ground.

“It is highly concerning that, although the RSPCA has no official role at the port, from an early stage, they were making objections to agreed contingency plans, making interventions from their legal team and, within an hour of a problem being
found, they had “instructed” AHVLA officers to unload animals at the port, despite RPSCA previously highlighting the lack of suitable facilities for handling animals.

“The NFU also still has questions about why the method of slaughter used by the RSPCA officers resulted in so much blood in the photographs that were taken and released to the media by the RSPCA. We cannot understand how the method of slaughter referred to in the report resulted in the blood patterns seen in the photographs.

“Not only that, but from the photographic evidence, it appears that the sheep were slaughtered together in a pen, in front of each other. That was after the RSPCA had objected to AHVLA’s original plan of euthanising one injured sheep on the transporter, and then sending the transporter on to a local facility in line with the agreed contingency plans, on the basis that the RSPCA felt it wasn’t appropriate to carry this out in front of the other animals.

“We cannot understand why the RSPCA published the photographs of the event and sought to make so much of the incident in the media, given the catalogue of delay and indecision identified in the report, the very clear influence of the RSPCA in the decision making process, and the fact that it was the RSPCA’s officers that slaughtered the sheep. We call upon the RSPCA to clarify what role their ‘inspectors’ at the port are there to fulfil.

“We now need to fully digest the report and we remain committed to working with Defra and AHVLA to ensure that British livestock can be traded freely but that both the standards and the enforcement of animal transport activities in the UK are maintained to safeguard animal welfare.”

VMD Confirms Schmallenberg Vaccine in the Pipeline
The Veterinary Medicines Directorate has taken the unprecedented step of confirming that it is considering an application by MSD for its ‘Bovilis SBV’ vaccine.

With Schmallenberg virus continuing to cause concern as the lambing and calving season progresses, there has been considerable interest in the development and commercial release of a vaccine.

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate, the agency responsible for regulating and issuing marketing authorisations, has responded to the urgency of the situation by taking the unprecedented step of providing an update on the progress of an application – that submitted by MSD for its ‘Bovilis SBV’ vaccine.

No date is given, but the VMD update describes the progress towards authorisation. For further information please visit NFUOnline.

2 Sisters’ buys Vion’s Red Meat and Poultry Business
2 Sisters’ purchase of Vion’s red meat and poultry business is good news for UK producers and will provide some certainty for the industry’s future according to the NFU.

2 Sisters, which has not been involved in the red meat sector before, is one of the UK’s largest poultry meat processors, while Vion currently has 11 processing sites across the UK and employs around 6,000 people.

NFU President Peter Kendall said the move would help to safeguard a key supply chain for UK producers and maintain the UK’s processing capacity to meet the growing demand for British sourced food.

Mr Kendall added: “Since the sale announcement by Vion in November, there has obviously been a degree of uncertainty for farmer suppliers, so this acquisition will come as good news and will help offer some reassurance to farmers across
England and Wales. “The purchase will safeguard a key supply chain for high quality British beef, lamb and poultry and the NFU will be arranging a meeting with 2 Sisters to help build a profitable future for British livestock farmers.

“This development will help to maintain and improve the UK’s processing capacity and it is critical, following Tesco’s announcement to source 100 per cent UK fresh chicken by July 2013, that the industry is able to respond to the growing demand for British sourced food. This move will help deliver shorter supply chains and increased traceability, and we hope it will be another step to developing a more sustainable, fairer and transparent supply chain for farmers across England and Wales.”

Host a Roast in British Beef Week
Ladies in Beef, a group of passionate female beef farmers, are calling on farmers, members of the public, restaurant owners, clubs, schools and workplaces to ‘Host a Roast’ during Great British Beef Week 2013 and raise funds for the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (R.A.B.I.).

Taking place this year between 21st and 27th April, Great British Beef Week is an annual celebration of Red Tractor quality assured British beef. It is supported both at a local level, with regional events, and nationally with the backing of the nation’s biggest supermarket retailers.

Ladies in Beef call on you to host a roast in British Beef Week,
Co-founders of Ladies in Beef, Minette Batters and Jilly Greed are proud to be supporting R.A.B.I., a charity which provides relief for farming families in times of difficulty and relies on the support of public donations and fundraising events.

Minette said: “The ‘Host a Roast’ events can take any format, large or small and organisers can invite anyone from family and friends, to colleagues or community groups. All we ask is that you serve Red Tractor quality assured British beef and that you encourage your guests to make a donation to help R.A.B.I.’s work to support farming families in financial difficulty.”

For more information and details of how to get a fundraising pack, including posters, flyers and invitations, see www.ladiesinbeef.co.uk or www.rabi.org.uk

Organic Beef and Lamb Prices
Graig Organics through Meadow Quality will be supplying the NFU with updates on organic lamb and beef prices. These updates will be posted on NFUOnline on a quarterly basis throughout the year. These figures represents a circa of 25% of the organic animals supplied into the top retailers.

Latest Update- Figure up until December 2012
- The price for organic beef animals rose throughout 2012 and then stabilised at around £4.25p/kg at the end of 2012.
- Organic lamb prices shows that at the beginning of 2012, the price rose to a high of around £4.75p/kg in March. The price then declined throughout the rest of 2012 to £3.50p/kg at the end of December 2012.

For more information please visit NFUOnline
Have You Filled up the Lamb Crop Survey?
Seven livestock industry bodies, including the NFU, have joined forces to gauge the effects of last year’s poor weather and prevalence of disease among this year’s lamb crop.

The online survey is aimed at producers in England, Scotland and Wales as they finish lambing and can record certain key performance figures. It will be followed by a calf crop survey in the coming weeks.

The responses are anonymous and it is designed to take less than 10 minutes to complete. The data will be interrogated regularly to build a picture of the season’s lambing and the survey will stay open until late May. Producers should enter their details once they have finished lambing on their farm – after each batch if they lamb in batches.

All are encouraging farmers to answer the questions to the best of their knowledge, whether they experience any problems or not, in order that specific projects can be tailored to help if problems do emerge.

You can access the lamb crop survey by clicking here.

International News

Member States Call for New Meat Labelling Rules
On the back of the horsemeat scandal most member states have spoken in favour of extending mandatory country of origin labelling to processed meat products. However, Denmark and the Czech Republic refused to change their position, maintaining that the issue with horsemeat was about fraud rather than labelling.

While the Commission upheld the view that origin labelling would not have stopped the fraud in this case, it appeared that the publication of its report on the possible effects of the labelling change had been accelerated and will now be published in October rather than by the end of the year. The report will consider the definition of country of origin, and consider the costs associated with origin labelling.

US Beef Exports Decline 12% in 2012
According to Meat and Livestock Australia, US beef exports in 2012 declined 12% on the previous year, to 1.11 million tonnes although volumes remained 11% above the five-year average. In contrast to an expectation in early 2012 of strong shipments, US beef exports to all major markets declined for the year, influenced by tight supplies and high prices.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) data, beef exports to Canada, the largest market for US beef in 2012, dropped 7%, to 211,927 tonnes. Shipments to Japan, Mexico and Korea, also fell 1%, 28% and 20%, respectively, during the year. The bright spots for the US beef trade in 2012 was in shipments to smaller markets, including Hong Kong (up 24%), China (385%), Russia (5%) and Chile (118%), where reduced supplies contributed to the strong demand from alternative suppliers.

While export volumes declined 12% in 2012, US beef export values increased 2%, to US$4.66 billion, boosted by a 16% rise in beef prices, to an average US$5,990/tonne
Ireland- Beef Prices Breaking Records
According to the Irish Farmers Journal, beef prices continue to increase at pace in Ireland as supplies of in-spec cattle suitable for the premium retail market continue to tighten both in Ireland and across Britain.

Irish factories have this week paid a base price of €4.64/kg for heifers which translate into a price of €4.88/kg (£4.25/kg) for U grade heifers. Industry sources predict a further lift in the base price in the weeks ahead, a move which could potentially see farmers securing up to €5/kg (£4.36/kg) for top quality heifers.

Meanwhile, the focus on in-spec cattle has seen the number of farmers looking to join the Bord Bia Quality Assurance Scheme (BQAS) running 150% ahead of the same period last year. Up to 250 farmers are now submitting applications on a weekly basis. From when the application is received the approval process is taking from four to five weeks to complete Irish farmers are advised to submit applications well in advance of intended slaughter date.

EU Lifts Ban on Brazilian Beef Jerky
Brazil has been added to the list of countries authorised to supply beef jerky and pasteurised beef products to the European Union.

In a decision published in the EU's Official Journal, the European Commission says the move reflects the improved animal health situation in the South American country. The authorisation opens the door to imports of beef jerky from Brazilian regions already listed to supply other meat products under Commission Decision 2007/777/EC of 29 November 2007.

The announcement was welcomed by the Brazilian agriculture ministry, which said it puts Brazil in the same position as rival exporters of cured beef products, such Uruguay and South Africa. The ministry said authorisation was achieved after a lengthy negotiating process, dating back to 2010, since when EU inspectors have carried out a series of inspections of Brazilian manufacturing facilities.