

Welcome...

...to a new, easy-to-read newsbrief, aiming to keep beef and sheep producers up-to-date with timely, topical and seasonal farming issues and to exchange the latest information between abattoirs, processors and other key contributors to the red meat supply chain.



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Quarterly market update

Sheep

December

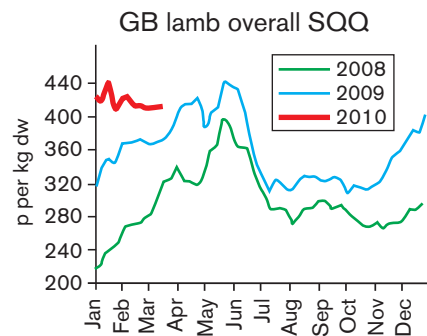
Continued strong demand/tight supplies pushed prices up. GB Deadweight SQQ increased 66p during December to 424p/kg (w/e 2 January) 35% above the same period in 2008.

January

Strong demand/tight supplies held sheep prices high. Average deadweight SQQ peaked mid January at 436p/kg with average monthly price up 40p on December to 420p/kg. Deadweight SQQ was 422p/kg (w/e 6 February), 14% up on February 09.

February

Sheep prices remained high throughout February. The monthly deadweight SQQ price for GB fell by 7p on the month to average 414p/kg in February. For the week ending 13 March, the deadweight SQQ was 411p/kg, 11% higher than in the same period in 2009.



Cattle

December

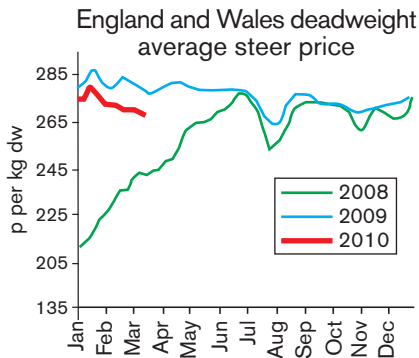
The average price for steers (Wales and England) increased 4p to 274p/kg (w/e 5 December), and remained relatively stable, increasing by just 2p to average 276p/kg deadweight (w/e 26 December).

January

Deadweight steer prices remained relatively stable during January. Average monthly price increased by 2p to 277p/kg but average steer price fell to 273p/kg (w/e 6 February).

February

The deadweight steer price in England and Wales declined during February, with the average monthly price falling by 5p to average 272p/kg. In the week ending 13 March, the average steer price fell to 269p/kg.



Pigs

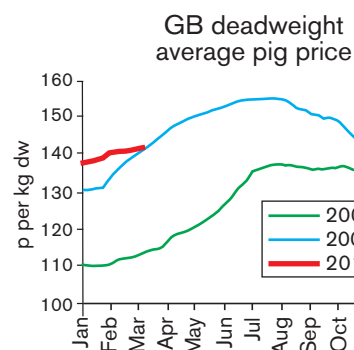
December

DAPP reduced by 1p to finish year just below 139p/kg, an 11% decline during the second half of the year. However, increases during the first half of 2009 enabled the DAPP to finish the year 6% higher than in 2008.

January

DAPP increased by 2p to finish the month just above 140p/kg, 5% higher than in 2009. The Deadweight Average Pig Price (DAPP) averaged 141p/kg during February, 3% higher than a year earlier.

Prices continued to increase, albeit at a slower rate than in previous weeks, to 142.04p/kg in week ended 13 March. The year-on-year difference in the DAPP continued to shrink with the margin reducing to less than 1p by mid-March.



HCC update and legislation update

HCC update

HCC has kick-started 2010 with a number of events and activities to raise the profile of Welsh Lamb and Welsh Beef both at home and abroad.

HCC representatives attended Gulfood in Dubai in February and Alimentaria in Barcelona in March to cement existing relationships with purchasers and to identify potential new trading opportunities.

With a third of Welsh Lamb being exported and Welsh Lamb exports reaching £109 million in 2009 (a 20% increase on the previous year), market development work in a diverse range of overseas countries is an important part of HCC's work. This type of activity is fairly evenly spread throughout the year. In the first half of this year for example HCC will have participated in trade events in Spain,

Finland, UAE and Singapore and worked with retailers in France, Italy, Spain and Germany marketing Welsh Lamb.

HCC carries out market development activities throughout the year although the type of activity varies according to the market. The majority of consumer media advertising in the UK takes place when the UK supermarkets have large supplies of Welsh Lamb on their shelves and fewer New Zealand product. This typically is in the September to November period. With limited funds it has proved more effective to have bursts of consumer activity. Nevertheless, HCC maintains an on-line presence throughout the year and produces a Spring/Summer point of sale kit for independent retailers and selected supermarket chains.

Legislation update

Food Chain Information

Farmers must comply with new rules to provide food chain information (FCI) at point of slaughter that were introduced at the beginning of 2010. Producers across Britain now need to provide FCI if supplying cattle and/or sheep directly or indirectly to slaughterhouses after 1 January 2010, when all abattoir operators are required to request, receive, check and act upon FCI for all animals received.

Sheep/Lambs - Provision has been made to include a tick box with a corresponding FCI declaration on the reverse of the pink copy of the new animal movement license (AML1) for sheep. If the sheep and lambs comply with FCI requirements you need to tick the box. If not, then you must tick the box and also complete the Additional Information proforma included on the reverse of the pink copy of the AML1. Please note, FCI is only required for animals going for slaughter, you should check with your abattoir to comply with their procedures. To move store animals, sheep for breeding, etc. just complete the AML1 as normal

and existing stocks of AML1 can be used. However, you are advised to request copies of the new AML1 from your local authority from January 2010 should you wish to move sheep or lambs to slaughter.

Cattle - In line with the Red Tape Review in the Rural Affairs Department of the Welsh Assembly Government, officials have developed a FCI sticker to use when taking cattle to slaughter, whether directly or indirectly (through a livestock market).

The FCI stickers will be made available at your Divisional office. The sticker should be placed as close as possible (without covering any other information) to the relevant "movement off" signature box in the passport(s) of the animal(s) being moved to slaughter.

Cattle keepers who already have an established system for reporting FCI to livestock markets/ abattoirs should continue with this system.

Abattoir update

Live to Dead Training

HCC are offering free training events to producers in Wales and providing practical demonstrations with 'hands on' experience at abattoirs. As part of the course farmers will assess live animals and follow them through to the cold rooms to compare live grades with the carcasses.

Each event is held at an abattoir with up to a dozen farmers. Although the courses are informal, each event focuses on the following topics:

- Handling techniques
- Market specifications
- Supply chain requirements
- Carcase classification
- Dressing specifications



The experience of handling and assessing a number of live animals and then being able to assess the carcasses of the same animals later in the day provides excellent experience and information for producers to take away and apply at home to improve their selection skills in their future marketing of stock.

To enrol on a course please contact HCC on **01970 625 050** or at info@hccmpw.org.uk

Don't Lose Out - Keep It Clean and Dry

Keeping cattle clean in the Welsh climate isn't easy - but farmers could face missing out on valuable slaughter payments if their animals are rejected for lack of cleanliness when they reach the abattoir.

Research results have shown that the dirtier the hide, the greater the potential for carcase contamination and the higher the risk to human health. If hides are contaminated at slaughter, there is a very real risk of the meat harbouring harmful bacteria, such as *E.coli O157*, *Campylobacter* or *Salmonella*. Wet hides may also increase the risk of bacteria being transferred more readily.

To prevent the contamination of meat for human consumption and reduce risks to public health, checks are carried out for cleanliness and dryness against five set categories, ranging from clean and dry to filthy and wet. Only livestock in the first two categories (clean and dry, slightly dirty) should be presented for slaughter without any further action being necessary. When animals fail inspection they are rejected - and the farmer loses out financially.

Cleanliness classification of livestock



Category 1 - Clean and Dry



Category 2 - Slightly Dirty



Category 3 - Dirty



Category 4 - Very Dirty



Category 5 - Filthy and Wet

Electronic Identification (EID) of sheep

New EID Rules Introduced

New rules for sheep identification were introduced on 31 December 2009 and breeding sheep will now need to be identified with Electronic Identification (EID).

Slaughter lambs can continue to be identified as a 'batch' (with no EID) and there is no requirement for EID reading equipment to be purchased as readings can be undertaken by third parties (e.g. auction markets and abattoirs).

Movement Documents will continue to require sheep to be 'batch' recorded (i.e. recording the flock mark) until 2011. Individual recording of breeding sheep will be required from 2011. Holding Registers will now need to record the individual identities of breeding sheep with EID at birth/ death and for on/off movements. 'Batch' information (i.e. flock mark) of slaughter lambs will continue to be required. Replacement tags will also need to be recorded.

EID Quick-Check Chart

	Identification Requirements	Replacement Requirements
Sheep identified before 31 December 2009	No new identifiers required (as already identified)	Use existing replacement rules
Breeding sheep identified after 31 December 2009	2 identifiers (1 visual tag and 1 EID)	A pair of identical numbered identifiers or a pair of new numbered identifiers
Slaughter lambs (up to 12 months) identified after 31 December 2009	A single non-EID batch tag or a single EID slaughter tag or 2 identifiers (1 visual tag & 1 EID)	A new numbered tag
Notes	EID tags should be yellow	Where only 1 tag is lost, the remaining tag should be removed Replacement tags should be red if the sheep is not on its holding of birth

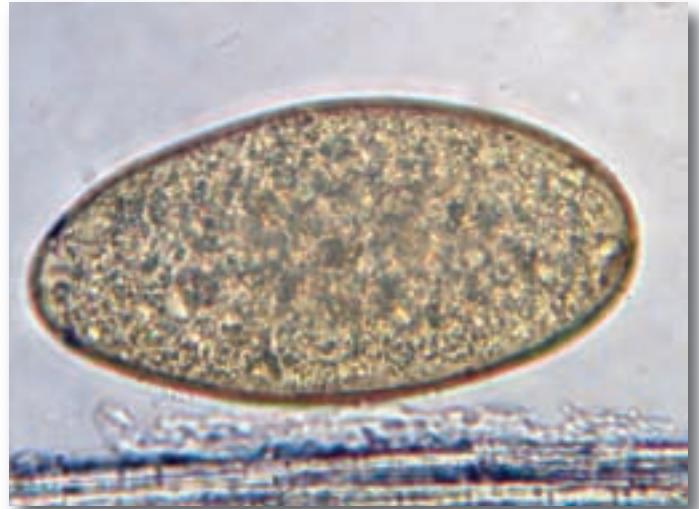
Further information and guidance notes are available from the Welsh Assembly Government.

Parasite Update and Forecast - April

Fluke cases high

Many sheep will have picked up Fluke infection over the late summer, autumn and winter following last year's wet weather and heavy contamination of pastures. In addition, many infected animals will suffer from chronic fluke, causing ill thrift and poor production, if not effectively treated. Chronic cases occur throughout the year but usually peak in late winter/spring. Sheep on farms with a history of fluke will probably have been dosed with a flukicide effective against immature fluke in January. This year a follow-up treatment, some four to six weeks later, may be a good idea. If animals have not been treated, then faecal samples from around ten ewes should identify any surviving infection and indicate any need to treat the group. Cattle dosed in October, then re-exposed to infective pastures, or undosed cattle, could now be treated or checked for the presence of fluke eggs in faeces. Serology can indicate previous exposure but does not indicate current status.

For more information on disease forecasting visit the National Animal Disease Information Service at www.nadis.org.uk



Fasciola hepatica eggs are large (130-150µm long), operculate and yellow brown. Their presence in sheep faeces indicates the presence of live adult fluke in the animal within the last 3 weeks. This can be important in the diagnosis of chronic fascioliasis along with history, clinical signs, post mortem examination and/or biochemical evidence of chronic liver damage (e.g. raised serum GGT levels, hypoalbuminaemia).

Don't Let Fluke Steal £3 in Every £20

Liver fluke can have a major effect on the performance of cattle and sheep. Current estimates suggest that fluke can reduce the market value per finished animal by ten to fifteen per cent- and that's as much as £3 in every £20.

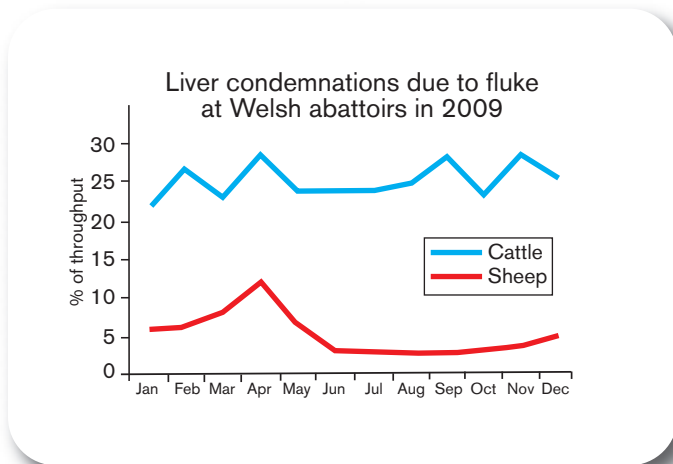
Last year's data from Welsh abattoirs showed the need for constant monitoring. Cases occurred throughout 2009 and, on average, nearly 35,000 (one in every four) cattle livers were condemned because of fluke damage. Condemnations from sheep were more seasonal than cattle. In April 2009, nearly twelve per cent of sheep throughput showed signs of liver damage, probably because the disease had more time to establish in the older lambs that were slaughtered that month because in

June this figure was 3.2 per cent and in August 2.95 per cent.

Don't lose cash: use the correct flukicide. Remember, some work against immature flukes and others against adult flukes only. Get your vet's advice and get the flukicide that is effective for you.

The risk of severe outbreaks of liver fluke increases following wet springs and summers. It's possible to predict the likely incidence and severity and so HCC is helping farmers to plan their fluke and parasite control strategies by supporting regular fluke and parasite forecasts through NADIS (National Animal Disease Information Service).

Animal health and technical article: Beef



Source: Meat Hygiene Service

Producers should also note that inspection findings from the slaughterhouse can be requested and should animals have fluke this would be reported. Having this information can assist in taking the correct approach to control and treatment of fluke.

For more information on this disease and other animal health issues visit the Animal Health section of the HCC website www.hccmpw.org.uk

Technical article: Beef

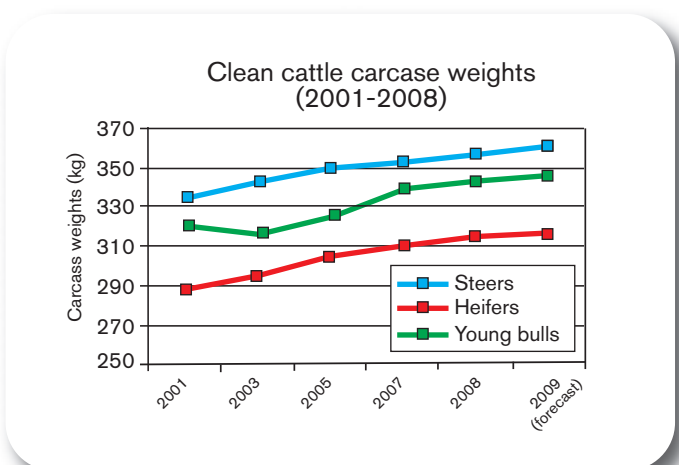
Feeding for profit

Keeping cattle to achieve heavier weights does not necessarily lead to more profit and can often mean losses to the farmer. Why?

- Older cattle become less efficient at converting food into body mass;
- Keeping cattle for longer reduces turnover of animals;
- Carcasses that are outside weight specification can attract price penalties.

Yet the slaughter weight of clean cattle has increased over recent years. Figure 1 shows the seven-year trend in average carcass weight of cattle slaughtered in the UK (2001-08).

Figure 1 - Clean Cattle Carcase Weights (2001-2008)



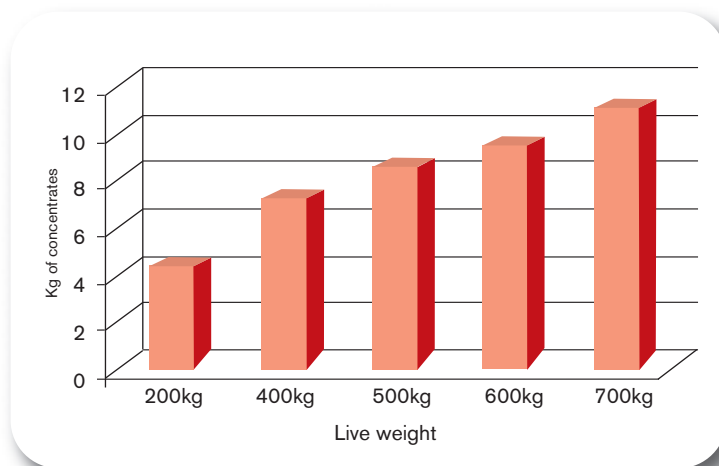
Source: DEFRA

Feeding for profit

Effect of Live weight on Feed Conversion Efficiency

The production of one unit of fat requires at least four times more energy than one unit of muscle. The feed needed to maintain an animal increases as it gets heavier and fat becomes an increasing proportion of any weight gain (depending on age, breed and sex).

The graph opposite charts the feed requirement for 1.0 kg of Live Weight Gain and the decline in the efficiency of converting energy into live-weight gain as cattle become heavier. Some 4.5kg of concentrates are needed to produce 1kg of live-weight gain (equivalent to 56MJ) for cattle weighing 200kg - but an enormous 11kg of concentrates (equivalent of 140MJ) are needed for cattle weighing 700kg.



Source: DEFRA

The table below considers a ration based on grass silage and concentrates (but no other variable costs e.g. straw, veterinary medicines etc or fixed costs e.g. machinery and labour). There is also the daily

cost of the money invested in the cattle to be considered - for example, a 550kg beast valued at £1.55/kg is worth £882 - or 6p or 12p per day if borrowed at rates of either 2.5% or 5% per annum.

Effect of Live weight on Daily Margin after Feed Costs (cattle fed grass silage and concentrates)

Live weight (kg)	Concentrate feed (kg/head/day)	Silage (kg/head/day)	Feed costs (p/day)	Daily margin (p/head)
200	2	13	59	96
400	3	24	105	50
500	4	26	119	36
600	4	34	139	16
700	5	40	167	-12

Protect Pastures by Controlling Parasites

Worm during lambing

Fit and healthy adult ewes have a good immunity to most species of worms but this drops at times of stress and especially during lambing. Worms at lambing can affect the performance of adult ewes but the main concern is pasture contamination as parasitised ewes will shed large numbers of eggs onto pasture where the lambs will graze later in the season. This is usually the only time that adult sheep need to be treated for worms.



Timing the treatments

Timing of the lambing treatment is crucial.

- The rise in parasite egg output from the ewes can occur anywhere between 4 weeks before lambing to 6-8 weeks after lambing;
- Faecal egg counts (FEC) are highly accurate and can help determine the best time to treat ewes during the lambing period;
- The timing also depends on practical limitations such as indoor / outdoor lambing, the availability of pasture post-lambing and the presence of *Haemonchus contortus*;
- Ewes should be treated depending on their age, condition score and FEC.

Discuss with your vet/advisor the approach that would be best for your farm

Not all ewes will suffer the same amount of stress at lambing. It is advisable to leave 10-20 per cent of the least vulnerable ewes (e.g. fit and mature singles) untreated. FEC on different groups of ewes will help determine those needing treating and the feeding of an increased level of protein will reduce egg counts in lambing ewes. Many farmers worm ewes earlier in the winter (e.g. at housing) when worms present are likely to be at inhibited stages (in a dormant state until the spring) so if wormers are given earlier then you need to ensure that the wormer is effective against inhibited stages of roundworms.

Don't forget about late autumn/winter replacement ewe/store lambs

Parasites have adapted to recent changes in our climate and high worm burdens have been found recently in lambs in the middle of winter. FEC should be continually used on lamb groups during the winter months to catch any unexpected worm burdens. Check wintered stock and treat if necessary so that worms are not brought back with them. If the land where they are wintered has had sheep from another farm grazing there within the last 2 years then all lambs returning should be quarantine treated to avoid bringing in resistant worms.

Always check that your wormer DOES work

For further advice on parasite control please contact your vet.

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