



## National Beef Association Newsletter

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**12th May 2017: Issue 19/48**

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## NBA'S WEEKLY REPORT

**PLEASE NOTE THAT NBA HEAD OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED NEXT WEEK. ALL STAFF WILL BE LOCATED AT STONELEIGH PARK SETTING UP BEEF EXPO, IF YOU NEED TO CONTACT US PLEASE DO SO BY EMAIL. SORRY FOR ANY INCONVENIENCE.**



### **Performance is key focus for South Devon herd**

It will be no surprise to see Edward Hawkins and some of his South Devon cattle exhibiting in the performance championships at the NBA Beef Expo, Stoneleigh.

Performance recording runs through Mr Hawkins' veins and his enthusiasm for measuring, recording and improving his cattle is at the heart of all he does on his Somerset farm.

Farming in Trull, just outside Taunton, he describes how every week, the plate meter comes out to help plan the herd's grazing; every month, youngstock are weighed to check they are meeting their 200-, 400- and 600-day targets; and once-a-year, Cutsey Farm has a visit from a Breedplan technician, where ultrasound scanning for eye muscle area, fat depth, intramuscular fat and calculation of retail beef yield form an integral part of the system. "If you do not measure it, what hope is there of improving," says Mr Hawkins, who believes the beef industry should take its lead from dairy farming, where performance recording has become second nature.

However, he regrets that within the beef industry there are not more producers performance recording, and says he would particularly like to see more take part in ultrasound scanning for carcass quality traits.

The real value, Mr Hawkins says, is in knowing an animal's estimated breeding values (EBVs) which will form a significant part of the competition, just as they do in sire and dam selection on Cutsey Farm.

Mr Hawkins says: "EBVs are a great tool and they are 60 per cent of the battle, but appearance is also important. We are looking for locomotion and good feet and we want to see bulls we buy in working condition. In other words, what they will look like when they take off their show clothes."

Among its many accomplishments, the herd has won the Wessex region herd competition in 2014 and was the second most improved herd for EBVs in Eblex's national competition in the same year.

At Beef Expo, all Mr Hawkins hopes to achieve is to do the breed proud: "For me, it is all about the South Devon – it is such a good breed."

## 2017 NBA DIARY

<b>17th May</b>	<b>Beef Expo Farm Tours</b>
<b>18th May</b>	<b>BEEF EXPO, Stoneleigh Park</b>
<b>8th June</b>	<b>SBA Event, Fans, Earlston, Berwickshire</b>
<b>4th July</b>	<b>NBA Board Meeting, Hexham</b>

Entries in **Red** are open to all NBA Members

Entries in **Green** indicate Meetings attended by NBA representatives

Entries in **Blue** indicate NBA Committee Meetings

### **OPEN DAY TO FOCUS ON FUTURE OF UK BEEF PRODUCTION**

New opportunities for UK beef producers will be highlighted at a Beef Improvement Group open day at JSR Wold Farm's feed evaluation unit in East Yorkshire on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

The event marks the conclusion of a successful five-year research programme to develop the first Net Feed Efficiency Estimated Breeding Value (EBV) and will afford visitors the opportunity to hear about the project's next steps followed by a tour of the Givendale Stabiliser suckler herd.

To register for the event contact Ursula Taylor at the Stabiliser Cattle Company office, phoning 01377 227790 or by emailing [ursula.taylor@jsr.co.uk](mailto:ursula.taylor@jsr.co.uk)

## **SBA NEWS**

### **Border's Monitor Farm Focuses on Boosting Grass Production**

Plans to improve grassland management will be the focus of the next Borders monitor farm meeting on Wednesday 17 May.

With the bulk of calving over and lambing finished for this year, the Mitchell family at Whitriggs near Denholm, are turning their attention to their 442 hectares of mainly semi-permanent and permanent grassland.

With 140 Beef Shorthorn cross, Aberdeen-Angus cross suckler cows and 1,000 Lleyne ewes, Robert and Lesley Mitchell, along with son Stuart, are keen to see if they are able to finish more stock off grass, and save money on bought-in feed.

At the meeting, independent advisor Rhidian Jones will lead a discussion about the benefits of improved grassland management and the various systems available to farmers with an interest in boosting their production from grass.

"For cattle and sheep producers, grazed grass is the lowest cost feed. Managing this valuable resource to its full potential can reduce costs and increase output per hectare," said Mr Jones. The Mitchells currently produce 1,600 tonnes of silage each year, to help feed their stock over winter. They took their first cut of silage at the beginning of May and plan to take a further 1-2 cuts later this year.

"We have an Italian ryegrass and red clover mix and are generally happy with the quality of the silage we produce," said Robert Mitchell. "However, we are keen to look at how we can improve quality even further, so that we can reduce the need for bought in feed for our stock." Soil management is key to ensuring grass performance and at the meeting the Mitchells will share the results of recent soil analyses to see if they need to change the pH or add any nutrients to the soil to help improve their land for both grazing and silage, and for the 40 hectares of winter wheat and oats they produce to help feed their stock.

Andrew Robinson from Hawick vets will also share this year's lambing performance from the 1,000 Lleyne flock and lead a discussion about reducing lamb mortality in all flocks.

Whitriggs farm is one of nine new monitor farms established in Scotland as part of a joint initiative by Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) and AHDB Cereals & Oilseeds and is being funded by £1.25million secured from the Scottish Government and European Union's Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Fund.

The aim of the programme is to help improve the productivity, profitability and sustainability of Scottish farm businesses through practical demonstrations, the sharing of best practice and the discussion of up-to-date issues.

Over 80 farmers attended the first meeting and a management group of local farmers and others involved in agriculture has now been established to work with the community group and facilitators to drive the project over the next three years.

The meeting on 17 May will start at Whitriggs Farm, Denholm, TD9 8QR at 10am, with lunch at the nearby Cross Keys, and should finish by 2.30pm. All are welcome and the event is free. For catering purposes, those interested in coming along on 17 May should contact Stephen Young, one of the project facilitators on 07502 339613 or email [stephen.young@saos.coop](mailto:stephen.young@saos.coop). For more information about the monitor farm programme [here](#) or [cereals.ahdb.org.uk](http://cereals.ahdb.org.uk).

## **NBA MARKET REPORT (written today at 4pm)**

The demand for finished cattle remains good and we are seeing weekly increases as processors find it harder to get adequate numbers. The dry spring has resulted in limited grass growth and as a result grass cattle will be later in coming forward. Consumer demand for beef has remained strong with continued growth in value of beef sales the trade for finished cattle will continue to firm as we progress into the early summer. It is still the case that those with numbers to fill a lorry are getting a premium over quoted prices.

For the week ended 6 May, the GB all prime average moved up almost 3p on the week earlier, to 352p/kg, the biggest move upwards for over 6 months with the price over 40p/kg ahead of last year's prices. The price has moved up in England, Wales and Scotland with no sign of any opportunities for processors to bring the price rises to a halt.

Prices moved up across the board, with overall steers up 2p on the week earlier, to 352.4p/kg and those meeting the R4L specification securing a 0.8p increase, to 363.7p/kg. Heifer prices recorded a weekly increase of 2.8p, to 355.1p/kg, with in target animals posting an increase of 1.4p to 363.8p/kg. R4L young bull carcasses recorded the largest weekly positive change, by 9.6p to 346.8p/kg. Young bulls are seeing a surge in demand compared to last year primarily as numbers of prime cattle are tight, processors are once again seeing the value of young bulls.

The cow trade continues to be strong with those meeting –O4L specification up 2p on the week earlier, to 266.2p/kg. The strong demand for manufacturing beef, both domestically and on the continent, in the face of lower numbers coming forward has helped to support this. Those cows meeting the target specification have increased by over 30p/kg since the beginning of the year, and 45p/kg since early May last year.

During April the share of retail price coming to the farmer increased by over one percentage point to 50.2%, which is back up to levels recorded in February. The figure for April 2017 is 11% more than the equivalent period in 2016. This year a rise in the average monthly farmgate price outweighed a fall in the average retail price, leading to the producers share increasing. There is still room for improvement as historically the producer share of retail price was in the area of 54%.

Imports of prime cattle from ROI for direct slaughter in NI last week totalled 175 head with 79 cows also imported. A further 9 prime cattle and 127 cows were imported from GB for direct slaughter in NI plants last week. Meanwhile 171 cows were exported from NI for direct slaughter in ROI last week with no cattle making the journey to GB for direct slaughter

The average R4L steer price in GB is up 0.8p/kg at 363.7p/kg, Scotland is steady at 372.8p/kg, the South is at 357p/kg, the average in the North is back 1.1p/kg at 361.1p/kg, Midland steers are up 7.8p/kg at 361.5p/kg for the week. In NI steers are up 2.1p/kg at 355.5p/kg whilst in the ROI are up 1.9p/kg at 339.4 p/kg.

The average R4L heifer price in GB is up 1.4p/kg at 363.8p/kg, the R4L heifer price in Scotland is steady at 373.2p/kg, Midlands heifers are up 6.3p/kg at 364.1p/kg, in the North heifers are up 1.6p/kg at an average of 358p/kg, whilst Southern England heifers are back 5.8p/kg at 356.2p/kg. In NI heifers are up 1.1p/kg at 353.8p/kg whilst ROI heifers are at 348.9p/kg a rise of over 2p/kg.

### **For the coming week:**

In the South of England, we are seeing cattle being quoted from around 358p. The North, is seeing base prices quoted for next week in the region of 364p/kg. Scotland is seeing cattle being quoted from a base of around 373p/kg.



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## BEEF INDUSTRY NEWS

### Lead Alert

Analysis of SAC data for the past 5 years shows that 92.5% of lead poisoning cases were diagnosed between April and September i.e. during the grazing season.

Of these almost three quarters occurred in May and June. In other words the time of greatest risk is the period immediately following turn out. The vast majority of cases (92.5%) involved animals aged 2 years or less with animals under a year accounting for half of these.

Spring would therefore be a good time to be alert to this issue and to inspect fields before cattle, especially young stock, are turned out.

Particularly check for lead batteries which are a common source of toxicity. These may have appeared as a result of fly tipping or been overlooked following use of an electric fence.

Sites of burnt out vehicles and bonfires (where batteries have been added) are also dangerous. To make these safe remove the ash plus a layer of soil. Lead paint and geochemical lead (present naturally in the soil) are less common causes of toxicity.

Lead is ingested because young cattle are inquisitive and the electrolytes in batteries can be palatable. Following absorption lead competes with calcium affecting the CNS, neuromuscular transmission and bone. Acute toxicity can occur within 24 hours and sign range from sudden death to blindness, ataxia, convulsions and hyperaesthesia. Animals that survive for a few days are dull, blind, anorexic, have abdominal distention and may become recumbent.

Differential diagnosis include CCN, meningitis and other toxicities e.g. closantel.

A green top (heparin) blood sample is required for diagnosis in the live animal.

As lead is excreted by the liver and kidneys these are the best tissues to collect post-mortem.

In order to protect the human food chain cases of lead poisoning are reported to Food Standards Scotland or the Food Standards Agency in England and Wales as appropriate.

### Sampling organic materials effectively

Two videos from AHDB demonstrate how to sample slurries and farmyard manures (FYM) for nutritional profiling.

Taking representative samples and assessing their nutrient content accurately can help farmers make better use of organic materials and reduce costs.

The videos follow the steps necessary to obtain a representative sample and package appropriately to send to a lab for analysis.

They have been created ahead of publication of the new [AHDB Nutrient Management Guide](#) (RB209).

Typical values of the total nutrient content of livestock manures are tabulated in the Organic Materials section of the new guide. But a range of farm-specific influencing factors mean nutrient content can vary considerably from the average, meaning lab analysis can give farmers the edge when it comes to effective nutrient management planning.

Thom Washbourne, AHDB Knowledge Exchange Manager for Dairy, who hosts 'How to sample slurry', said: "All crops need a steady supply of nutrients to grow, we all know we have a certain amount of nutrients in our slurries – the question is whether they are more or less than the given values in the book.

"Accurate analysis of nutrient content means farmers can make better use of their slurry and save money on bagged fertiliser."

Bill Reilly, AHDB Beef & Lamb Scientific Officer for grass and forage, who presents 'How to sample farmyard manure', said: "Manure is often seen as a waste product but in many ways it could improve farm profitability and efficiency."

Visit [www.ahdb.org.uk/RB209](http://www.ahdb.org.uk/RB209) to view the videos today and save it to your bookmarks to download the new guide on 24 May.

### **HCC aims for major export push during the month of May**

The future of Welsh lamb and beef exports post-Brexit was a major topic of discussion in Westminster in the final debates before the UK General Election.

But while Parliament is now dissolved until after June 8, red meat agency Hybu Cig Cymru – Meat Promotion Wales (HCC) is looking forward to an exceptionally busy month of promoting premium PGI Welsh Lamb and PGI Welsh Beef to existing international customers and searching for new business across the globe.

Around a third of the Welsh lamb flock is exported every year, bringing well over £100 million to the Welsh economy. Welsh Beef is also in demand, with annual exports worth in excess of £50 million. Currently, over 90% of the export trade is with the European Union.

This week, HCC is meeting a wide range of clients from across Europe and the Middle East at Tutto Food in Milan, one of the world's largest food exhibitions, and Welsh meat processors are attending the SIAL Toronto fair in Canada. Welsh Lamb will also be showcased at the Hofex exhibition in Hong Kong where HCC Scholarship winner Peter Rushforth, from Swans Farm Shop in Flintshire, will be conducting butchery demonstrations. Contestants at a major cookery competition at Hofex will also be challenged to create winning dishes using PGI Welsh Lamb. Later in the month, a delegation of overseas agents and marketers will visit Welsh farms to see for themselves the high standards of production and sustainability for which our meat is renowned.

"May is an exceptionally busy month for HCC," said Chief Executive Gwyn Howells. "Due to the uncertainty over the future terms of trade after 2019, it's more vital than ever that we both nurture relationships with our existing European customers and intensify our work to open up new markets.

"At Tutto Food, HCC and Welsh meat processors have a packed schedule of meetings with European retailers and foodservice companies who are proud to stock Welsh Lamb and Welsh Beef, to reassure them of our commitment to grow our brands in these established markets," he added. "But at the same time, it's important to showcase our products and attract business in territories such as Hong Kong and Canada, which have potential for increased trade."

Mr. Howells emphasised that May's events were also a chance to explore new opportunities which might arise over the next two years. "Canada offers Wales a way to establish contacts for the important US market, where work to gain access for Welsh Lamb has been ongoing for many years and may finally come to fruition in the next twelve months. We have similar hopes for gaining market access to Saudi Arabia; it's encouraging that Saudi retailers have decided to come to Milan to sample Welsh produce and discuss the potential for future trade with us."

"Increasing the value of exports has a direct positive effect on the prices for farmers and processors at home," added HCC's interim Chairman Kevin Roberts. "It's vital that we keep our options open – both maintaining our European markets and continuing to work in new territories. Welsh Lamb and Welsh Beef are iconic premium products which reinforce Wales's reputation for quality across the globe."

For further information on the importance of exports for the Welsh red meat industry, and potential post-Brexit scenarios, HCC's report on Challenge and Change can be found online at: <http://bit.ly/2q5gVWB>

### **Beef Calf Registrations Dominated by Six Major Breeds**

During April 2017 51,997 beef sired calves were registered on NI farms taking total registrations for the year to date to 136,419 head.

This is very similar to the 136,762 beef sired calves registered during the corresponding period in 2016 and notably higher than the 114,601 beef sired calves registered during the same period in 2015.



While the total number of beef sired calves has remained stable there has been a notable reduction in the number of dairy sired calves registered on NI farms during 2017 to date. During April 2017 11,406 dairy sired calves were registered on NI farms taking total registrations for the year to date to 59,771 head. This is a notable reduction of 11,522 head from the corresponding period in 2016 when 71,293 dairy sired calves were registered. Beef sired registrations to dairy cows during 2017 to date have totalled 51,390 head. This is an increase of 4,548 head from the same period in 2016 when 46,842 beef sired calves were registered to dairy cows.

Beef sired calves from the dairy herd have accounted for 38 per cent of all beef sired calf registrations in NI during 2017 to date compared to 34 per cent of beef sired registrations during the same period in 2016.

Beef sired calf registrations in NI continue to be dominated by six major breeds (Limousin, Charolais, Aberdeen Angus, Hereford, Simmental, Belgian Blue) and together these six breeds accounted for 92 per cent of all beef sired calf registrations in the region during 2017 to date. Limousin continues to be the most popular beef sire used on NI farms with 35,919 registrations during the first four months of 2017. This accounts for 26.3 per cent of all beef sired registrations during that period. It is however a slight reduction from the corresponding period in 2016 when 27.8 per cent of all beef sired calf registrations in NI were Limousin. Aberdeen Angus calves registrations during 2017 to date totalled 29,794 head and this accounted for 21.8 per cent of all calf registrations in NI. This is an increase from the same period in 2016 when Aberdeen Angus calves accounted for 19.9 per cent of beef calf registrations. Aberdeen Angus is now the second most popular beef sire in NI.

During 2017 to date 29,265 Charolais calves have been registered on NI farms making it the third most popular beef sire on NI farms. Charolais calves accounted for 21.5 per cent of all beef sired calf registrations during 2017, a reduction from the same period in 2016 when 31,302 Charolais calves were registered and accounted for 22.9 per cent of all beef sired calf registrations.

A total of 11,952 Hereford calves have been registered on NI farms during 2017 to date, accounting for 8.8 per cent of all beef calf registrations. In the same period in 2016 11,205 Hereford calves were registered accounting for 8.2 per cent of all beef sired calf registrations in the region.

Simmental calf registrations during 2017 to date totalled 9,982 head and these accounted for 7.3 per cent of all beef sired calf registrations. In the same period in 2016 10,751 Simmental calves were registered, accounting for 7.9 per cent of all beef sired registrations.

A total of 8,582 Belgian Blue calves were registered on NI farms during 2017 to date and these accounted for 6.3 per cent of all beef sired calf registrations. This is an increase from 2016 levels when 7,632 calf registrations accounted for 5.6 per cent of total beef sired registrations.

### **Report finds CAP highly inefficient especially to environmental effects**

A new report commissioned by the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) and BirdLife Europe has found that an overhaul of farm policy is crucial for the EU to meet sustainable development goals.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is highly inefficient and falls short of addressing the most relevant challenges relating to agricultural sustainability, a new report has found.

Commissioned by the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) and BirdLife Europe, the Rapid CAP Assessment found that the CAP is highly inefficient especially with respect to environmental effects.

The CAP is also incoherent with environmental sustainable development goals (SDGs), particularly biodiversity and climate it found.

The study highlights that the mechanisms for environmental protection are there, but cannot achieve their goals due to other competing instruments in the CAP itself.

The policy in its current form poorly supports SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production) due to unsustainable consumption and production, and SDG 15 (life on land) due to exporting the high environmental footprint beyond the EU.

Finally, both socio-economic studies and environmental ones indicated sustainability issues to be critical for the successes or failures of the CAP, as well as its effectiveness, efficiency and acceptance by the public.

Lead author of the study, Guy Pe'er, said that the available evidence analysed so far points to major inefficiencies resulting from the lack of a coherent set of objectives, ineffective and partly conflicting instruments and poor uptake of knowledge.

"We also identified very poor relevance of the objectives themselves, and that both farmers and the public are unsatisfied with the CAP and its outcomes.

"While the design and implementation of CAP instruments fails to meet current sustainability challenges, the good news is that the knowledge and tools needed to move towards a better and smarter CAP are available. What's needed now is the political will to use them."

Meanwhile, speaking at a Birdlife Europe event on Thursday 11 May, which coincided with the release of the preliminary results of study, the European Commission for Agriculture and Rural Development Phil Hogan gave his backing to the CAP.

"Thanks to this policy, we have achieved food security, the highest global standards for safe and quality food, minimum standards for the environment, sustainable rural development and modernisation of European agricultural practices.

"These are just a few examples to demonstrate the policy's achievements.

"But we must always strive to do more, and the CAP needs to step up to the plate and help to deliver on our ambitious international agreements, such as the SDGs and the Paris agreement on climate change.

"In order to make this happen, we need to mandate our farmers to perform a variety of important tasks for the benefit of our society, and our planet."

### **Australia Continues Rebuilding its National Herd**

Australia is the UK's biggest non-EU trading partner when it comes to importing fresh and frozen beef but volumes have fallen since 2014. In 2016, the fall in the value of sterling and the tight Australian supply situation contributed to this development. Virtually all product is high quality chilled used in food service and comes under the High Quality Beef (HQB) and autonomous beef quotas under which either 10% or no import tariff apply.

The UK imported 4,400 tonnes from Australia in 2016 which represented less than 2% of the UK total of 264,000 tonnes. UK data indicates that the price of Australian beef was down 6% in sterling in 2016 but such has been the weakness of the currency that in Australia dollar the price was down 15%. Volume shipments were down 32% on 2015 and nearly 40% on 2014. However, Australia is still one of the world's biggest producers of beef and veal, producing nearly 2.1 million tonnes last year. Widely documented severe droughts in the country slashed production from over 2.6 million tonnes in 2014. Exports of both live animals and beef also fell dramatically in 2016 with beef shipments down by 21% on 2015. Since then the focus has very much been on rebuilding the national herd.

Meat and Livestock Australia's April update points to recent rainfall injecting new life into the cattle market, although competitive pressure will remain with MLA projecting softer global market conditions. Lower slaughter rates as forecast in January have been restated, with an annual figure of 7.1million for 2017 quoted. This is 3% lower than in 2016, although production is only forecast to fall by 1% year on year, because of steadily increasing carcass weights. A relatively smaller proportion of females than usual is expected to be slaughtered as the herd recovers, which if not the case would otherwise hold back carcass weight growth.

Australian beef exports are expected to remain similarly subdued in 2017 and shipments to fall even further by a small amount. Added to the relative weakness of the pound against global currencies, it may be a while yet before the amount of Australian product coming to the UK recovers.

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- Reduced advance tickets to the annual Beef Expo (£10)
- Regional meetings on industry related topics
- Weekly newsletter containing NBA news, national and international beef industry news and market reports



**MORE IMPORTANTLY:**

**LOBBYING SUPPORT ON MATTERS SUCH AS:**

- Brexit negotiations
- Consultations such as TB and Red Tractor policies
- Legislation and Regulation
- Farm Ombudsman for primary producers

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Fill in the student discount voucher and attach to NBA application and a photocopy of your driving licence, university ID or young farmers ID for proof of age to redeem your discount. Application forms available at <http://www.nationalbeefassociation.com/about/how-to-join/>

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Attached proof of identity [ ]	Course studied
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