HCC Market Bulletin

September 2023

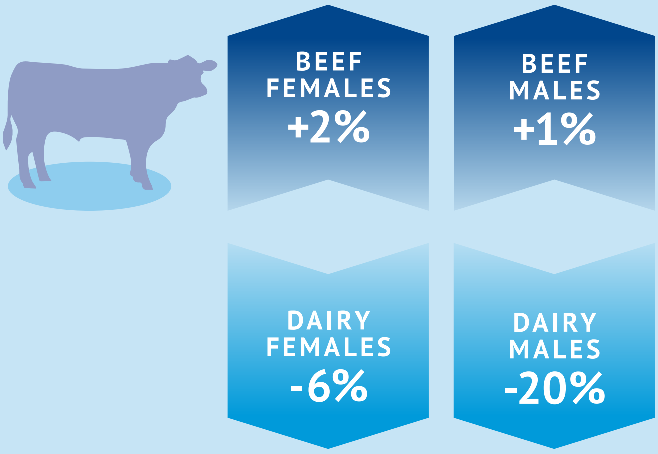
BCMS has released calf registration figures for Wales which show the beef and dairy trends during the first half of this year. This month's Market Bulletin looks deeper at these figures which hint that supply may be tight if calf registrations remain subdued for during the latter half of 2023.

Glesni Phillips – Intelligence, Analysis and Business Insight Executive

During the first six months of 2023, total calf birth registrations in Wales fell by 2% compared to the same period a year ago. According to recent data, the British Cattle Movement Service (BCMS) registered almost 223,100 calves during the period – over 5,000 calves less year-on-year.

This largely follows the trends seen across GB as a whole – total calf registrations down 2% to 1.5 million head. For Wales, this is the least number of calf registrations recorded during the first half of the year (H1) since 2019; a decrease which was driven by fewer dairy registrations.

Calf registrations in Wales
(H1 of 2023 vs 2022):



Source: BCMS

On the **dairy** side, registrations of dairy female calves during H1 of 2023 in Wales decreased by 6% compared to the same period a year ago, whilst dairy male numbers were down by over 20%. Dairy male calf numbers have been in decline for some time, with numbers accounting for just 8% of total registrations during H1 (which is down from 11% in 2021). When looking at the proportion of female vs male dairy calves; in 2021 males accounted for 37% of dairy registrations, but this figure has reduced to just 30% in 2023.

Looking at **beef** calf registrations only; males and females combined were up 1.5% on the year to 162,940 head, and a further 1.9% higher than H1 of 2021. Both beef females and males have been accounting for increasing proportions of total calf registrations during recent years – beef males accounted for 37% of registrations in 2023 compared to 35% in 2021, and females accounted for 36% compared to 34% in 2021. However, the split between sexes has remained relatively stable.

What does this mean for industry?

Increased uptake of sexed semen within the dairy industry due to dairy calf management requirements, leading to fewer bull calves being born and an increased number of dairy females. This should contribute to stabilisation within dairy herd numbers. Increased beef calf numbers are also likely a reflection of increased use of beef semen – meaning more beef is being produced from the same amount of breeding animals.

The number of calves registered that could be available for **beef production** (dairy male calves and beef calves of both sexes) fell to the lowest level of 181,000 head since 2019 – although some of the beef females would be retained as suckler replacements in the herd. This will have implications for the future of our beef supply in Wales, and therefore calf registrations for H2 of 2023 will be monitored closely.

GB LEVEL;

Calf registrations across Great Britain (GB) saw declines in all categories – unlike Wales which recorded increases in the beef herd. Total calf registrations in GB during H1 of 2023 fell by 2% on the year to 1.5 million head as fewer dairy male registrations drove the decline. There were also fewer dairy female registrations – down 4% to 226,000 head, whilst both the beef female and male categories recorded small declines of 1% and 0.5% respectively. In a similar manner to the Wales-only levels; the number of calves potentially available for beef production in the future was down 2% - suggesting that supply could be tight if registrations remain dampened during H2 of the year.

HCC FARMER INTENTIONS SURVEY

What impact are rising costs having on beef and sheep farm businesses? We're conducting research, and need the views of farmers to ensure a complete picture. Take our 10-minute survey and have a chance to win a voucher prize. CLICK HERE

CATTLE

Prices – week ending 16th September

The prime cattle average price at auction markets in England and Wales stood at **263.1p/kg**. This was:

- +1.3p on the previous week,
- +20.0p compared with year-earlier levels,
- 53.1p higher than the 5-year average (2018-22 average: 209.9p/kg).

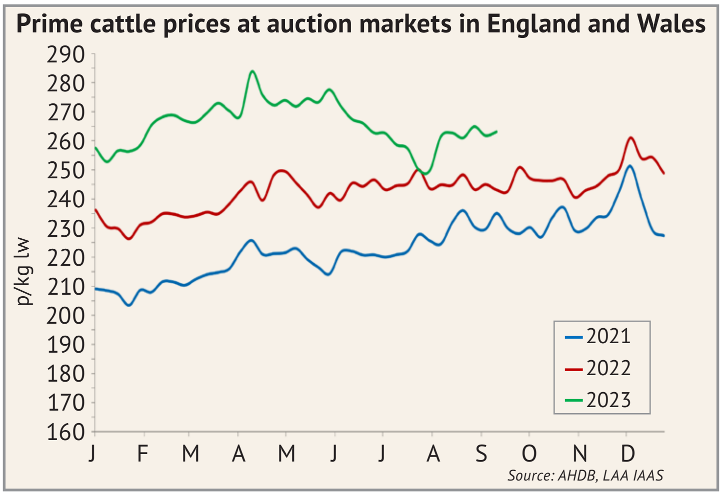
The average deadweight prices in England and Wales for steers stood at **469.2p/kg**. This was:

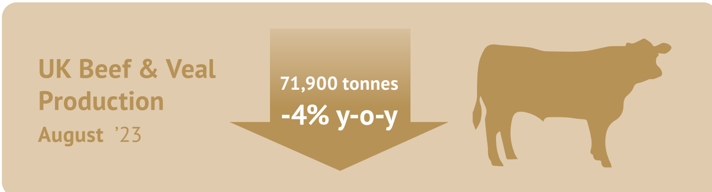
- +7.0p on the previous week,
- 34.8p above year-earlier levels.

The deadweight prices for heifers stood at 466.2p/kg (+8.6p on the week), young bulls at 459.9p/kg (+7.5p), and cull cows at 322.6p/kg (+5.3p).

Throughput – August 2023

- Total cattle throughput at UK abattoirs = 218,600 head – down 5% on the year.
- Total prime cattle throughput = 161,300 head – down 4% on the year.
  - ➢ *steers -5%, heifers -2%, and young bulls -4%.*
- Average prime cattle carcase weights = 346.7kg (+3.2kg on the year).
- Adult cattle throughput = 49,800 head – down 6% on the year.





SHEEP

Prices – week ending 16th September

The prime lamb average liveweight SQQ at auction markets in Wales stood at **246.3p/kg**. This was:

- +1.5p on the previous week,
- +22.3p compared with year-earlier levels,
- 50.8p above the 5-year average (2018-22 average: 195.5p/kg).

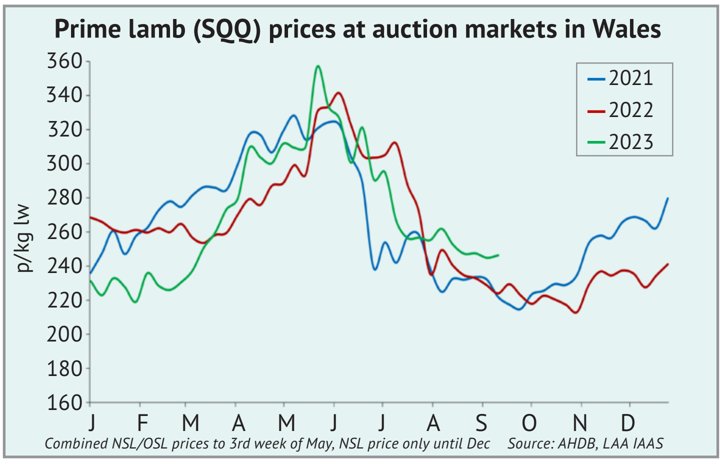
Cull ewe prices at auction markets in Wales averaged **£66.10/head**. This was:

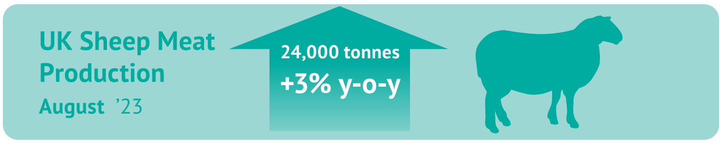
- -£1.50 on the previous week,
- £5.70 above year-earlier levels.

GB deadweight lamb prices averaged 546.4p/kg (-3.3p on the week).

Throughput – 2nd September 2023

- Total sheep throughput at UK abattoirs = 1.2 million head – up 2% on the year.
- Lamb throughput = 1.0 million head – up 2% on the year.
- Average lamb carcase weights = 19.6kg (- 0.1kg on the year).
- Cull ewe and ram throughput = 149,300 head – down 2% on the year.





PIGS

Prices – week ending 9th September

The EU-spec All Pig Price (APP) in GB stood at **224.0p/kg**. This was:

- +0.9p on the previous week,
- +21.3p compared with year-earlier levels,
- 56.6p higher than the 5-year average (2018-22 average: 167.4p/kg).

Throughput – August 2023

- Total pig throughput at UK abattoirs = 894,500 head – down 6% on the year.
- Clean pig throughput = 876,300 head – down 6% on the year.
- Average clean pig carcase weights = 89.3kg (+1.9kg on the year)
- Sow and boar throughput = 18,200 head – down 8% on the year.