

ICMSA says farmers should be aware of issues around imported stock

Against the background of the welcome increase in cattle prices across all ages this year, Kevin Connolly, Chairperson of ICMSA's Beef and Cattle Committee, has stated that there has been a noticeable increase in the number of imported stock in the country and he has urged farmers to be aware of the possible pitfalls that may arise in that context.

It is quite clear that running alongside the high cattle prices, we have seen a market open for imported stock and there has been a noticeable increase in adverts selling imported stock from a number of EU countries. This is a perfectly legal trade but it's very important that farmers purchasing such stock should take a number of precautions to ensure the safety of their own existing herds. In particular, farmers should satisfy themselves very methodically regarding the health status of the animals. With the advent of the single market in 1992, Ireland imported many diseases and today we find ourselves setting up eradication schemes to get rid of these diseases, such as BVD. We should not repeat the mistakes of the 1990s and it is important for individual farmers that they satisfy themselves of the imported animals' health status, said the Beef & Cattle Committee Chairman.

Secondly, if purchasing imported stock, farmers should be aware that not all meat plants kill imported stock and it therefore becomes obviously important that the farmer who has purchased imported cattle ensures that he/she has an outlet for these cattle at the finishing stage. You do not want a situation where in two years time you have cattle with little or no sales outlets with the consequent impact on the prices you receive for your stock. The clear message for farmers is that given the lack of a history of importing stock to Ireland and the fact that not all meat plants will kill imported stock, it would be very wise of farmers thinking of buying imported animals to have a very clear idea of potential outlets for these cattle when they are finished and who will pay a price equivalent to Irish cattle, cautioned Mr Connolly.

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