

New Entrants to Farming

New Entrants Guide to Buying and Selling at the Mart



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Buying or selling stock through an auction mart for the first time is likely to be a daunting prospect. Sale days are busy and can generally be quite hectic however they are also a 'shop window' for many livestock producers giving them the opportunity to show a large crowd of potential buyers what they have to offer. As well as the buying and selling opportunity a day at the mart allows the farming community to get together and a lot can be learnt from talking to people around the ring.

Buying Stock

Before you buy any livestock you should have applied for a Main Location Code (MLC) often referred to as a CPH e.g. 01/234/5678. You will have been allocated a CPH after registering your land with SGRPID. You will also have to register as a livestock keeper with the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). They will have issued you with a herd/flock number. Once registered you can purchase stock.

For more information on registering and recording see numerous fact sheets at <https://www.fas.scot/getting-started/>

Cattle, sheep and goats, pigs, poultry and horses are all sold at livestock markets. However smaller markets may only cater for cattle and sheep sales.

Once you have decided to buy livestock be it cattle or sheep you can start looking at the markets which are in your area to find out what day sales are on. Most marts have a dedicated sale day for cattle and sheep. Different classes of stock are generally sold on different days (fat cattle will be sold on a different day to breeding cattle).

Most auction marts nowadays have their sales calendars online so it is worth having a look before you go along to the mart to know what type of sale is on which day. It's also a good idea to make contact with the local auctioneer and introduce yourself. This may well save time on the sale day.



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Classes of Stock

Sale Type	Definition & Stock Class
Breeding Sale	<p>Sale of animals for breeding purposes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cows and or heifers with calves at foot • In calf cows and or heifers • Bulling heifers • Breeding bulls and rams or tups • Ewes with lambs at foot • In lamb ewes or gimmers (often referred to as 'Grit Ewes') • Ewe lambs or gimmers
Store Sale	<p>Sale of weaned animals which require more growth and fattening before slaughter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullocks, steers, stots (castrated male) • Bulls • Heifers • Feeders (adult cattle or sheep now not suitable for breeding purposes) • Lambs (ewe lambs, castrated male lambs and tups)
Fat or Prime Sale	<p>Sale of cattle or lambs which are ready for slaughter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullocks, steers, stots • Bulls • Heifers • Feeders • Lambs (ewe lambs, castrated male lambs and tups)
Cull Sale	<p>Sale of breeding animals which have reached the end of being productive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cows • Bulls • Ewes • Tups or rams
Weaned or suckled calves	<p>Sale of young stock usually under 1 year old which are newly weaned or still require suckling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullocks, steers, stots • Bulls • Heifers

Buying on the Sale Day for the First Time

For some sales you may need a bidding number to bid for stock. This is generally on large sale days or at specialist sales e.g. poultry or rare breed sales. These tend to attract a wider audience and not usual and regular farmers attending on general sale days. The bidder number can be obtained from the auction administrator prior to the sale. This will be unique to you and will be used by the auctioneer to record your purchases. At most sales however the auctioneer will record your purchase against your name or farm name (hence why it's a good idea to have made yourself known to the auctioneer beforehand).

Method of Sale

The type of stock and sale will depend on how the animals are sold. At store sales cattle and sheep will be sold per head and are usually sold in batches depending on weight, age, breed and sex. So if there are four store heifers in the ring at one time these are being sold as a batch/pen of four meaning if the auctioneer's hammer falls on £850 as a purchase price then that's £850 per head (or £850 for each heifer) so a total of £3400.

Breeding cattle are sold either per head or per outfit (a term used to describe a cow with a calf at foot). For example a cow comes into the ring with her calf at foot, they sell for £3000 which is the cost for the cow and her calf. In calf cows and heifers and bulling heifers are sold in the same way as store cattle, on a head age basis.

However you need to be cautious as at some breeding sales particularly breeding sheep sales where ewes with lambs at foot are being sold as some auction markets sell these on a headage basis. Therefore if the price is £90 for a ewe with her twin lambs at foot then you would pay a total of £270.

Cull animals (cows, ewes and bulls) are also generally sold on a headage basis. This is also the case for many prime lamb sales.

Finished (fat) cattle are invariably sold individually through the sale ring are sold on a live weight basis as pence per kilo live weight. So if an animal weighs 550kg and sells for 215p/kg that equates to £1182.50.

In some instances livestock is sold in guineas however this is now largely confined to sales for pedigree breeding stock. A guinea is the equivalent to £1.05. So a pedigree gimmer sold for 950gns would equate to £997.50.



Before the Sale

Before bidding on livestock on the sale day it's a good idea to have a price or budget in mind for the stock you have chosen to buy. It's easy to get caught up with the excitement and buzz of the sale and to get carried away and pay more than you want to. Before the sale starts it's always worthwhile to go out and have a look at the stock in the penning area (where the cattle or sheep are penned before they come through the ring to be sold). This gives you the opportunity to have a closer look at the stock being sold. This is especially important if you are intending to buy breeding stock. Here you can look at their mobility, soundness and ensure you are happy with the animal. When the animals come into the ring you won't have much time to access them. The pens will have a number associated with them which you can match up to the sale catalogue. Note down the pen number/s of the animals you are interested in.

During the Sale

Sit or stand where the auctioneer can see you and where you have a clear view of the ring and what is being sold. Listen closely to what the auctioneer is saying as some speak very quickly when selling and it can be difficult to determine what they are actually saying. Also by sitting back and listening to the sale you will gain an insight to what the 'trade' is like. Trade is the term used to describe the price stock are selling for. There is usually a display screen above the ring which will have information for the cattle or sheep being sold. Breed, age, lot number, farm assurance and TB status are all likely to appear on this.



When the lot you are interested in comes into the ring bid calmly and clearly and try to stick to the price you have set yourself.

After the Sale

At the end of the sale or after you have finished buying you will need to pay for the stock you have bought. Markets have an office where you will pay for your stock. Payment of stock is generally on the day unless you have made prior arrangements with the market or the auctioneer. A number of markets offer livestock finance for farmers and new entrants to help with the purchase of livestock.

Payment is usually in the form of a cheque however if you have not dealt with the market before they may ask you to pay using a debit card and may ask you to provide a bank letter confirming you have the necessary funds to pay. Most markets now have card machines for those who do not have a cheque book.

The cashier or office administrator will issue you with a receipt for your purchase as well as a movement document (showing that the stock you have bought have moved onto your holding) and a pass. Most marts will record the movement onto your holding on your behalf, however it is best to check as it is your responsibility to ensure that movements to your holding have been correctly reported. For cattle this will be through BCMS, for sheep it requires sending your movement form to SAMU. For more information see <https://www.fas.scot/getting-started/>

The pass is needed for you to remove the animals from the mart. If you are not taking your purchases home yourself you will need to arrange for a livestock haulier to do this. The mart will help you arrange this.

Selling on Sale Day for the First Time

Before the Day of the Sale

You will need to enter you livestock with the mart you have chosen to sell at, this can either be done by phoning the mart office, auctioneer or for some sales an entry form may need to be completed.

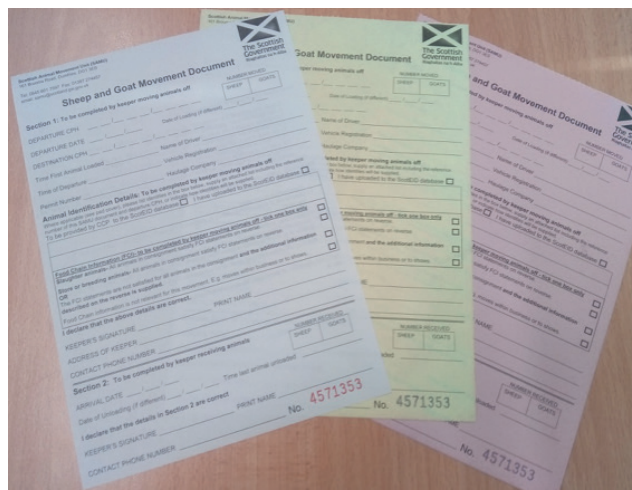
Selling livestock at the mart is for most farmers a significant date in the calendar, in which they showcase what they have to offer and many take pride in bringing their stock to market. The heads, tails and backs of cattle are often clipped for sale day to show the animal off. Dirty back ends (cattle and sheep) also tend to be avoided. Farmers try to make their animals look the best they can in order to attract buyers and gain a higher price.

Ensure that livestock are correctly identified with the appropriate ear tags before they leave your holding to be sold. If animals are not correctly tagged then the mart is likely to refuse to sell them. It is a legal requirement to ensure that animals are identified correctly. Cattle must be double tagged (one primary and one secondary). An EID tag may be used as a secondary tag. All cattle must have both tags before they leave the holding. The ear tag numbers of cattle moving off the holding should be recorded in your herd register or livestock recording system. Tags must be legible. If need be clean dirty tags so that they can be easily read at the mart.

Store and fat lambs (providing they are under 12 months of age and have not moved from the holding of birth) require a single EID tag. Breeding sheep and all other sheep older than 12 months require to be double tagged one of which being an EID tag. From 1st January 2015 all sheep born before 1st January 2010, which are not already, EID tagged should be upgraded prior to moving to market. These sheep should be double tagged one of which must be an EID tag. The tag numbers of these sheep must be recorded in your continuous record book.

On the Day of the Sale

You will need to ensure that the correct paperwork accompanies your animals to the mart. Cattle must have their passport along with a completed movement document. A movement document must also be completed for sheep. A food chain declaration may also need to be filled in.



Arrive in plenty time to allow the yard staff to pen your animals. The office staff will also require to process your paperwork before your animals come through the ring. Potential buyers will also have the opportunity to look at your animals before the sale so its good practice to be there to allow time for this. Arriving late may mean that you miss your place in sale and you may have to wait to the end of the sale. Nowadays most sale catalogues are available online a few days before the sale so you can see where you are in the sale and gauge what time you need to be there for.

Similarly to buying stock it is a good idea to have a price in mind for what you would like your animals to make or sell for. The auctioneer will either ask before the sale or as you make your way up to the ring what your reserve is or what the least price you will take is. Bear in mind there are many factors which can affect the price that your animals make on the day.

After the Sale

Once your animals have been sold you will be able to collect your cheque and sales receipt. Most markets will give sellers a cheque to take away on sale day however a number still operate a system of sending out cheques afterwards. You will have a number of deductions on your sales receipt. One of which is commission. Livestock markets work on a commission basis for selling livestock. Typically this is between 2 and 4.5%. There may be other additional fees/charges these include insurance, levy's, VAT deductions and belly clipping of lambs.