

Farm & Country

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Hopes high for 2012 as mart marks a bumper year

Craven Cattle Marts achieved a modern-day record year in 2011 in terms of increased sales and values – both good barometers of trade in the regional agricultural sector.

Livestock throughput in all sectors at Skipton Auction Mart showed a healthy increase on 2010, with some 270,000 prime, store and breeding sheep sold over the past 12 months, up almost 14 per cent.

And the 20,000 prime, store and breeding cattle and calves sold represented an increase of just over 10 per cent.

Ted Ogden, Craven Cattle Marts' farmstock sales manager and auctioneer, said: "Although we may have seen improved trading levels for livestock in 2011, recent figures published by EBLEX, the industry promotion board, illustrate this was the first time in many years that the 'retail price spread' – the percentage of the final retail price that the farmer receives – was above 50 per cent.

"In previous years, the farmer had only received about 46 to 48 per cent of the total retail price for beef and lamb paid by consumers. However, any perceived additional benefit that

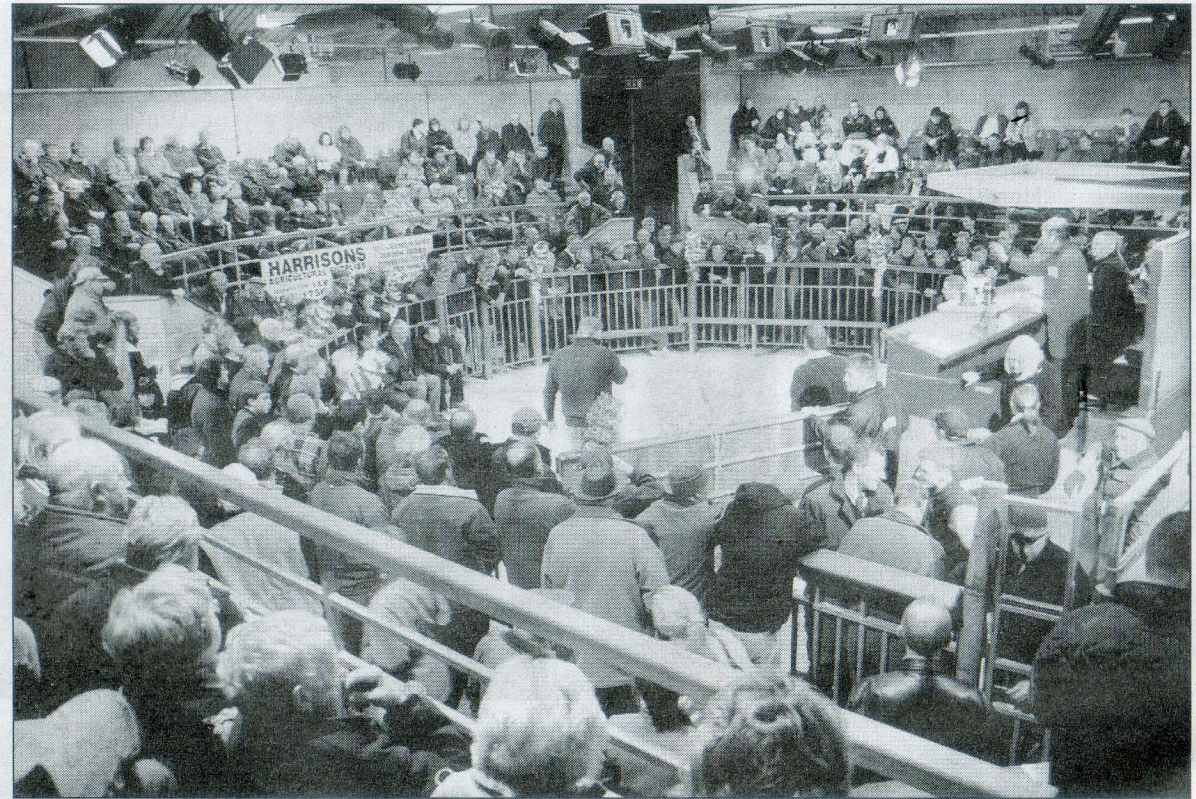
stered by dispersal sales of milk herds, which have decreased of late, illustrating that the national dairy herd has now reached a stable level.

Calf trade throughout the year was buoyant, with high-end Continental-sired bull calves regularly selling at £350 to £400 and heifer calves at between £250 and £300 – now the norm rather than the exception.

"With the continued decline in the national beef herd, this continued confidence is indicative of a shortage of cattle for beef finishers," said CCM general manager Jeremy Eaton. Solid sheep trade right across 2011 saw prime lambs in big demand by abattoirs supplying the multiple supermarkets, local meat wholesalers and high-class retail butchers – both traditional and ethnic.

There was also strong demand from abattoirs supplying export markets to Europe, in particular the premium market in Belgium, volume markets in France and Germany, and lighter carcasses to southern European countries.

"This demand was created by a worldwide shortage and advantageous exchange rates," said Mr



OPTIMISM: A good location and a reputation for quality has helped maintain Skipton Auction Mart's top standing

and retail butcher customers week in week out.

Buyers from throughout the UK beat a path to Skipton to buy store lambs. A total of 467 separate buyers attended the fortnightly sales of store lambs, with large numbers finding homes in North Wales and the Welsh borders once drought conditions allowed, together with the traditional feeding areas of the East and Midlands. During the year, there were some 482 separate purchasers at the regular sales of store and breeding cattle.

There was again major interest in and good support throughout the year for the many monthly, seasonal and special cattle and sheep shows, which continue to provide a high profile stage for the region's showmen and women to demonstrate

to cement and develop our excellent reputation as specialist pedigree livestock auctioneers. The mart is at the heart of one of the major livestock producing areas in the country, and at the confluence of three major roads that provide rapid access to the M1, M6 or A1. Our excellent facilities, combined with the willingness of breeders to travel to areas of strong demand, have helped to consolidate this status with our customers."

Location is all-important too for Skipton's renowned seasonal sales of working sheep dogs, which attract vendors and buyers from many parts of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

Improvements have also been made to the ever-popular bi-monthly Saturday collective sales of farm machinery household antique fur-

As well as farming communities, there remains a great deal of interest – and passion – among members of the public for these special auctions.

Mr Eaton said: "It's been a positive and successful year and we look forward to more of the same in 2012, which will be our 21st year at the present site.

"We remain one of the country's leading and most progressive auction marts and as we get busier, we continue to invest in improving and further modernising our facilities for the benefit of our customers, including a new wagon wash and much-needed extension to the car park.

"The CCM board, management and the entire team here at Skipton would like to thank our customers for their continuing patronage. Our warm appreciation also goes to all