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Farming Statistics - Livestock Populations at 1 December 2014, United Kingdom

This release shows livestock numbers on agricultural holdings in the United Kingdom.

Data come from various different sources, full details of which are provided in the methodological notes on pages 8 and 9.

Key points:

Cattle ([Table 1](#))

The UK's dairy herd has increased by 3.7% to almost 1.9 million. In contrast the UK's beef herd continues to decrease, falling by 1.2% to 1.5 million, reflecting concerns over profitability.

Pigs ([Table 2](#))

Despite a fall in the breeding herd of 1.8% the total number of pigs in the UK increased by 2.9% to 4.5 million compared to December 2013. This rise is mainly due to the 3.5% increase in fattening pigs to just over 4 million animals.

Sheep ([Tables 3 and 4](#))

The total number of sheep and lambs in the UK increased by 4.0% during 2014 to 22.9 million animals. The UK's female breeding flock increased by 3.0% to 14.8 million in 2014.

Survey methodology ([Pages 8 and 9](#))

For information on the different data sources please see the methodology section on pages 8 and 9.

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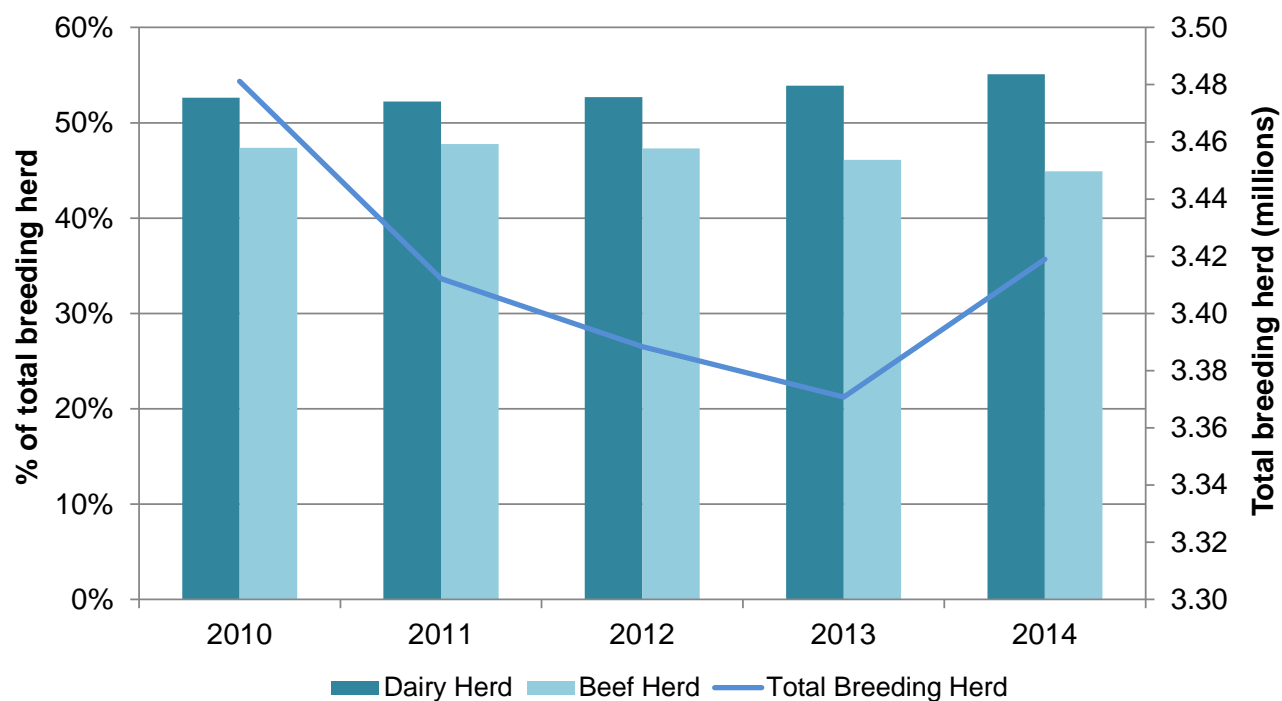
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Detailed results

Cattle

The total number of cattle and calves in the UK increased by 0.1% between December 2013 and December 2014 and now stands at almost 9.7 million.

Figure 1: Female dairy and beef herds at 1 December 2010 to 2014



The UK's dairy herd has increased by 3.7% to almost 1.9 million. In contrast the UK's beef herd continues to decrease, falling by 1.2% to 1.5 million, reflecting concerns over profitability.

The female breeding herd is made up of dairy and beef cows over two years old with offspring and accounts for 48% of all female cattle in 2014.

Table 1: Cattle and calves on agricultural holdings on 1 December ^(a)

thousands

| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | % change 2014/13 |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Total cattle and calves | 9 924 | 9 692 | 9 749 | 9 682 | 9 693 | 0.1 |
| All female cattle | 7 188 | 7 054 | 7 062 | 7 013 | 7 076 | 0.9 |
| Aged 2 years or more | 4 302 | 4 164 | 4 128 | 4 126 | 4 176 | 1.2 |
| Total breeding herd | 3 481 | 3 412 | 3 388 | 3 371 | 3 419 | 1.4 |
| Beef herd | 1 649 | 1 630 | 1 603 | 1 554 | 1 536 | -1.2 |
| Dairy herd | 1 832 | 1 783 | 1 786 | 1 817 | 1 883 | 3.7 |
| Other female cattle | 821 | 752 | 740 | 755 | 757 | 0.3 |
| Beef | 398 | 335 | 346 | 353 | 348 | -1.4 |
| Dairy | 423 | 417 | 394 | 402 | 409 | 1.7 |
| Aged between 1 and 2 years | 1 364 | 1 352 | 1 394 | 1 396 | 1 367 | -2.0 |
| Beef | 854 | 835 | 861 | 852 | 824 | -3.3 |
| Dairy | 510 | 516 | 532 | 543 | 543 | -0.1 |
| Less than 1 year | 1 521 | 1 538 | 1 540 | 1 491 | 1 532 | 2.8 |
| All male cattle | 2 736 | 2 638 | 2 687 | 2 669 | 2 617 | -2.0 |
| Aged 2 years or more | 348 | 303 | 305 | 342 | 344 | 0.4 |
| Aged between 1 and 2 years | 1 021 | 985 | 1 001 | 1 015 | 964 | -5.0 |
| Less than 1 year | 1 367 | 1 350 | 1 381 | 1 312 | 1 309 | -0.2 |

(a) Figures are sourced from the Cattle Tracing System (CTS) in England, Wales and Scotland and the equivalent APHIS system in Northern Ireland. The data include returns from all holdings with cattle so are not subject to survey error.

Pigs

The total number of pigs in the UK is 4.5 million at 1 December 2014, an increase of 2.9% from December 2013. Breeding pigs in the UK decreased by 2.1% in December 2014 to 486 thousand animals. Conversely, the total number of fattening pigs increased in 2014 rising by 3.5% (137 thousand animals) to just over 4.0 million pigs.

Figure 2: Proportion of pigs in the breeding herd and total number of fattening pigs

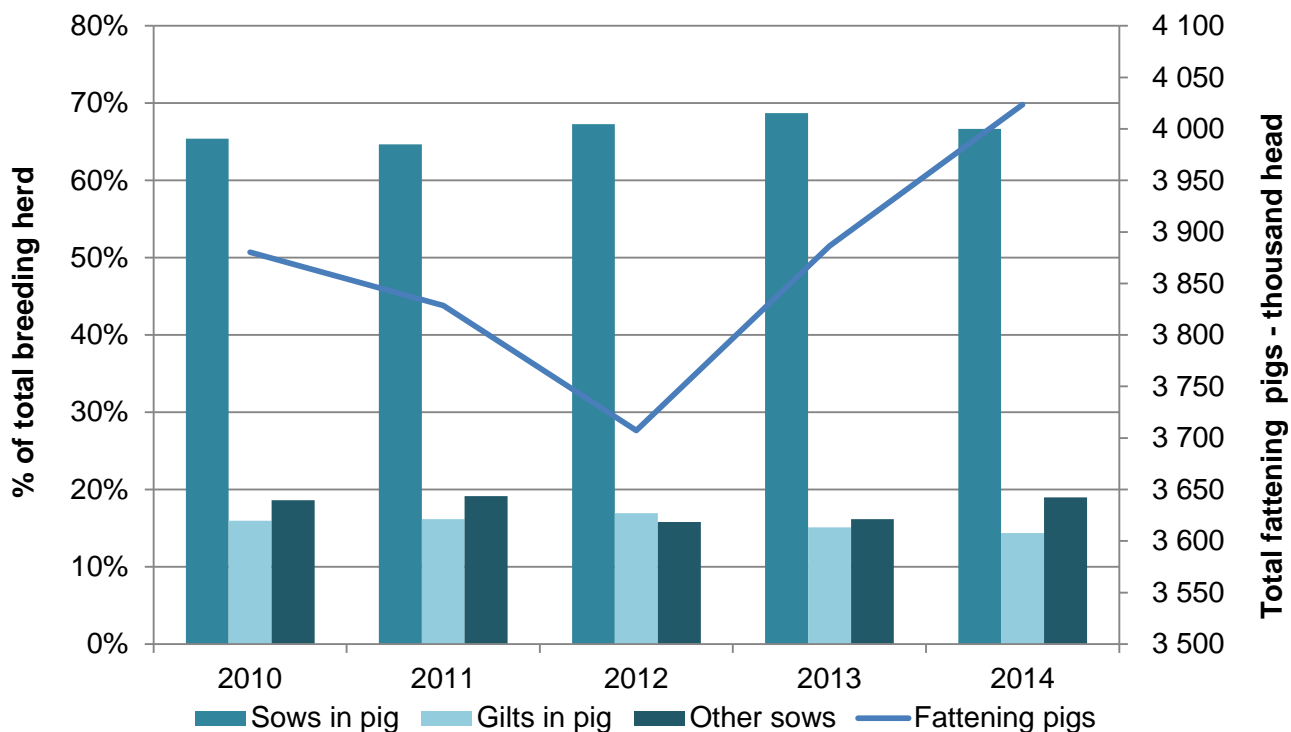


Table 2: Pigs on commercial agricultural holdings on 1 December

| | | | | | | thousands |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|
| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | % change 2014/13 |
| Total pigs | 4 388 | 4 327 | 4 216 | 4 383 | 4 510 | 2.9 |
| Breeding pigs | 508 | 499 | 509 | 497 | 486 | -2.1 |
| Female breeding herd | 423 | 409 | 400 | 398 | 390 | -1.8 |
| Sows in pig | 277 | 265 | 269 | 273 | 260 | -4.8 |
| Gilts in pig | 68 | 66 | 68 | 60 | 56 | -6.7 |
| Other sows ^(a) | 79 | 78 | 63 | 64 | 74 | 15.4 |
| Other breeding pigs | 85 | 90 | 109 | 99 | 96 | -3.4 |
| Boars being used for service | 16 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 13 | -12.4 |
| Gilts intended for first time breeding | 69 | 75 | 93 | 84 | 83 | -1.8 |
| Fattening pigs (incl. barren sows) | 3 880 | 3 828 | 3 707 | 3 886 | 4 024 | 3.5 |

(a) Either being suckled or dry sows kept for further breeding.

Sheep

The total number of sheep and lambs in the UK increased by 4.0% between December 2013 and December 2014 and now stands at 22.9 million animals. The UK's female breeding flock increased by 3.0% to 14.8 million over the same period. Other sheep and lambs increased 6.0% in December 2014 to 8.2 million animals.

Figures for England for 2012 and 2013 have been revised to take into account late inventory returns. The figures in table 3 have been updated as a result. Table 4 over the page shows the effect of the revisions.

Figure 3: Total sheep and lambs, December 2010 - 2014

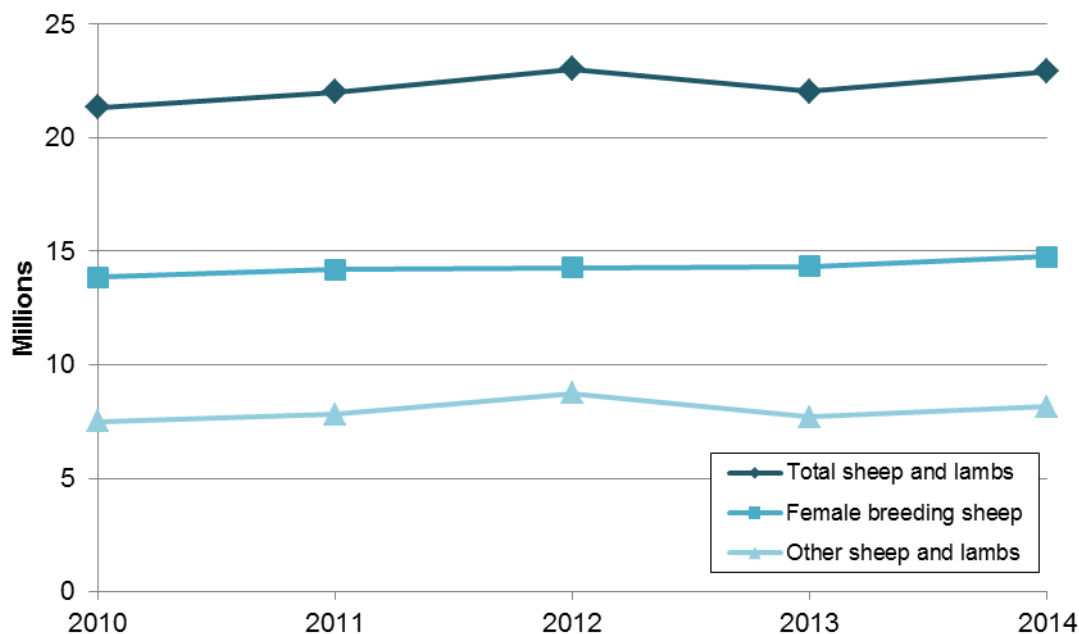


Table 3: Sheep and lambs on agricultural holdings on 1 December

| | thousands | | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 ^(a) | 2014 ^(b) | % change 2014/13 |
| Total sheep and lambs | 21 347 | 22 007 | 23 028 | 22 027 | 22 916 | 4.0 |
| Female breeding sheep | 13 843 | 14 199 | 14 286 | 14 337 | 14 764 | 3.0 |
| Other sheep and lambs | 7 504 | 7 808 | 8 742 | 7 690 | 8 152 | 6.0 |

(a) In 2013 Wales started using data from the annual Sheep and Goat Inventory (an annual exercise requiring all sheep and goat keepers to record animals under their keepership). Until 2012 sheep data was collected via the Welsh December survey of agriculture.

(b) 2014 results are provisional.

Figures for England for 2012 and 2013 have been revised to take into account late inventory returns.

The table below shows the effect of these revisions on UK figures:

Table 4: Effect of revisions to Sheep figures for 2012 and 2013

| | thousands | | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------|---------------|------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| | 2012 | | | 2013 | | |
| | Original | Revised | % change | Original | Revised | % change |
| Total sheep and lambs | 22 991 | 23 028 | 0.2 | 22 624 | 22 027 | -2.6 |
| Female breeding sheep | 14 278 | 14 286 | 0.1 | 14 849 | 14 337 | -3.4 |
| Other sheep and lambs | 8 714 | 8 742 | 0.3 | 7 774 | 7 690 | -1.1 |

Methodological notes

All percentage changes in this release's tables are based on unrounded figures. Therefore, totals may not necessarily agree with the sum of their components due to rounding.

England

Data for this 2014 December livestock publication comes from a number of different sources.

Cattle

Cattle results are sourced from the Cattle Tracing System (CTS). The data include returns from all holdings with cattle so are not subject to survey error. More information on the use of this administrative data can be found on the "survey notes and guidance" web page via the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/182225/defra-stats-foodfarm-landuselivestock-june-results-BovineRegisters.pdf.

Pigs

Pig data came from the December survey of Pigs, which is a small sample survey of farms that keep over 750 pigs. It is used to estimate the size of the pig herd in England at 1 December each year. The pig data were gathered using 300 paper forms, achieving a response rate of 84%, so the results for pigs are subject to a degree of sampling error.

Pig data relates to commercial holdings only. Commercial holdings are defined as those with significant levels of farming activity, i.e. holdings with more than five hectares of agricultural land, one hectare of orchards, 0.5 hectares of vegetables or 0.1 hectares of protected crops, or more than 10 cows, 50 pigs, 20 sheep, 20 goats or 1,000 poultry.

Sheep

Sheep data came from the annual Sheep and Goat Inventory (an annual exercise requiring all sheep and goat keepers to record animals under their keepership at 1 December). It is an EU requirement to hold an annual inventory of sheep and goat keepers for livestock tracing and identification purposes. In England the inventory is held on 1 December each year. Sheep and goat keepers in England will receive either a paper form or an email request to complete their inventory in late November. Since 2010 the information collected by the inventory is used to estimate the size of the English sheep flock at 1 December. More information about the use of the sheep and goat inventory for estimating sheep populations is available below:

[Use of the sheep and goat inventory for estimating sheep populations](#) (PDF, 114KB, 6 pages)

Data analysis

The data for pigs and sheep are subject to rigorous validation checks which identify inconsistencies within the data or large year-on-year changes.

Wales

Until 2012 sheep numbers were collected via the Welsh December survey of agriculture. In 2013 the sheep data was sourced for the first time from the Welsh Sheep and Goats Inventory, which is an annual exercise requiring all sheep and goat keepers to record animals under their keepership as at 1 January. The Inventory figures are adjusted to take account of the number of sheep slaughtered during December in order to produce an equivalent figure. Cattle data are taken from the Cattle Tracing System (an administrative system primarily set up for animal health monitoring purposes).

No individual figures have yet been published for Wales, but it is anticipated that they will be shortly. When available they will be found on the Welsh Government website at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/?lang=en>

Scotland

The December agricultural survey is based on a sample of main holdings and covers pigs, sheep and crops. From a population of around 21,600 main holdings, 13,800 holdings were sampled and 8,650 responses received, giving a response rate of 63 per cent. Estimates are made for non-responses.

Final results for Scotland were published on 17 March 2015 by the Scottish Government, Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services, Q Spur, Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh, EH11 3XD (e-mail agric.stats@scotland.gsi.gov.uk) and are available online at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Agriculture-Fisheries/PubFinalResulsDecCensus>

Northern Ireland

The 2014 December Survey conducted in Northern Ireland was a sample survey targeted at 4,972 farms, 4,098 forms were returned, an 82% response rate. Estimates are made for non-responses. This survey covered pigs, crops and heifer numbers. All other information relating to cattle was taken from the APHIS (Animal and Public Health Information System) database, while data on sheep was taken from the Annual Sheep and Goat Inventory, each of these being a census of animal numbers. The APHIS database is a central register maintained by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for Northern Ireland. It is a live database containing individual cattle records and details for associated herds and keepers.

Final results for Northern Ireland were published on 26 February 2015 by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for Northern Ireland, Dundonald House, Belfast, BT4 3SB (telephone: Belfast (02890) 525450) and are available online at: www.dardni.gov.uk/december-agricultural-survey-results

Data uses and users

- The UK is required to supply estimates to Eurostat of livestock populations in December each year.
- This data also helps us monitor changes in livestock populations over time and the effects of e.g. CAP reform on the industry.
- The numbers are used to make forecasts of meat and milk production to inform industry of the availability of supply which affects prices.
- Livestock distributions across the UK also help assess the risk of veterinary disease and to control outbreaks.