



15<sup>th</sup> January 2020

This notice replaces the one published on the 14<sup>th</sup> January due to an error in pig slaughter figures.

### United Kingdom Slaughter Statistics – December 2020

*Due to the increased strain Covid-19 is having on the Livestock industry, our survey response were lower than usual at 94%. To compensate we have made greater use of the Food Standards Agency throughput data to maintain coverage. This may impact on how within species numbers are split amongst their classifications; such as how sheep numbers are split amongst clean sheep and ewe & rams.*

This release shows the latest monthly information on the number of slaughters in the United Kingdom for cattle, sheep and pigs. It also contains monthly average dressed carcass weight for cattle, sheep, and pigs; and monthly volumes of home killed meat production.

### The key results for December 2020 compared to December 2019 are:

- **Cattle:** UK prime cattle (steers, heifers and young bulls) slaughterings in December 2020 were up 6.3% on December 2019 at 163,000 head. Beef and veal production was 75,000 tonnes, 5.1% higher than in December 2019.
- **Sheep:** UK clean sheep slaughterings were up 1.5% on December 2019 at 1208,000 head. Mutton and lamb production was 27,000 tonnes, 0.1% lower than in December 2019.
- **Pigs:** UK clean pig slaughterings were 4.9% higher than in December 2019 at 952,000 head. Pigmeat production was 86,000 tonnes, 8.7% higher than in December 2019.
- The response rate for December was 94% in England and Wales.

## Section 1 – Livestock slaughtered

### 1.1 Monthly numbers of home killed livestock slaughtered

Table 1.1 shows monthly estimates of the number of home killed cattle, sheep and pigs, slaughtered as meat for human consumption in UK abattoirs.

**Table 1.1: United Kingdom monthly numbers of livestock slaughtered (Thousand head)**

	<b>Dec-19</b>	<b>Oct-20</b>	<b>Nov-20</b>	<b>Dec-20</b>	<b>yr on yr</b>
	<b>31 days</b>	<b>31 days</b>	<b>30 days</b>	<b>31 days</b>	<b>% change</b>
Steers	81	91	91	85	4.7%
Heifers	62	69	72	67	8.3%
Young Bulls	10	13	12	11	6.2%
Cows and Adult Bulls	57	68	70	57	0.0%
Calves	7	7	6	5	-32%
Clean Sheep	1190	1239	1259	1208	1.5%
Ewes and Rams	143	120	111	113	-21%
Clean Pigs	907	979	909	952	5%
Sows and Boars	19	23	20	17	-13%

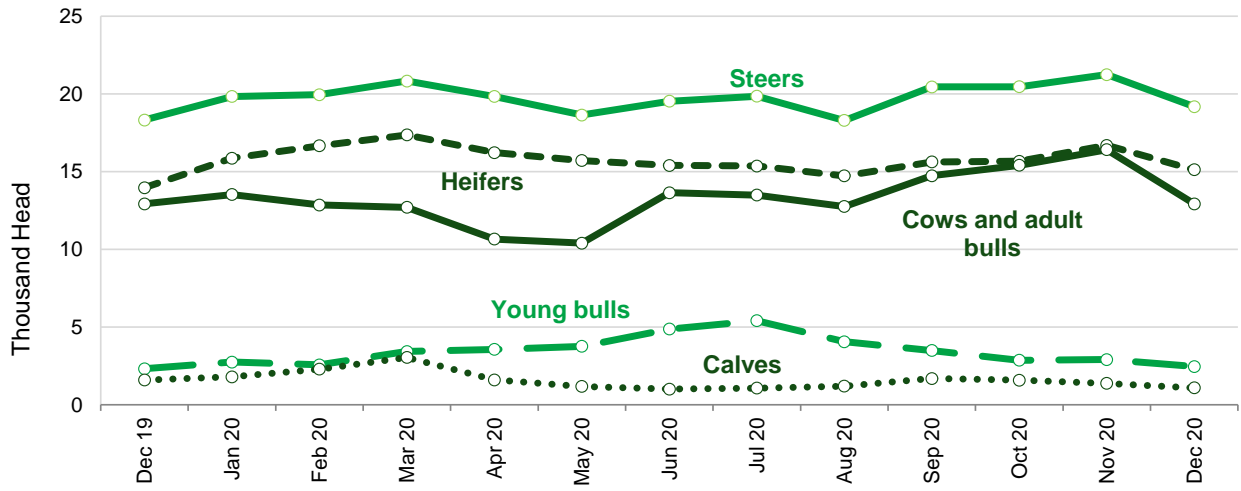
### 1.2 Average weekly numbers of home killed livestock slaughtered

Table 1.2 shows the average weekly slaughter figures for the last four months and the previous year's current month for comparison. The monthly slaughter figures in section one are affected by the number of days in the survey period. To get a clearer measure of trends weekly averages are calculated using the number of livestock slaughtered and the number of days in each period. Longer term trends can be seen in Figures 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3, following this table.

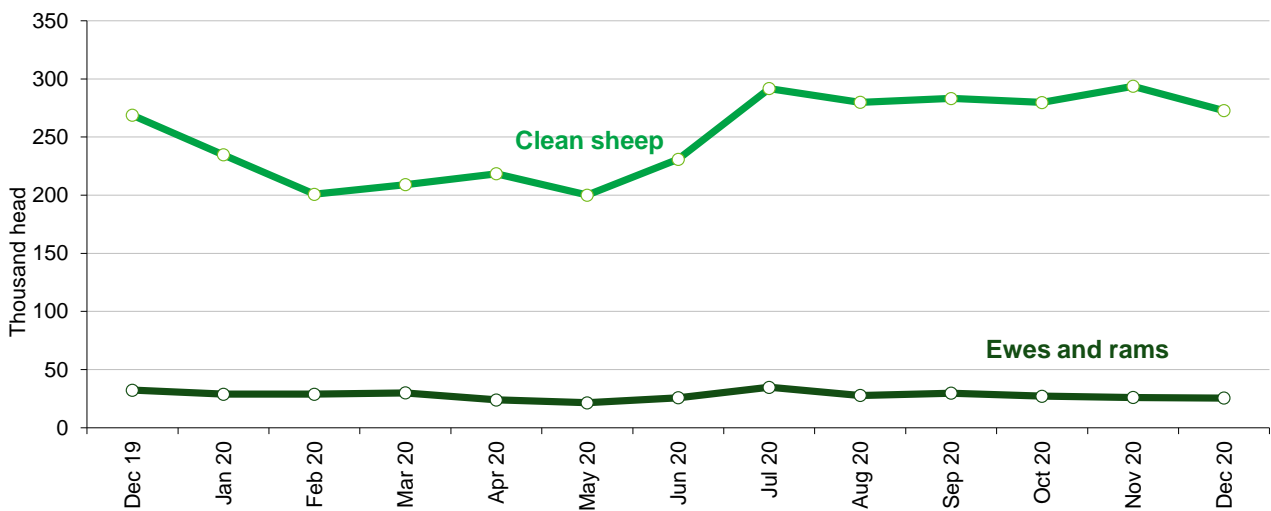
**Table 1.2: United Kingdom average weekly numbers of livestock slaughtered (Thousand head)**

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2020</b>
	<b>Dec</b>	<b>Sep</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>
Steers	18	20	20	21	19
Heifers	14	16	16	17	15
Young Bulls	2	3	3	3	2
Cows and Adult Bulls	13	15	15	16	13
Calves	2	2	2	1	1
Clean Sheep	269	283	280	294	273
Ewes and Rams	32	30	27	26	26
Clean Pigs	205	212	221	212	215
Sows and Boars	4	5	5	5	4

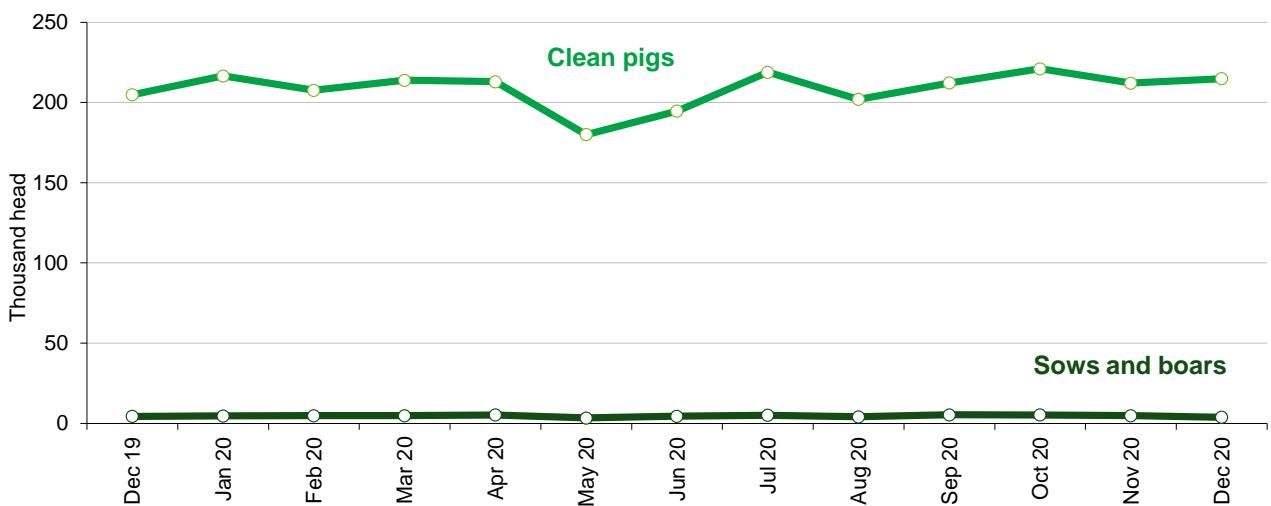
**Figure 1.1 United Kingdom average weekly numbers of cattle slaughtered**



**Figure 1.2 United Kingdom average weekly numbers of sheep slaughtered**



**Figure 1.3 United Kingdom average weekly numbers of pigs slaughtered**



### 1.3 Monthly numbers of home killed livestock slaughtered by country

Table 1.3 shows monthly estimates of the number of cattle, sheep and pigs slaughtered for meat in England and Wales, Scotland, Great Britain and Northern Ireland

**Table 1.3: United Kingdom monthly numbers of livestock slaughtered by country (Thousand head)**

	<b>Oct-20</b> 31 days	<b>Nov-20</b> 30 days	<b>Dec-20</b> 31 days
<b>England &amp; Wales</b>			
Steers	55	58	54
Heifers	44	47	43
Young Bulls	8	9	7
Cows and Adult Bulls	50	54	42
Calves	7	5	4
Clean Sheep	1068	1101	1058
Ewes and Rams	116	108	110
Clean Pigs	769	708	777
Sows and Boars	22	20	15
<b>Scotland</b>			
Steers	18	17	17
Heifers	14	13	12
Young Bulls	2	2	1
Cows and Adult Bulls	7	6	5
Calves	0	0	0
Clean Sheep	124	117	113
Ewes and Rams	2	2	2
Clean Pigs	31	33	26
Sows and Boars	1	1	2
<b>Great Britain</b>			
Steers	73	75	71
Heifers	58	60	56
Young Bulls	10	10	9
Cows and Adult Bulls	57	60	48
Calves	7	5	4
Clean Sheep	1192	1219	1171
Ewes and Rams	117	110	112
Clean Pigs	801	740	803
Sows and Boars	23	20	17
<b>Northern Ireland</b>			
Steers	18	16	14
Heifers	12	12	11
Young Bulls	3	2	2
Cows and Adult Bulls	12	10	10
Calves	0	0	0
Clean Sheep	47	40	37
Ewes and Rams	2	2	2
Clean Pigs	178	169	149
Sows and Boars	0	0	0

## Section 2 – Average dressed carcase weights

### 2.1 Monthly average dressed carcase weights for cattle, sheep, and pigs

Table 2.1 shows the monthly average dressed carcase weight (DCW) of livestock slaughtered for meat for human consumption in the United Kingdom.

**Table 2.1: United Kingdom average dressed carcase weights <sup>(1)</sup> (kilogramme)**

	Dec-19	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20
Steers	363.5	357.6	357.4	360.6
Heifers	325.0	323.1	325.6	327.7
Young Bulls	327.3	346.7	343.2	342.2
Cows and Adult Bulls	307.9	308.7	309.8	313.7
Calves	70.8	64.9	82.2	84.6
Clean Sheep	19.4	19.5	19.6	19.5
Ewes and Rams	25.1	26.9	26.5	27.4
Clean Pigs	84.7	88.3	89.0	88.3
Sows and Boars	143.3	146.2	145.2	144.1

(1) Revised methodology for calculating cattle DCW has been applied from January 2018 onwards. Please see methodology for full details

## Section 3 – Home killed meat production

### 3.1 Monthly volumes of home killed meat production

Table 3.1 shows the monthly volumes of meat produced in UK abattoirs

**Table 3.1: United Kingdom monthly volumes of meat production (thousand tonnes)**

	Dec-19	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	yr on yr % change
	31 days	30 days	31 days	30 days	31 days	
Beef	71	78	81	82	75	5.1%
Mutton and Lamb	27	27	27	28	27	-0.1%
Pigmeat	80	83	90	84	86	8.7%

(1) Revised methodology for calculating cattle DCW has been applied from January 2018 onwards. This change will impact production volume data. Please see methodology for full details.

## Section 4 – About these statistics

### Methodology:

- Defra runs a monthly survey of registered England and Wales slaughterhouses. It is a statutory survey (approximately 85) that collects information on livestock slaughter numbers and weight of meat produced. All major slaughterhouses participate in the survey and the response rate is typically 100%. Similar surveys are run by RERAD in Scotland and by DAERA in Northern Ireland. Scottish statistics on livestock slaughterings are available in the Economic Report on Scottish Agriculture at the [Economic Report on Scottish Agriculture webpage from Scottish government](#) (Tables A5 and A6). This website also contains contact details and more information. Northern Ireland results are available at the [Northern Ireland cattle sheep slaughterings webpage](#) and [Northern Ireland pig slaughterings webpage](#)
- The England and Wales slaughter survey accounts for around 90% of the E&W slaughterhouse throughput for each livestock type. These data are supplemented by administrative data from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) for smaller slaughterhouses to give complete monthly coverage of livestock slaughterings.
- Information on the weight of meat produced from a sample of animals weighed at slaughterhouses is obtained from survey respondents, around 55 slaughterhouse respondents. From the information provided average dressed carcass weights for each animal type are primarily calculated by adding up the total weight of the meat produced and dividing by the number of animals weighed. Cold dressed carcass weights are recorded.
- The volume of meat production is estimated from the number of all livestock slaughtered and average dressed carcass weight information collected. This total 'Home killed' production includes livestock imported into the United Kingdom for slaughter.
- The data are subject to a variety of validation checks which identify inconsistencies in the data. All data are cleaned prior to publication in discussion with the survey respondents.
- With effect from February 2016 the statistics published in this notice are based on calendar rather than statistical months. This change simplifies our survey processes and brings our slaughter survey in line with our milk surveys which are already run on a calendar month basis; it also removes the need for the 53 week year (which would have to be 2016). Since the end of weekly slaughter survey several years ago, there is no legislative requirement for weekly data, so since then we have derived the average weekly throughput from the monthly survey data.
- The January 2016 data will include the last week of December 2015 and therefore be classed as a 5 week month. From 1<sup>st</sup> February 2016 onwards the statistics are based on calendar months.
- We have carried out a review of the methodology for calculating the dressed carcass weights in order to align with UK specifications. Some slaughterhouses provide Cattle Dressed Carcass Weights (DCW) including Kidney Knob and Channel Fat (KKCF); some slaughterhouses provide pig weights at EC

specification. From September 2019 cattle DCWs are calculated to UK specification which excludes KKCF; Pigs are dressed to UK specification.

- To calculate the DCW of animals by category:
  - If the slaughterhouse includes KKCF in the total weight, a deduction of 3.9% occurs. This aligns to the UK DCW specification.
  - [Link to beef carcass classification scheme webpage](#)
  - If pigs are dressed to EC specification then an increase of 1.6% to the DCW occurs to align with UK specification.
  - [Link to pig carcass grade scheme webpage](#)
- Some slaughterhouses specialise for niche markets. These slaughterhouses are treated separately so their DCW are not used to raise the data for those slaughterhouses who do not provide DCW data.
- Data have been revised to January 2018 using the new methodology. If you have any questions or comments we are happy to discuss. Please contact us at [livestock.statistics@defra.gov.uk](mailto:livestock.statistics@defra.gov.uk).

#### **Revisions policy:**

- Figures in this notice are provisional and subject to revision. We will provide information about any revisions we make to previously published information in this statistics notice and the associated datasets. Revisions could occur for various reasons, including:
  - a. If we have not received survey data from respondents we make an estimate based on their previous returns. These estimates will be replaced with actual survey data when it is received.
  - b. Survey respondents occasionally supply amended figures for previous periods.
  - c. If we have not received administrative data for the smaller slaughterhouses we make an estimate based on previous data received. These estimates will be replaced with actual data when it is received.

#### **Data users:**

- The livestock industry is also a major user of the data, including divisions of the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB). AHDB Pork (formally known as BPEX, representing the English pig industry) and AHDB Beef and Lamb (formerly EBLEX, representing the English beef and sheep industry). Industry users rely heavily on the numbers of slaughterings and meat production to assess the current state of the industry and predict the available supplies of meat for the coming year. This, in turn, can affect meat prices and trade decisions on levels of imports and exports to maintain supply. Users have always been very keen for the slaughtering statistics to be produced as quickly as possible so that the data is still relevant. For this reason, we collect and publish these statistics to a very tight timetable, publishing within three weeks of the survey date. The “Market Intelligence” and “Market Outlook” Reports on the AHDB Beef and Lamb website refer consistently to our statistics at the [AHDB Beef and lamb webpage](#). The AHDB

Pork site provides more in-depth analysis of pigmeat production statistics at the [AHDB pigmeat production webpage](#).

- Contact details are available on the front page of this notice, for you to send feedback or ask questions about the information provided.

## Section 5 – Definitions

- Steers (or Bullocks): Castrated males over 1 year old, raised for beef.
- Heifers: Female animals that have not calved. Over 1 year old, raised for beef.
- Young bulls: Non-castrated young males, raised for beef, generally slaughtered around 13 months old.
- Prime cattle: All those raised specifically for beef production. Total of Steers + Heifers + Young Bulls.
- Breeding bulls: Older cull males, previously used for breeding
- Cows: Older cull females, previously used for breeding
- Calves: All bovine animals aged 1 year old or younger. Prior to May 2014, the definition was “animals weighing less than 165kg”.



## What you need to know about this release

### Contact details

Livestock statistics team

Email: [livestock.statistics@defra.gov.uk](mailto:livestock.statistics@defra.gov.uk)

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### National Statistics Status

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

The continued designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in 2014 following a compliance check by the UK Statistics Authority (now the Office for Statistics Regulation) against the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Since the last review of these statistics in 2014, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made improvements including:

- Providing a detailed breakdown of livestock categories following user feedback
- Improved the data quality by updating guidance for data providers and carrying out enhanced validation checks on data received

For general enquiries about National Statistics, contact the National Statistics Public Enquiry Service:

Tel: 0845 601 3034

Email: [info@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:info@statistics.gov.uk).

You can find National Statistics on the internet at the [UK government statistics webpage](#)

### Future publications

This notice will be updated at 09:30 on Thursday 11th February 2021. Additional time series which include weekly slaughter averages, production and trade data can be found at the [UK government livestock statistics webpage](#).