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Farming Statistics - Livestock Populations at 1 December 2015, England

This release shows livestock numbers on agricultural holdings in England. These results are from the December Pigs Survey as at 1 December 2015, along with data from the administrative sources of the Cattle Tracing System (CTS) and the Annual Sheep and Goat (SAG) Inventory. Full details of these sources are provided in the methodological notes on page 7.

Key points:

Cattle ([Table 1](#))

The total number of cattle and calves in England is 5.4 million in December 2015. This is an increase of 0.9% since December 2014.

Pigs ([Table 2](#))

The total number of pigs in England has decreased by 3.6% since December 2014 to 3.5 million. Fattening pigs fell by 4.3%, which was partly offset by a rise of 1.9% in breeding pigs.

Sheep ([Table 3](#))

The total number of sheep and lambs in England rose by 2.7% between December 2014 and December 2015 to 10.9 million. The female breeding flock increased by 4.0% from 6.3 million in 2014 to 6.6 million in 2015.

Survey methodology ([Pages 7 and 8](#))

For information on the different data sources please see the methodology section on pages 7 and 8.

Other surveys and next publications ([Page 8](#))

Further information on the next publications due can be found on page 8.

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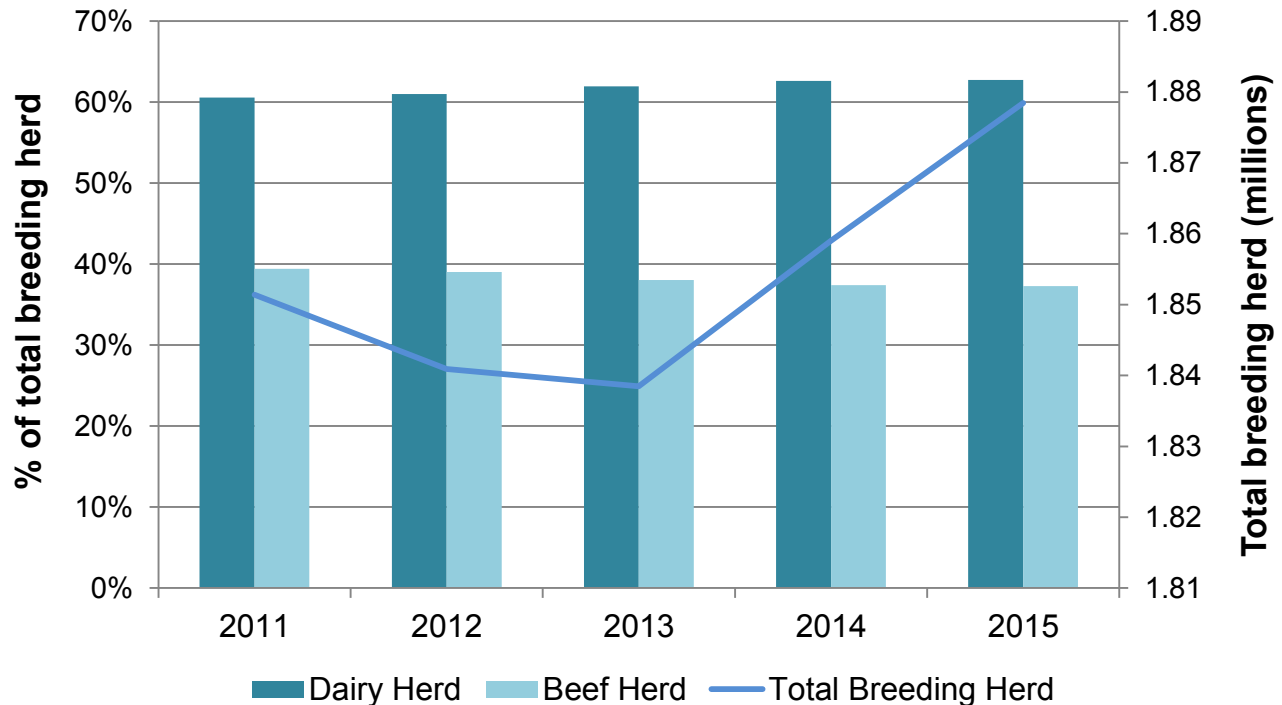
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Detailed results

Cattle

The total number of cattle and calves in England is 5.4 million in December 2015. This was an increase of 0.9% since December 2014 and the largest cattle population seen in December since 2010.

Figure 1: Female dairy and beef herds at 1 December 2011 to 2015



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 2015.

In recent years England's beef breeding herd has declined, reflecting concerns over profitability. However in 2015 there has been a slight increase with the beef herd increasing by 0.7% since December 2014. The dairy herd has also continued to rise increasing by 1.2% to 1.18 million in December 2015.

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

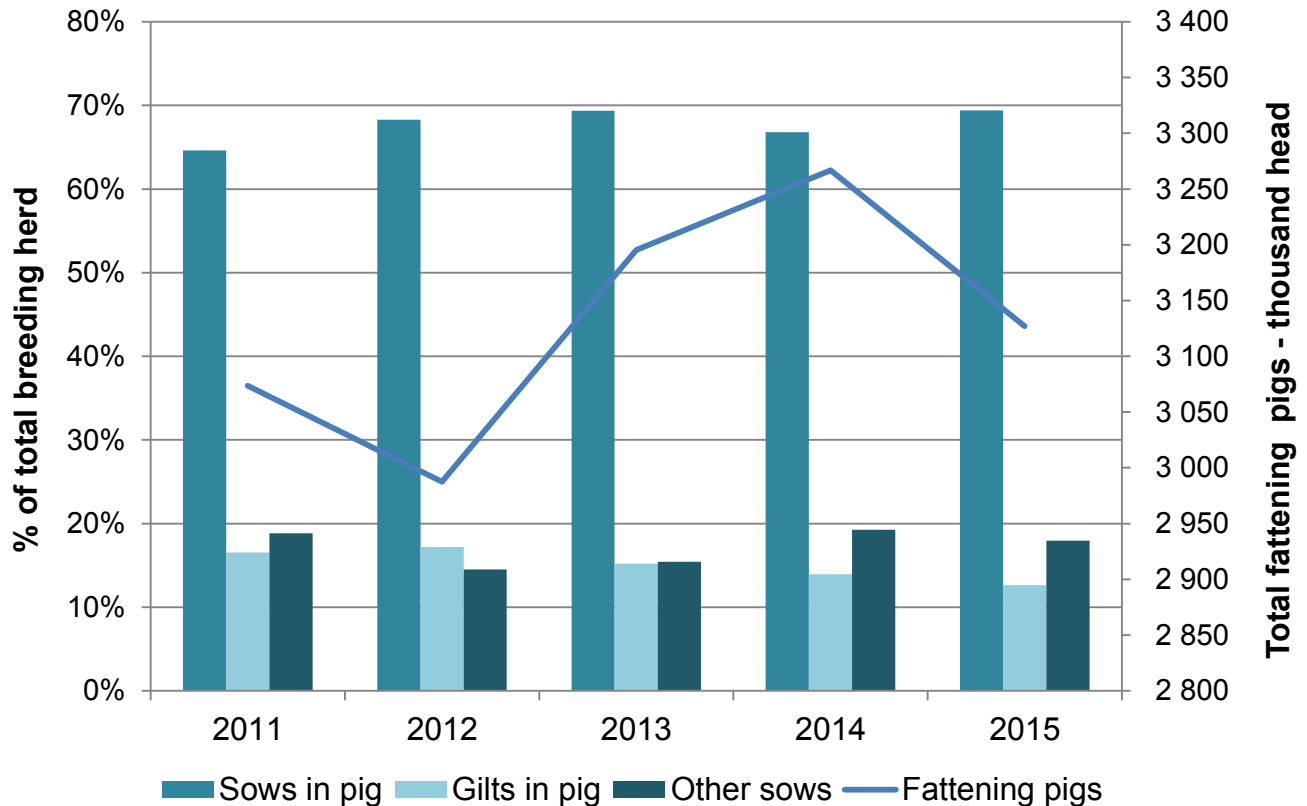
	Thousands					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	% change 2015/2014
Total cattle and calves	5 275	5 308	5 323	5 308	5 358	0.9
All female cattle	3 849	3 843	3 843	3 868	3 900	0.8
Aged 2 years or more	2 276	2 254	2 269	2 288	2 273	-0.7
Total breeding herd	1 851	1 841	1 838	1 859	1 878	1.0
Beef herd	730	718	699	695	700	0.7
Dairy herd	1 122	1 123	1 139	1 164	1 178	1.2
Other female cattle	425	413	430	429	394	-8.0
Beef	169	171	188	185	173	-6.6
Dairy	256	242	242	243	221	-9.2
Aged between 1 and 2 years	742	761	764	749	769	2.6
Beef	419	434	436	422	431	2.1
Dairy	323	328	328	327	338	3.3
Less than 1 year	830	828	810	831	858	3.3
Beef	494	488	472	482	498	3.4
Dairy	337	339	338	349	360	3.3
All male cattle	1 427	1 466	1 480	1 440	1 457	1.2
Aged 2 years or more	175	176	202	200	182	-9.2
Aged between 1 and 2 years	532	544	562	532	530	-0.5
Less than 1 year	720	746	717	708	746	5.4

(a) These figures have been sourced from the Cattle Tracing System (CTS). The data include returns from all holdings with cattle so are not subject to survey error.

Pigs

The total number of pigs in England has decreased by 3.6% since December 2014 to just over 3.5 million. With the female breeding herd showing a 1.1% increase, the decrease in the total number of pigs was driven by a 4.3% fall in fattening pigs to just over 3.1 million.

Figure 2: Proportional make-up of the female breeding herd and the total number of fattening pigs at 1 December 2011 to 2015



Data for pigs are provided for only those holdings considered to have a commercial level of agricultural activity. This allows data to be directly comparable to data from the June Survey of Agriculture and Horticulture. Commercial holdings are defined in the methodology section on pages 7 and 8.

Table 2: Pigs on commercial agricultural holdings on 1 December

	Thousands					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	% change 2015/2014
Total pigs	3 489	3 417	3 607	3 662	3 530	-3.6
Breeding pigs	415	429	411	396	403	1.9
Female breeding herd	337	332	326	313	317	1.1
Sows in pig	218	227	226	209	220	5.1
Gilts in pig	56	57	50	44	40	-8.4
Other sows ^(a)	63	48	50	60	57	-5.6
Other breeding pigs	78	97	86	82	86	4.8
Boars being used for service	13	13	13	11	12	4.8
Gilts intended for first time breeding	65	84	73	71	75	4.8
Fattening pigs (incl. barren sows)	3 074	2 988	3 195	3 267	3 127	-4.3

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

Sheep

The total number of sheep and lambs in England increased by 2.7% from 10.6 million in December 2014 to 10.9 million in December 2015. England's female breeding flock increased by 4.0% to 6.6 million animals over the same period. Other sheep and lambs also increased in December 2015, rising by 0.8% to 4.3 million.

Figure 3: Total sheep and lambs at 1 December 2011 to 2015

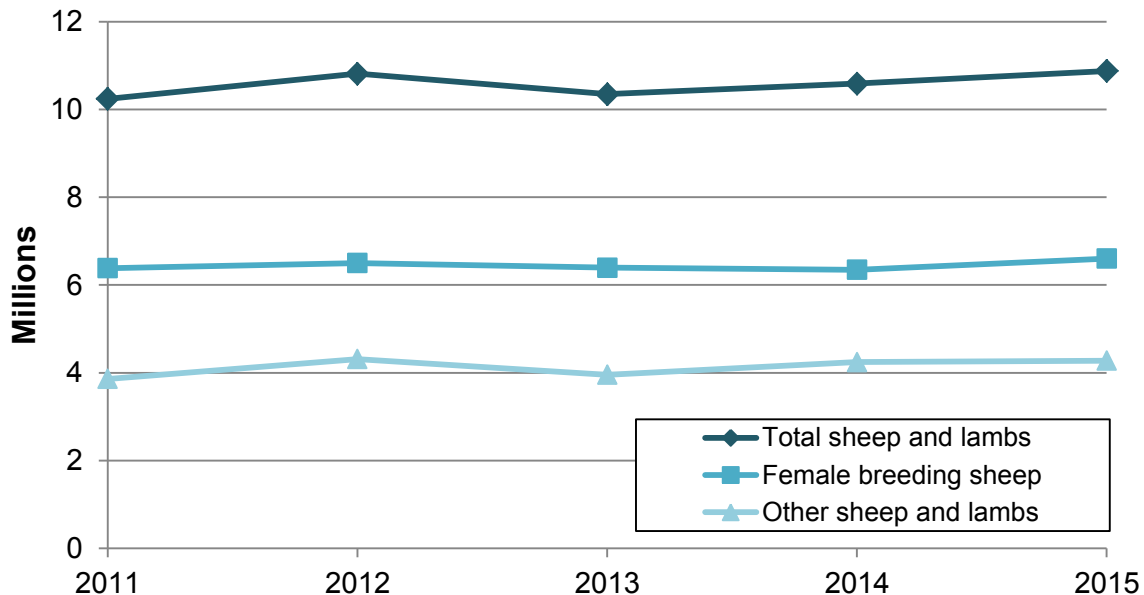


Table 3: Sheep and lambs on agricultural holdings on 1 December ^(a)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Thousands % change 2015/2014
Total sheep and lambs	10 242	10 814	10 348	10 587	10 877	2.7
Female breeding sheep	6 384	6 501	6 393	6 346	6 601	4.0
Other sheep and lambs	3 858	4 312	3 955	4 241	4 276	0.8

(a) 2015 results are provisional.

Figures for 2014 have been revised to take into account late inventory returns and additional data cleansing. The table below shows the effect of the revisions:

Table 4: Effect of revisions to Sheep figures for 2014

	Thousands		%
	2014		change
	Original	Revised	
Total sheep and lambs	10 817	10 587	-2.1
Female breeding sheep	6 493	6 346	-2.3
Other sheep and lambs	4 324	4 241	-1.9

Survey methodology

Data for this 2015 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.

To improve the coverage of the pig sector, a special data collection exercise was run to collect data from a central point for some of the largest companies. This resulted in an increase to the sample size to 810 holdings, achieving a response rate of 91%, 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.

The following document provides further detail on why data is provided for commercial holdings only (see section 3.3 on thresholds):

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/182206/defra-stats-foodfarm-landuselivestock-june-junemethodology-20120126.pdf

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.

Data notes

- All percentage changes are based on unrounded figures.
- Totals may not necessarily agree with the sum of their components due to rounding.

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.

Other survey results and publications

Results from all the Defra farming surveys can be viewed on the Defra website via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/about/statistics> . This also contains details of future publication dates.

The next publication due for December livestock populations relates to the UK and is shown below.

UK Publications

- 17 March 2016: Farming Statistics Livestock Populations at 1 December 2015, United Kingdom

More detailed results can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/structure-of-the-livestock-industry-in-england-at-december>

These data series include annual statistics on the number of cattle, sheep and pigs in England and the UK as at 1 December each year from 1992.