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Farming Statistics - Livestock Populations at 1 December 2014, England

This release shows livestock numbers on agricultural holdings in England. These results are from the December Pigs Survey as at 1 December 2014, 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 5.3 million in December 2014. This is a decrease of 0.3% since December 2013.

Pigs ([Table 2](#))

The total number of pigs in England has increased by 1.5% since December 2013 to 3.7 million. Fattening pigs rose by 2.2% which was partly offset by a fall of 3.8% in breeding pigs.

Sheep ([Table 3](#))

The total number of sheep and lambs in England rose by 4.5% between December 2013 and December 2014 to 10.8 million. The female breeding flock increased by 1.6% from 6.4 million in 2013 to 6.5 million in 2014.

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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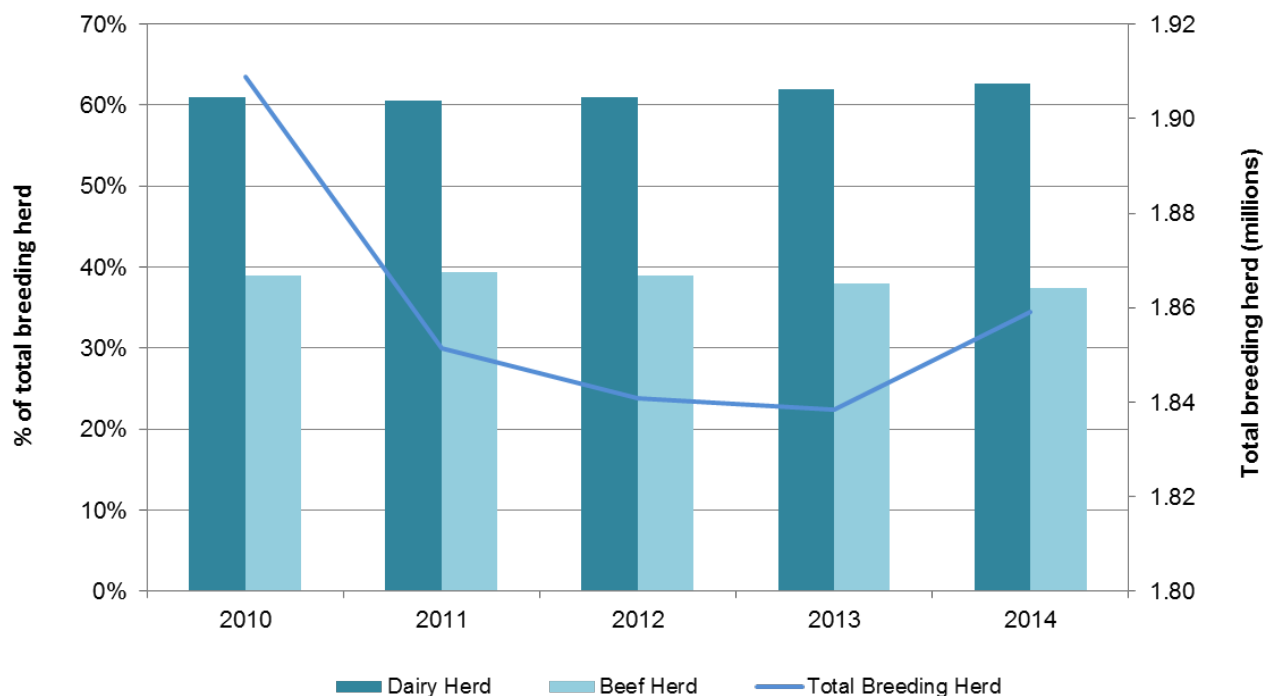
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Detailed results

Cattle

The total number of cattle and calves in England is 5.3 million in December 2014. This was a decrease of 0.3% since December 2013 and is a return to a similar level recorded in 2012.

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



In recent years England's beef breeding herd has continued to decline reflecting concerns over profitability. The downward trend in the beef herd has continued in December 2014. However the decrease seen was smaller than in recent years with the beef herd falling by 0.6% since December 2013. Conversely the dairy sector is demonstrating a more optimistic outlook, increasing by 2.2% to 1.16 million in December 2014.

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)

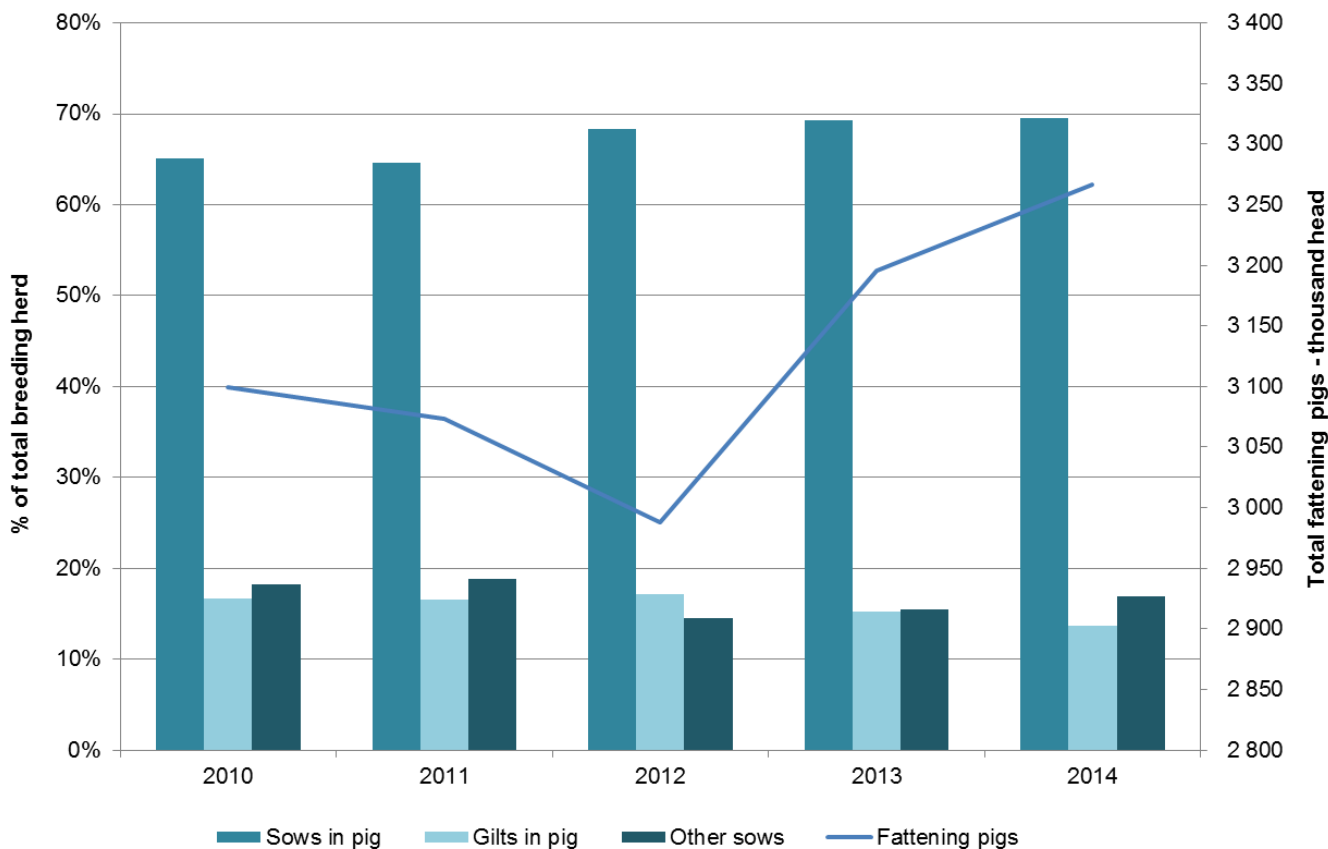
	thousands					
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	% change 2014 / 2013
Total cattle and calves	5 434	5 275	5 308	5 323	5 308	-0.3
All female cattle	3 946	3 849	3 843	3 843	3 868	0.7
Aged 2 years or more	2 380	2 276	2 254	2 269	2 288	0.9
Total breeding herd	1 909	1 851	1 841	1 838	1 859	1.1
Beef herd	745	730	718	699	695	-0.6
Dairy herd	1 164	1 122	1 123	1 139	1 164	2.2
Other female cattle	471	425	413	430	429	-0.3
Beef	206	169	171	188	185	-1.3
Dairy	265	256	242	242	243	0.5
Aged between 1 and 2 years	741	742	761	764	749	-1.9
Beef	422	419	434	436	422	-3.1
Dairy	318	323	328	328	327	-0.4
Less than 1 year	825	830	828	810	831	2.5
Beef	491	494	488	472	482	2.0
Dairy	335	337	339	338	349	3.3
All male cattle	1 488	1 427	1 466	1 480	1 440	-2.7
Aged 2 years or more	202	175	176	202	200	-0.9
Aged between 1 and 2 years	550	532	544	562	532	-5.2
Less than 1 year	737	720	746	717	708	-1.3

(a) These figures have been sourced from the Cattle Tracing System (CTS). Confidence intervals and confidence indicators are not appropriate for this table as 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 increased by 1.5% since December 2013 to just under 3.7 million. With the breeding herd showing a 3.8% decrease, this rise was driven by a 2.2% increase in the number of fattening pigs, to almost 3.3 million, as the improvement in sow productivity continues.

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



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.

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

The switch to providing pig numbers for only commercial holdings had minimal impact on the data.

Table 2: Pigs on commercial agricultural holdings on 1 December

						thousands
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	% change 2014 / 2013
Total pigs	3 514	3 489	3 417	3 607	3 662	1.5
Breeding pigs	415	415	429	411	396	-3.8
Female breeding herd	342	337	332	326	313	-3.8
Sows in pig	223	218	227	226	209	-7.3
Gilts in pig	57	56	57	50	44	-11.8
Other sows ^(a)	63	63	48	50	60	20.0
Other breeding pigs	72	78	97	86	82	-3.8
Boars being used for service	14	13	13	13	11	-13.6
Gilts intended for first time breeding	59	65	84	73	71	-2.1
Fattening pigs (incl. barren sows)	3 100	3 074	2 988	3 195	3 267	2.2

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

Sheep

The total number of sheep and lambs in England increased by 4.5% during 2014 to 10.8 million. England's female breeding flock remained steady increasing by 1.6% to just under 6.5 million. The 'Other sheep and lambs' category saw an increase in the population to 4.3 million, an increase of 9.3% over that period.

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

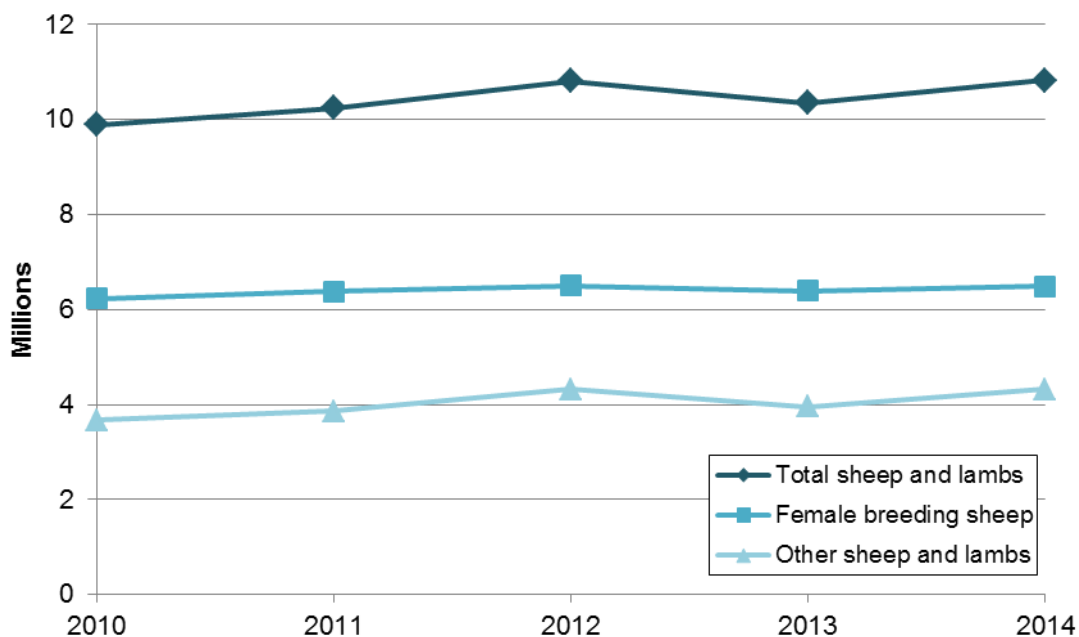


Table 3: Sheep and lambs on agricultural holdings on 1 December ^(a)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	thousands % change 2014/2013
Total sheep and lambs	9 892	10 242	10 814	10 348	10 817	4.5
Female breeding sheep	6 227	6 384	6 501	6 393	6 493	1.6
Other sheep and lambs	3 665	3 858	4 312	3 955	4 324	9.3

(a) 2014 results are provisional.

Figures for 2012 and 2013 have been revised to take into account late inventory returns. The table below shows the effect of the revisions:

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

	2012			2013		
	Original	Revised	% change	Original	Revised	% change
Total sheep and lambs	10 777	10 814	0.3	10 944	10 348	-5.4
Female breeding sheep	6 493	6 501	0.1	6 905	6 393	-7.4
Other sheep and lambs	4 283	4 312	0.7	4 039	3 955	-2.1

Survey methodology

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.

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/publications?publication_filter_option=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

- 19 March 2015: Farming Statistics Livestock Populations at 1 December 2014, United Kingdom

More detailed results can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/structure-of-the-agricultural-industry>. 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.