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Farming Statistics - Livestock Populations at 1 December 2016, England

This release shows livestock numbers on agricultural holdings in England. These results are from the December Pigs Survey as at 1 December 2016, 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](#))

In December 2016 the total number of cattle and calves in England remained almost unchanged at 5.4 million.

Pigs ([Table 2](#))

The total number of pigs in England has increased by 2.2% since December 2015 to 3.6 million. Fattening pigs also saw an increase, rising from 3.1 million to 3.2 million.

Sheep ([Table 3](#))

The total number of sheep and lambs in England rose by 3.4% between December 2015 and December 2016 to an estimated 11.2 million. The female breeding flock, that makes up almost two thirds of the population, increased by 76 thousand animals to 6.7 million in 2016.

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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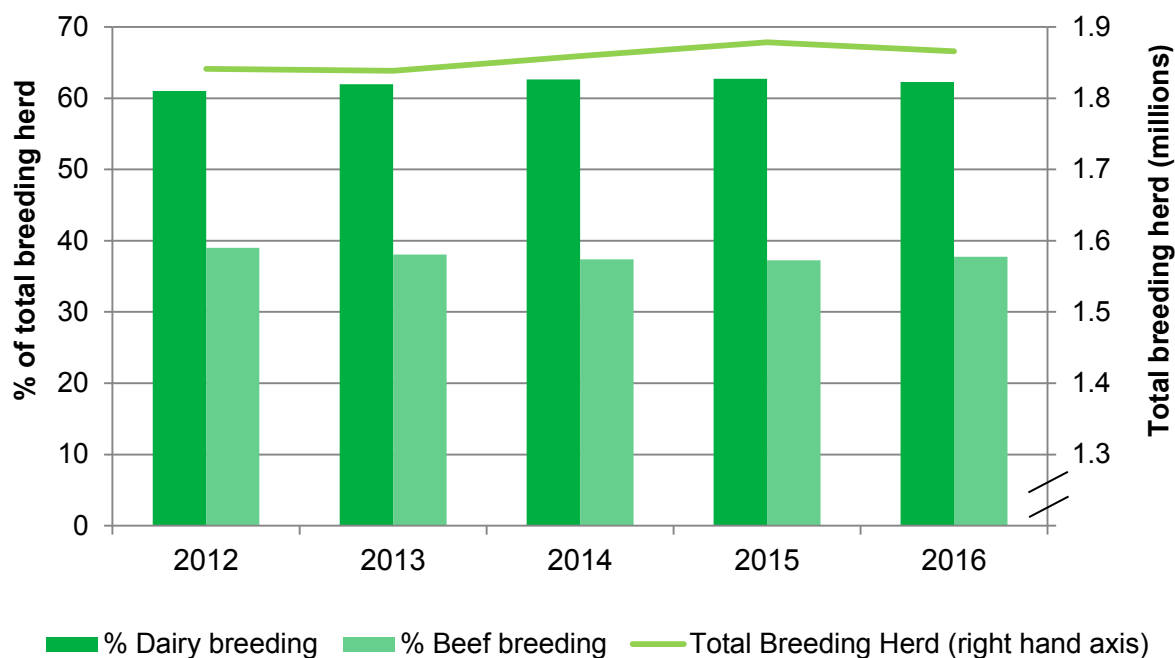
Detailed results

Cattle

In December 2016 the total number of cattle and calves in England remained almost unchanged at 5.4 million.

The total number of male cattle in 2016 has increased by 0.2% since December 2015 to 1.5 million, however male cattle aged 2 year or more has decreased 6.4% to 170 thousand in 2016.

Figure 1: Female dairy and beef breeding herds at 1 December 2012 to 2016



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 2016.

In recent years England's beef breeding herd has declined, reflecting concerns over profitability. However both December 2015 and 2016 have shown a slight increase with the beef herd continuing to rise a further 0.6% in December 2016. In contrast the dairy breeding herd has fallen for the first time since December 2011 decreasing by 1.4% to 1.2 million in December 2016.

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

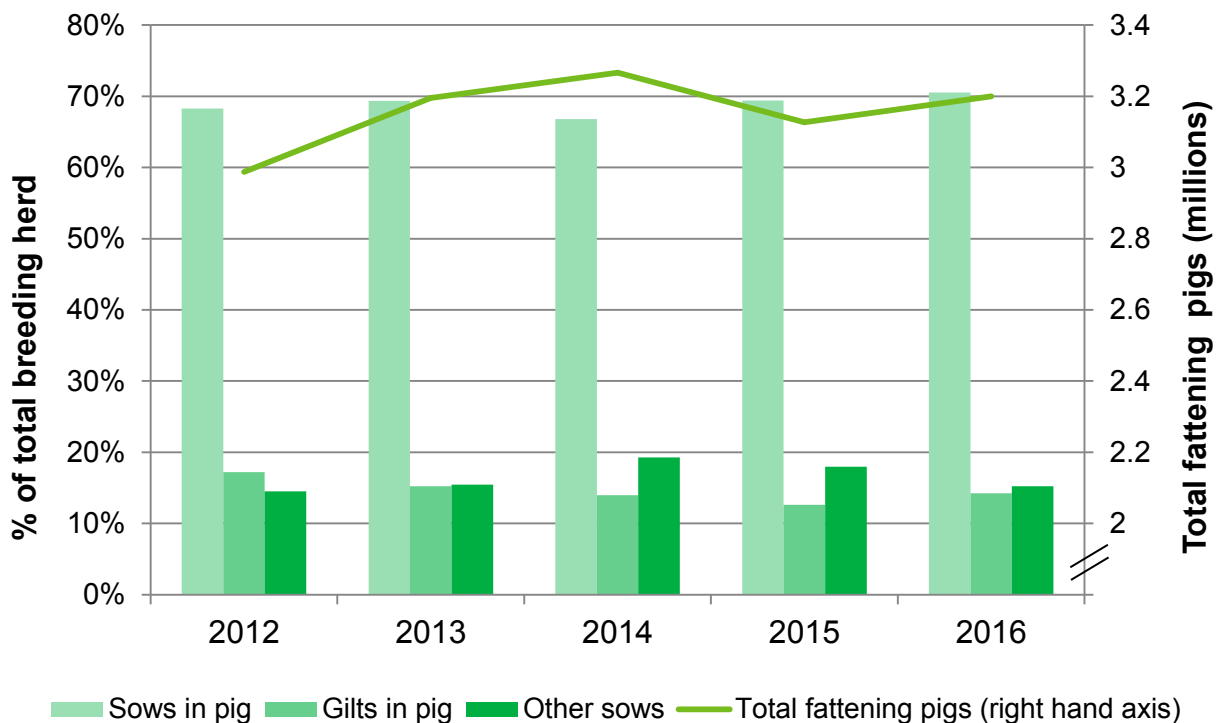
	Thousands					
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	% change 2016/2015
Total cattle and calves	5 308	5 323	5 308	5 358	5 355	0.0
All female cattle	3 843	3 843	3 868	3 900	3 895	-0.1
Aged 2 years or more	2 254	2 269	2 288	2 273	2 247	-1.1
Total breeding herd	1 841	1 838	1 859	1 878	1 866	-0.7
Beef herd	718	699	695	700	704	0.6
Dairy herd	1 123	1 139	1 164	1 178	1 162	-1.4
Other female cattle	413	430	429	394	381	-3.3
Beef	171	188	185	173	173	0.1
Dairy	242	242	243	221	208	-6.1
Aged between 1 and 2 years	761	764	749	769	789	2.6
Beef	434	436	422	431	441	2.3
Dairy	328	328	327	338	348	3.1
Less than 1 year	828	810	831	858	859	0.1
Beef	488	472	482	498	520	4.4
Dairy	339	338	349	360	339	-5.9
All male cattle	1 466	1 480	1 440	1 457	1 460	0.2
Aged 2 years or more	176	202	200	182	170	-6.4
Aged between 1 and 2 years	544	562	532	530	551	4.0
Less than 1 year	746	717	708	746	739	-1.0

(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 increased by 2.2% since December 2015 to just over 3.6 million. The female breeding herd also increased by 2.2% but the main driver for the overall increase was fattening pigs which rose by 2.3% to 3.2 million.

Figure 2: Proportional make-up of the female breeding herd and the total number of fattening pigs at 1 December 2012 to 2016



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					
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	% change 2016/2015
Total pigs	3 417	3 607	3 662	3 530	3 608	2.2
Breeding pigs	429	411	396	403	408	1.3
Female breeding herd	332	326	313	317	324	2.2
Sows in pig	227	226	209	220	229	3.9
Gilts in pig	57	50	44	40	46	15.2
Other sows ^(a)	48	50	60	57	49	-13.3
Other breeding pigs	97	86	82	86	84	-2.2
Boars being used for service	13	13	11	12	13	8.7
Gilts intended for first time breeding	84	73	71	75	72	-3.9
Fattening pigs (incl. barren sows)	2 988	3 195	3 267	3 127	3 200	2.3

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

Sheep

The estimated total number of sheep and lambs in England increased by 3.4% from 10.9 million in December 2015 to 11.2 million in December 2016. England's female breeding flock increased by 1.2% to 6.7 million animals over the same period. The other sheep and lambs category saw a greater proportional increase in the year to December 2016, rising by 6.8% to 4.6 million.

Figure 3: Total sheep and lambs at 1 December 2012 to 2016

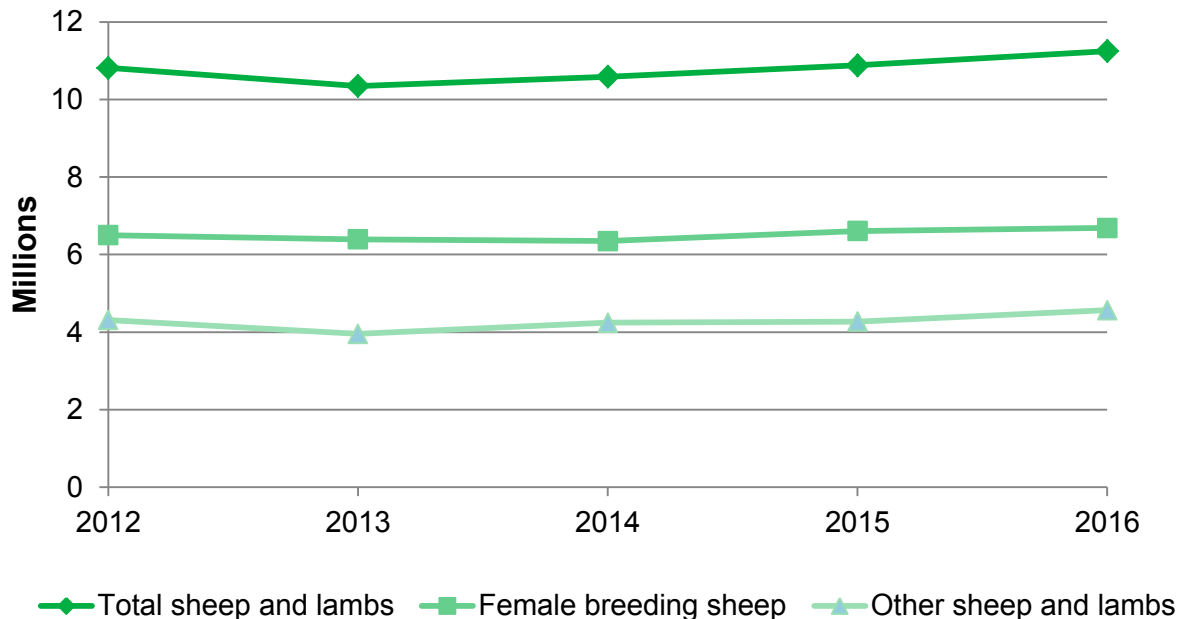


Table 3: Sheep and lambs on agricultural holdings on 1 December ^(a)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Thousands % change 2016/2015
Total sheep and lambs	10 814	10 348	10 587	10 881	11 248	3.4
Female breeding sheep	6 501	6 393	6 346	6 609	6 685	1.2
Other sheep and lambs	4 312	3 955	4 241	4 272	4 563	6.8

(a) 2016 results are provisional.

Figures for 2015 have been revised to take into account late inventory returns and additional data cleansing. The table below shows the minimal effect of the revisions:

Table 4: Effect of revisions to Sheep figures for 2015

	2015		Thousands % change
	Original	Revised	
Total sheep and lambs	10 877	10 881	0.0
Female breeding sheep	6 601	6 609	0.1
Other sheep and lambs	4 276	4 272	-0.1

Survey methodology

Data for this 2016 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 brought the total sample size to 798 holdings, achieving a response rate of 94%, 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, or one hectare of orchards, or 0.5 hectares of vegetables or 0.1 hectares of protected crops, or more than 10 cows, or 50 pigs, or 20 sheep, or 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.

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.
- 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 animal diseases 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

- 16 March 2017: Farming Statistics Livestock Populations at 1 December 2016, 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.