



14th January 2016

United Kingdom Slaughter Statistics – December 2015

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Key points

This release shows the latest monthly information on the slaughtering of cattle, sheep and pigs. It also includes dressed carcase weight and meat production information. The key results for **December 2015** are given below:

- **Cattle:** UK prime cattle (steers, heifers and young bulls) slaughterings in December 2015 were 6.7% higher than December 2014 at 148 thousand head. Beef and veal production was 70 thousand tonnes, 11% higher than in December 2014.
- **Sheep:** UK clean sheep slaughterings were 3.8% lower than in December 2014 at 1.1 million head. Mutton and lamb production was 23 thousand tonnes, 3.6% lower than in December 2014.
- **Pigs:** UK clean pig slaughterings were 2.8% higher than in December 2014 at 821 thousand head. Pigmeat production was 69 thousand tonnes, 3.3% higher than in December 2014.

Monthly data for December 2015 contains a higher than usual level of estimation. We expect to be able to replace these with actual data in time for our next publication. This notice will be updated at 09:30 on 18th February 2016. Additional time series which include weekly slaughter averages, production and trade data can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/cattle-sheep-and-pig-slaughter>

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Section 1: Monthly numbers of home killed livestock slaughtered

Table 1 shows monthly estimates of the number of home killed cattle, sheep and pigs, slaughtered as meat for human consumption in UK abattoirs. The survey is run according to statistical, rather than calendar months, the number of weeks in the statistical month is specified below.

Table 1: United Kingdom monthly numbers of livestock slaughtered thousand head

	December 2014 4 weeks	October 2015 5 weeks	November 2015 4 weeks	December 2015 4 weeks	yr on yr % change
Steers	72	103	87	79	9.4%
Heifers	55	69	59	56	1.6%
Young Bulls	12	19	15	14	13%
Cows and Adult Bulls	47	70	61	51	8.0%
Calves ⁽¹⁾	7	12	8	7	5.2%
Clean Sheep	1109	1376	1108	1067	-3.8%
Ewes and Rams	125	169	141	119	-4.8%
Clean Pigs	798	1086	887	821	2.8%
Sows and Boars	16	25	20	17	6.6%

(1)The definition of Calves from May 2014 is "Bovines less than 1 year old". Pre-May 2014, the definition was "Bovines weighing less than 165kg". Please see Methodology page for full details.

Section 2: Average dressed carcass weights

Table 2 shows the monthly average dressed carcass weight of livestock slaughtered for meat for human consumption in the United Kingdom.

Table 2: United Kingdom average dressed carcass weights kilogramme

	October 2015	November 2015	December 2015
Steers	372.7	372.4	383.0
Heifers	331.9	331.4	338.9
Young Bulls	329.3	330.3	318.6
Cows and Adult Bulls	310.1	311.6	310.9
Calves ⁽¹⁾	56.7	60.4	62.4
Clean Sheep	19.5	19.6	18.9
Ewes and Rams	25.4	25.3	26.7
Clean Pigs	81.8	81.7	80.9
Sows and Boars	147.6	146.5	147.3

(1)The definition of Calves from May 2014 is "Bovines less than 1 year old". Pre-May 2014, the definition was "Bovines weighing less than 165kg". Please see Methodology page for full details.

Section 3: Monthly volumes of home killed meat production

Table 3 shows the monthly volumes of meat produced in UK abattoirs. Data is shown according to statistical, rather than calendar months, number of weeks in statistical month as specified.

Table 3: United Kingdom monthly volumes of meat production thousand tonnes

	October 2015 5 weeks	November 2015 4 weeks	December 2015 4 weeks
Beef	90	77	70
Mutton and Lamb	31	25	23
Pigmeat	93	75	69

Section 4: Average weekly numbers of home killed livestock slaughtered

Table 4 shows the average weekly slaughter figures for the last thirteen months. The monthly slaughter figures in section one are affected by the number of weeks in the statistical month. To get a clearer measure of trends weekly averages are calculated by dividing the number of livestock slaughtered each month by the number of weeks in the statistical month.

Longer term trends can be seen in Figures 4:1, 4:2 and 4:3, following this table.

Table 4: United Kingdom average weekly numbers of livestock slaughtered thousand head

	2014		2015										
	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Steers	18	19	20	20	19	19	18	19	18	19	21	22	20
Heifers	14	15	16	15	14	13	12	12	12	12	14	15	14
Young Bulls	3	3	3	3	3	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	3
Cows and Adult Bulls	12	13	13	11	10	9	10	11	12	12	14	15	13
Calves ⁽¹⁾	2	2	2	3	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
Clean Sheep	277	226	219	234	217	208	245	258	282	324	275	277	267
Ewes and Rams	31	27	29	27	28	26	30	30	33	43	34	35	30
Clean Pigs	199	191	204	203	194	197	203	201	205	207	217	222	205
Sows and Boars	4	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4

(1)The definition of Calves from May 2014 is "Bovines less than 1 year old". Pre-May 2014, the definition was "Bovines weighing less than 165kg". Please see Methodology page for full details.

Figure 4:1 United Kingdom average weekly numbers of cattle slaughtered

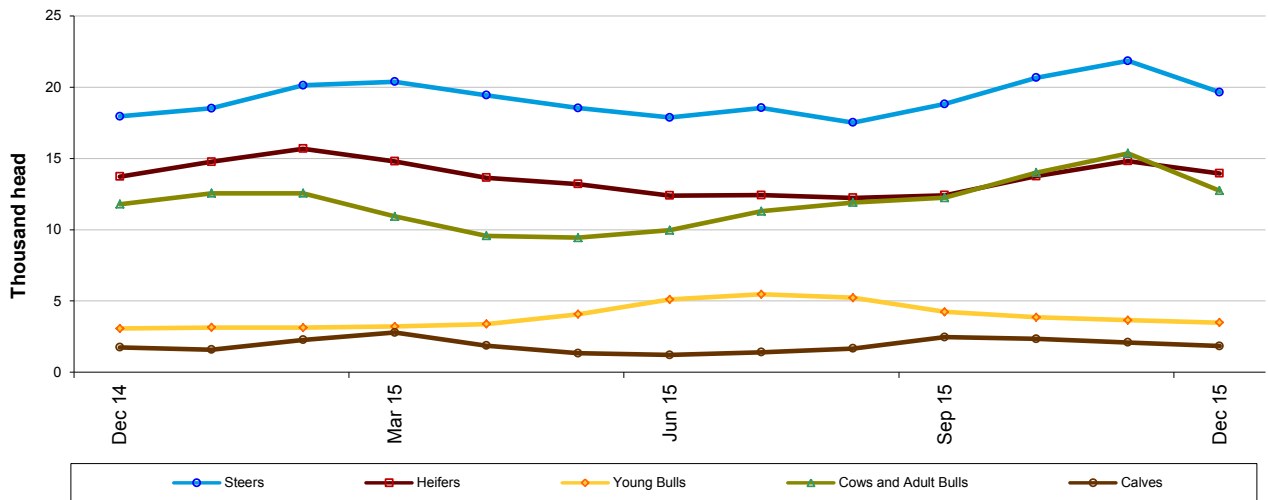


Figure 4:2 United Kingdom average weekly numbers of sheep slaughtered

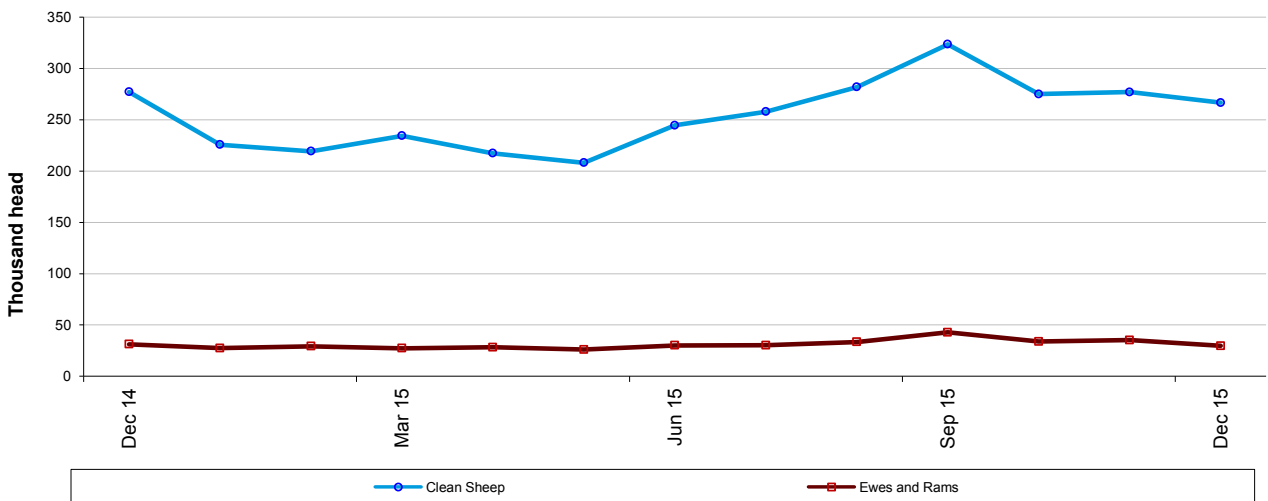
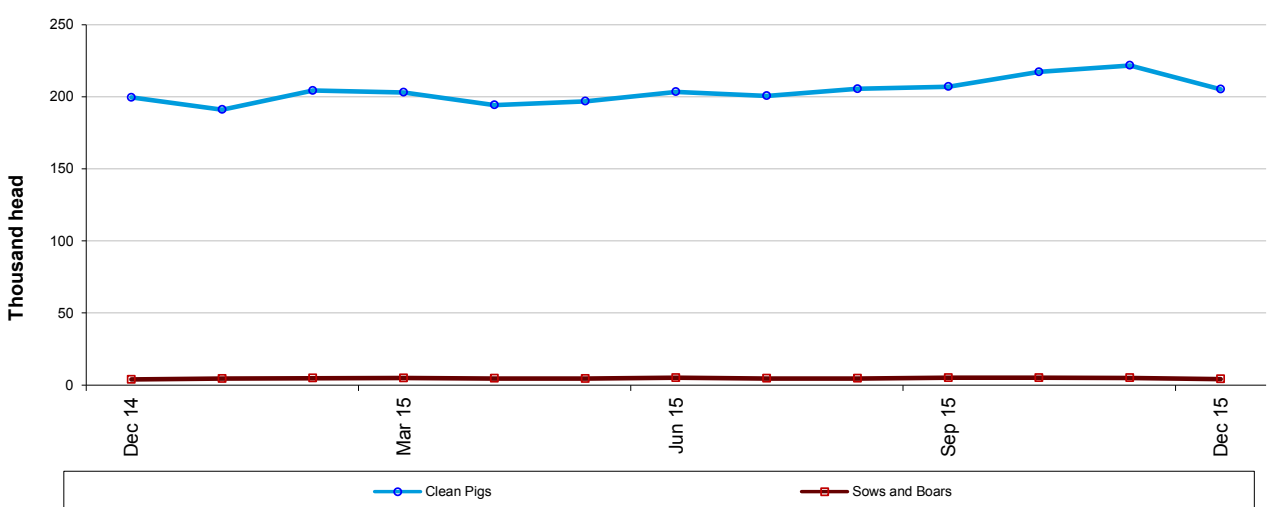


Figure 4:3 United Kingdom average weekly numbers of pigs slaughtered



Section 5: Monthly numbers of home killed livestock slaughtered by country

Table 5 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 5: United Kingdom monthly numbers of livestock slaughtered by country

	thousand head		
	October 2015	November 2015	December 2015
	5 weeks	4 weeks	4 weeks
England & Wales			
Steers	65	54	49
Heifers	42	37	33
Young Bulls	14	11	9
Cows and Adult Bulls	52	46	38
Calves ⁽¹⁾	11	8	7
Clean Sheep	1174	961	931
Ewes and Rams	164	137	115
Clean Pigs	891	729	674
Sows and Boars	25	20	17
Scotland			
Steers	20	17	16
Heifers	15	13	13
Young Bulls	3	2	2
Cows and Adult Bulls	7	6	5
Calves ⁽¹⁾	0	0	0
Clean Sheep	141	106	103
Ewes and Rams	2	2	1
Clean Pigs	30	24	24
Sows and Boars	0	0	0
Great Britain			
Steers	85	72	65
Heifers	58	50	46
Young Bulls	17	13	11
Cows and Adult Bulls	59	51	43
Calves ⁽¹⁾	11	8	7
Clean Sheep	1315	1067	1033
Ewes and Rams	166	138	116
Clean Pigs	920	752	698
Sows and Boars	25	20	17
Northern Ireland			
Steers	19	16	14
Heifers	11	10	9
Young Bulls	2	2	3
Cows and Adult Bulls	11	10	8
Calves ⁽¹⁾	1	1	1
Clean Sheep	61	41	33
Ewes and Rams	4	3	2
Clean Pigs	166	135	123
Sows and Boars	0	0	0

Section 6: Data users, methodology, Definitions and revisions policy

Data users

1. Users of the data include the EU Commission where these slaughtering statistics are required monthly under Regulation no. EC.1165/2008. Detailed information on this legislation is available by selecting “Animal Production” at <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/agriculture/legislation>. European level statistics on meat products (which includes data tables showing results at EU Member State level) are available at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Agricultural_products#Meat_and_milk
2. 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 <http://beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/markets/> The AHDB Pork site provides more in-depth analysis of pigmeat production statistics at <http://pork.ahdb.org.uk/prices-stats/>
3. Contact details are available on the front page of this notice, for you to send feedback or ask questions about the information provided.

Methodology

4. Defra runs a monthly survey of registered England and Wales slaughterhouses. It is a statutory survey (approximately 97) 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 DARD in Northern Ireland. Scottish statistics on livestock slaughterings are available in the Economic Report on Scottish Agriculture at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Agriculture-Fisheries/PubEconomicReport> (Tables A5 and A6). This website also contains contact details and more information. Northern Ireland results are available at <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/index/statistics/agricultural-inputs-and-outputs.htm>
5. 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 for smaller slaughterhouses to give complete monthly coverage of livestock slaughterings.
6. 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.

7. 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.
8. 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.

Definitions

9. 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".

Revisions policy

10. 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.
11. **This month there have been minor revisions to previously published November 2015 data. The revisions are small for example beef production has increased from 76.5 to 76.7 thousand tonnes (3.9%). This is due to actual survey data replacing estimates and revised Scottish data.**