



18th January 2018

United Kingdom Slaughter Statistics – December 2017

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Key points

The key results for **December 2017 compared to December 2016** are:

- **Cattle:** UK prime cattle (steers, heifers and young bulls) slaughterings in December 2017 were down 5.9% on December 2016 at 147,000 head. Beef and veal production was 69,000 tonnes, 5.0% lower than in December 2016.
- **Sheep:** UK clean sheep slaughterings were up 3.5% on December 2016 at 1250,000 head. Mutton and lamb production was 27,000 tonnes, 2.6% higher than in December 2016.
- **Pigs:** UK clean pig slaughterings were 6.1% lower than in December 2016 at 803,000 head. Pigmeat production was 68,000 tonnes, 6.2% lower than in December 2016.

This notice will be updated at 09:30 on 15th February 2018. 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.

Table 1: United Kingdom monthly numbers of livestock slaughtered

thousand head

	December 2016 31 days	October 2017 31 days	November 2017 30 days	December 2017 31 days	yr on yr % change
Steers	82	93	95	78	-5.0%
Heifers	61	64	68	57	-5.7%
Young Bulls	14	15	15	12	-12%
Cows and Adult Bulls	58	68	72	54	-7.0%
Calves(1)	9	12	11	6	-30%
Clean Sheep	1207	1254	1279	1250	3.5%
Ewes and Rams	136	137	131	132	-3.4%
Clean Pigs	855	925	977	803	-6.1%
Sows and Boars	17	17	20	14	-17%

(1) The definition of calves from May 2014 is "Bovines less than 1 year". Please see methodology for full details.

Section 2: Average dressed carcase weights

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

Table 2: United Kingdom average dressed carcase weights

kilogramme

	September 2017	October 2017	November 2017	December 2017
Steers	364.2	362.9	354.5	368.1
Heifers	327.1	327.8	328.0	331.1
Young Bulls	323.5	322.2	320.7	314.2
Cows and Adult Bulls	308.4	306.1	308.0	310.6
Calves(1)	52.9	67.5	84.6	70.4
Clean Sheep	19.0	19.2	19.1	18.9
Ewes and Rams	26.1	25.1	25.9	25.6
Clean Pigs	84.5	85.1	84.2	82.3
Sows and Boars	146.1	141.8	146.1	144.0

(1)The definition of calves from May 2014 is "Bovines less than 1 year". Please see methodology for full details.

Section 3: Monthly volumes of home killed meat production

Table 3 shows the monthly volumes of meat produced in UK abattoirs.

Table 3: United Kingdom monthly volumes of meat production

	thousand tonnes				
	December 2016 31 days	October 2017 31 days	November 2017 30 days	December 2017 31 days	yr on yr % change
Beef	72	81	84	69	-5.0%
Mutton and Lamb	26	27	28	27	2.6%
Pigmeat	73	81	85	68	-6.2%

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 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 4:1, 4:2 and 4:3, following this table.

Table 4: United Kingdom average weekly numbers of livestock slaughtered

	thousand head												
	2016		2017										
	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Steers	19	19	20	21	19	21	20	18	19	20	21	22	18
Heifers	14	15	15	15	13	14	13	13	13	14	15	16	13
Young Bulls	3	3	3	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	3	4	3
Cows and Adult Bulls	13	13	13	12	10	11	11	11	12	13	15	17	12
Calves(1)	2	2	2	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	1
Clean Sheep	273	224	221	236	230	221	244	240	277	283	283	299	282
Ewes and Rams	31	28	30	30	28	30	30	31	33	34	31	31	30
Clean Pigs	193	194	198	204	181	200	198	188	205	204	209	228	181
Sows and Boars	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	4	5	3

(1)The definition of calves from May 2014 is "Bovines less than 1 year". Please see methodology for full details.

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

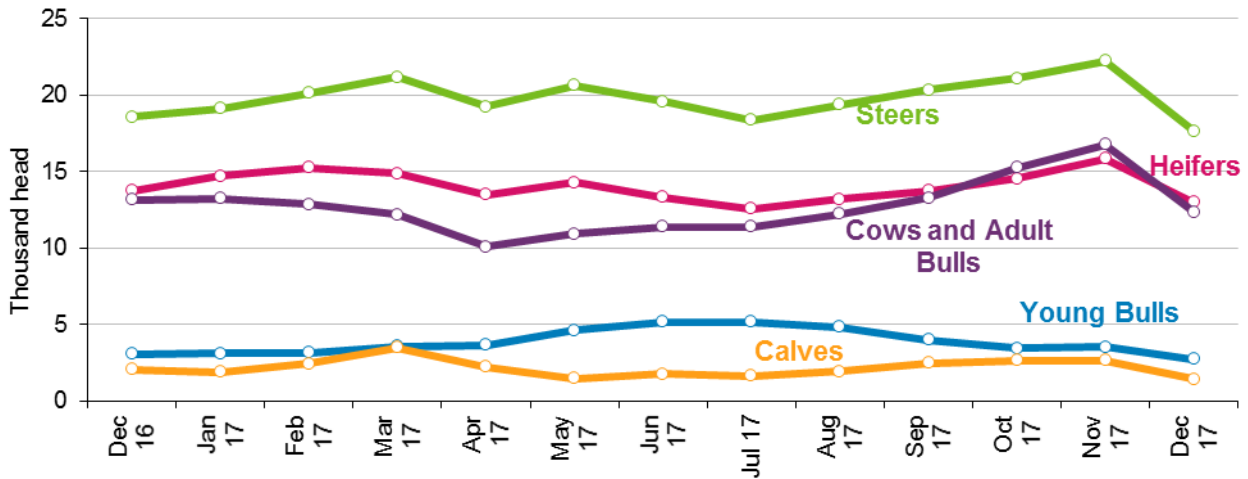


Figure 4:2 United Kingdom average weekly numbers of sheep slaughtered

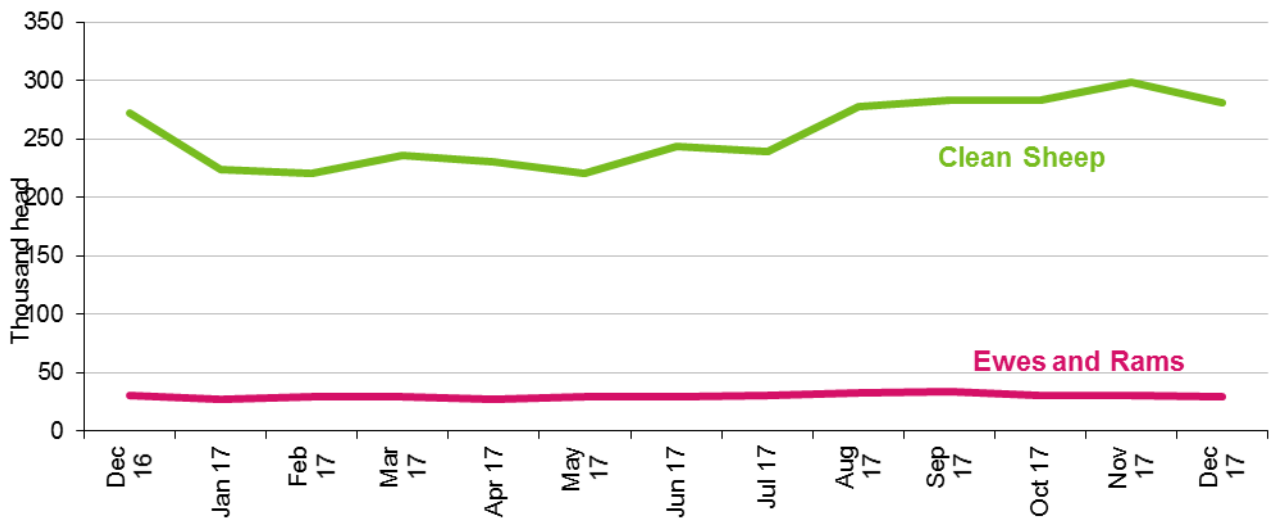
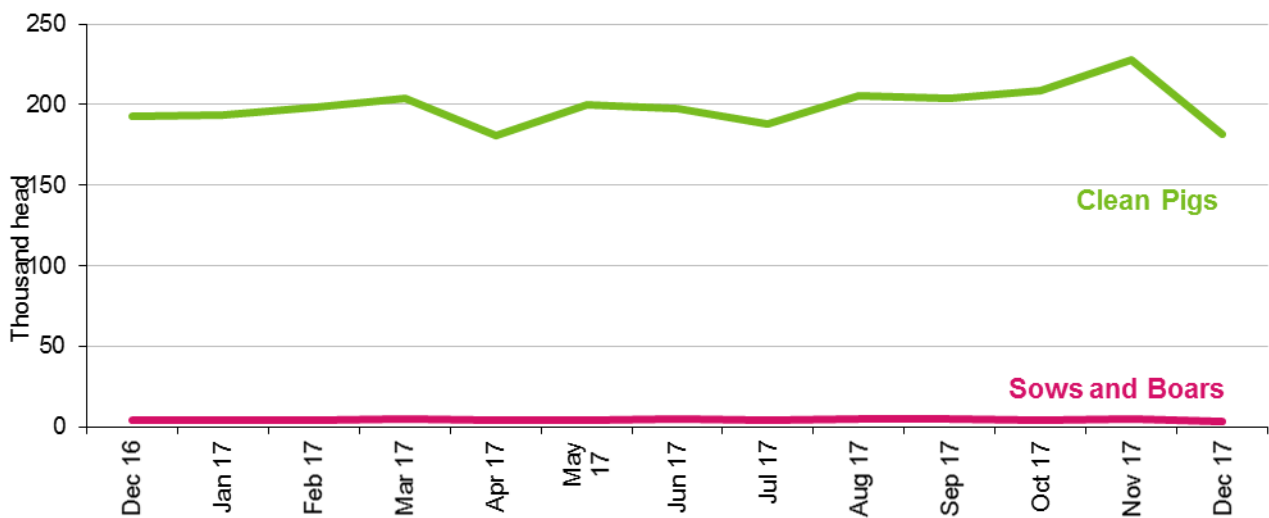


Figure 4:3 United Kingdom average weekly numbers of pigs slaughtered



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 2017	November 2017	December 2017
	31 days	30 days	31 days
England & Wales			
Steers	58	61	50
Heifers	40	42	35
Young Bulls	11	11	8
Cows and Adult Bulls	48	53	42
Calves	11	11	6
Clean Sheep	1094	1140	1125
Ewes and Rams	131	125	128
Clean Pigs	759	808	675
Sows and Boars	17	20	14
Scotland			
Steers	18	18	17
Heifers	13	14	14
Young Bulls	2	2	2
Cows and Adult Bulls	8	7	6
Calves	0	0	0
Clean Sheep	115	105	102
Ewes and Rams	2	3	2
Clean Pigs	7	21	28
Sows and Boars	0	0	0
Great Britain			
Steers	76	79	67
Heifers	53	56	49
Young Bulls	13	13	10
Cows and Adult Bulls	56	60	48
Calves	11	11	6
Clean Sheep	1209	1245	1227
Ewes and Rams	133	128	130
Clean Pigs	766	828	703
Sows and Boars	17	20	14
Northern Ireland			
Steers	17	16	11
Heifers	11	12	8
Young Bulls	3	2	2
Cows and Adult Bulls	12	12	7
Calves	1	1	0
Clean Sheep	45	34	23
Ewes and Rams	3	3	2
Clean Pigs	159	149	100
Sows and Boars	0	0	0

14 is "Bovines less than 1 year".

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 91) 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 <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 <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/slaughtering-cattle-and-sheep> and <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/slaughtering-pigs-2003>
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 from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) 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.
9. 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.
10. The January 2016 data will include the last week of December 2015 and therefore be classed as a 5 week month. From 1st February 2016 onwards the statistics are based on calendar months.

Definitions

11. 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

12. 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.
- d. There has been revisions to data from August 2017 to November 2017