



16th January 2020

United Kingdom Slaughter Statistics – December 2019

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Key points

The key results for **December 2019 compared to December 2018** are:

- **Cattle:** UK prime cattle (steers, heifers and young bulls) slaughterings in December 2019 were down 0.6% on December 2018 at 153,000 head. Beef and veal production was 71,000 tonnes, 1.8% higher than in December 2018.
- **Sheep:** UK clean sheep slaughterings were down 0.7% on December 2018 at 1190,000 head. Mutton and lamb production was 27,000 tonnes, 0.5% higher than in December 2018.
- **Pigs:** UK clean pig slaughterings were 12% higher than in December 2018 at 934,000 head. Pigmear production was 82,000 tonnes, 14% higher than in December 2018.

Response rates for December were 93% for England and Wales.

This notice will be updated at 09:30 on Thursday 13th February 2020. 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 2018 31 days	October 2019 31 days	November 2019 30 days	December 2019 31 days	yr on yr % change
Steers	79	97	93	81	2.0%
Heifers	62	74	72	62	-0.7%
Young Bulls	12	15	14	10	-17%
Cows and Adult Bulls	56	73	69	57	2.4%
Calves(1)	9	15	10	7	-22%
Clean Sheep	1198	1300	1238	1190	-0.7%
Ewes and Rams	142	157	136	143	0.6%
Clean Pigs	835	1002	960	934	12%
Sows and Boars	17	22	22	19	15%

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

Section 2: Average dressed carcass weights (2)

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

Table 2: United Kingdom average dressed carcass weights (2)

	kilogramme			
	December 2018	October 2019	November 2019	December 2019
Steers	357.4	358.8	358.9	363.5
Heifers	322.2	316.1	324.1	325.0
Young Bulls	325.7	333.9	330.1	327.2
Cows and Adult Bulls	299.7	304.5	305.2	307.9
Calves(1)	64.6	54.5	61.6	70.9
Clean Sheep	19.1	19.5	19.6	19.4
Ewes and Rams	25.7	25.5	25.6	25.1
Clean Pigs	83.5	85.6	85.5	84.9
Sows and Boars	146.0	143.6	146.1	143.3

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

(2) Revised methodology for calculating cattle DCW has been applied from January 2018 onwards. 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 2018 31 days	October 2019 31 days	November 2019 30 days	December 2019 31 days	yr on yr % change
Beef	70	86	83	71	1.8%
Mutton and Lamb	27	29	28	27	0.5%
Pigmeat	72	89	85	82	14%

(1) Revised methodology for calculating cattle DCW has been applied from January 2018 onwards. This change will impact production volume data. Please see methodology for full details.

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													
	2018	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019
	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Steers	18	20	21	19	19	20	18	18	18	21	22	22	18
Heifers	14	16	17	15	15	15	14	14	14	16	17	17	14
Young Bulls	3	3	3	3	4	4	5	5	4	4	3	3	2
Cows and Adult Bulls	13	14	14	13	11	12	12	12	12	14	17	16	13
Calves	2	2	3	4	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2
Clean Sheep	270	233	227	224	248	223	212	246	283	278	294	289	269
Ewes and Rams	32	32	34	31	31	31	26	34	39	33	35	32	32
Clean Pigs	189	212	209	194	207	206	189	205	212	210	226	224	211
Sows and Boars	4	6	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	4

(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

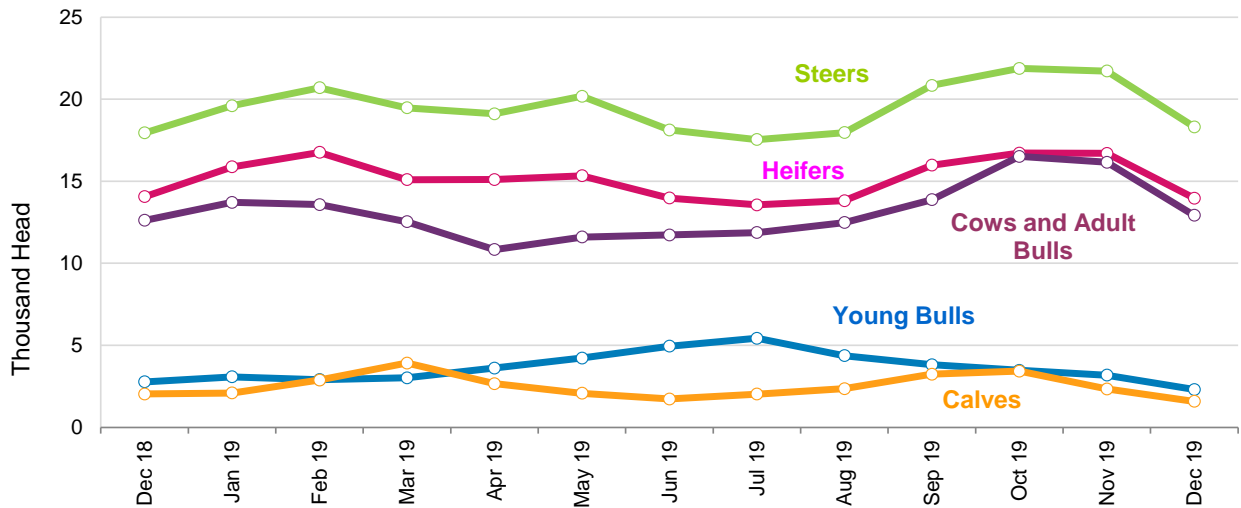


Figure 4:2 United Kingdom average weekly numbers of sheep slaughtered

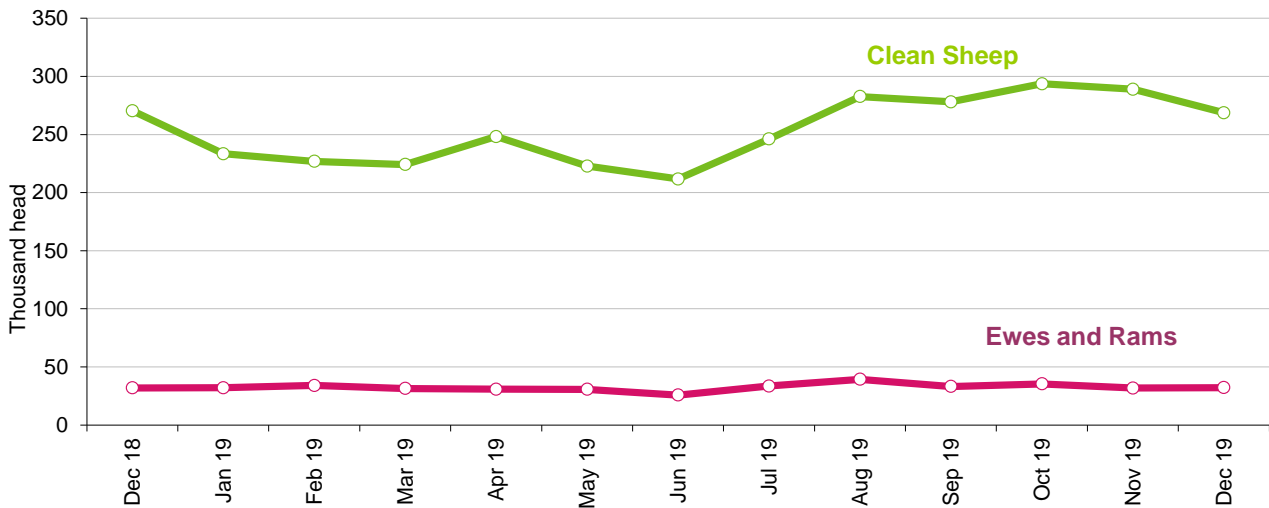
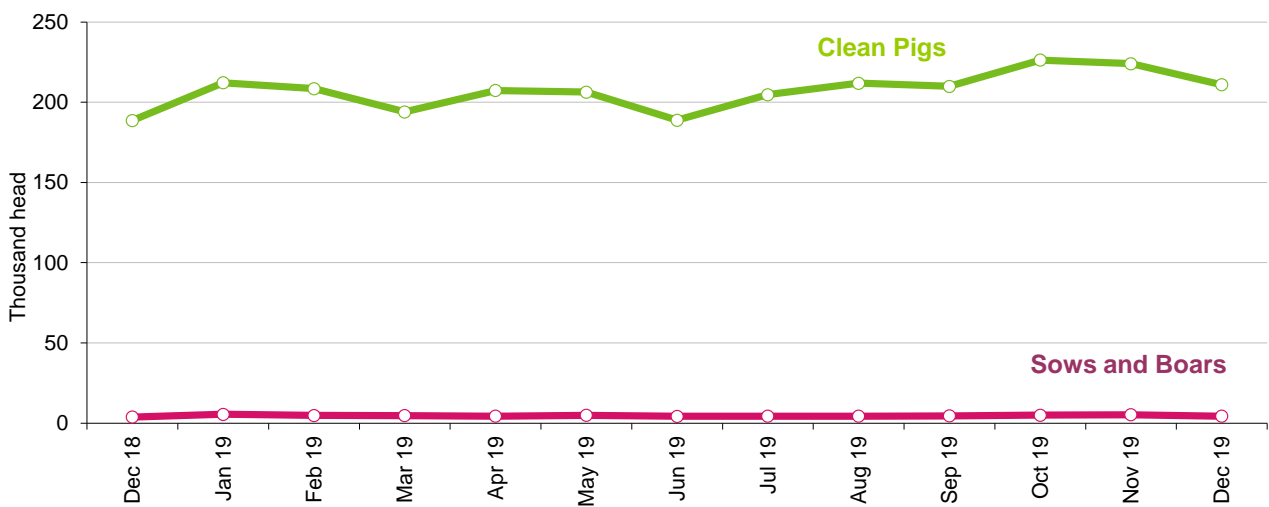


Figure 4:3 United Kingdom average weekly numbers of pigs slaughtered



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 2019	November 2019	December 2019
	31 days	30 days	31 days
England & Wales			
Steers	60	60	53
Heifers	48	45	39
Young Bulls	10	9	7
Cows and Adult Bulls	55	53	45
Calves	15	9	7
Clean Sheep	1127	1073	1057
Ewes and Rams	152	132	139
Clean Pigs	809	769	734
Sows and Boars	20	21	18
Scotland			
Steers	19	19	16
Heifers	14	14	13
Young Bulls	2	2	1
Cows and Adult Bulls	6	6	4
Calves	0	0	0
Clean Sheep	135	127	104
Ewes and Rams	2	2	2
Clean Pigs	30	30	27
Sows and Boars	2	2	1
Great Britain			
Steers	79	78	69
Heifers	62	59	51
Young Bulls	12	11	8
Cows and Adult Bulls	61	59	49
Calves	15	9	7
Clean Sheep	1262	1200	1162
Ewes and Rams	154	134	141
Clean Pigs	838	800	761
Sows and Boars	22	22	19
Northern Ireland			
Steers	18	15	13
Heifers	12	12	11
Young Bulls	3	3	2
Cows and Adult Bulls	12	11	8
Calves	1	1	0
Clean Sheep	38	38	28
Ewes and Rams	3	3	2
Clean Pigs	164	160	173
Sows and Boars	0	0	0

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

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 85) 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.
11. We have carried out a review of the methodology for calculating the dressed carcass weights in order to align with UK specifications. Some slaughterhouses provide Cattle Dressed Carcass Weights (DCW) including Kidney Knob and Channel Fat (KKCF); some slaughterhouses provide pig weights at EC specification. From September 2019 cattle DCWs are calculated to UK specification which excludes KKCF; Pigs are dressed to UK specification.
12. To calculate the DCW of animals by category:
 - a. If the slaughterhouse includes KKCF in the total weight, a deduction of 3.9% occurs. This aligns to the UK DCW specification.
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-beef-carcass-classification-scheme-classify-carcasses>
 - b. If pigs are dressed to EC specification then an increase of 1.6% to the DCW occurs to align with UK specification.
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-pig-carcass-grading-scheme-dress-and-grade-carcasses>
13. Some slaughterhouses specialise for niche markets. These slaughterhouses are treated separately so their DCW are not used to raise the data for those slaughterhouses who do not provide DCW data.
14. Data have been revised to January 2018 using the new methodology. If you have any questions or comments we are happy to discuss. Please contact us at DEFRA.FISU@defra.gov.uk

Definitions

15. 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

16. 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.

National Statistics status

17. National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

18. The statistics last underwent a full assessment [[Assessment Report 271 Statistics on Agriculture](#)] against the [Code of Practice for Statistics in 2014](#).

19. Since the latest review by the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics and have enhanced data quality by reviewing methodologies and data sources.