



15th October 2020

United Kingdom Slaughter Statistics – September 2020

Due to the increased strain Covid-19 is having on the Livestock industry, our survey response were lower than usual at 91%. To compensate we have made greater use of the Food Standards Agency throughput data to maintain coverage. This may impact on how within species numbers are split amongst their classifications; such as how sheep numbers are split amongst clean sheep and ewe & rams.

This release shows the latest monthly information on the number of slaughters in the United Kingdom for cattle, sheep and pigs. It also contains monthly average dressed carcass weight for cattle, sheep, and pigs; and monthly volumes of home killed meat production.

The key results for September 2020 compared to September 2019 are:

- **Cattle:** UK prime cattle (steers, heifers and young bulls) slaughterings in September 2020 were down 3.2% on September 2019 at 169,000 head. Beef and veal production was 78,000 tonnes, 1.3% lower than in September 2019.
- **Sheep:** UK clean sheep slaughterings were up 1.6% on September 2019 at 1211,000 head. Mutton and lamb production was 27,000 tonnes, 0.5% lower than in September 2019.
- **Pigs:** UK clean pig slaughterings were 1.1% higher than in September 2019 at 910,000 head. Pigmeat production was 83,000 tonnes, 4.7% higher than in September 2019.
- The response rate for September was 91% in England and Wales.

Section 1 – Livestock slaughtered

1.1 Monthly numbers of home killed livestock slaughtered

Table 1.1 shows monthly estimates of the number of home killed cattle, sheep and pigs, slaughtered as meat for human consumption in UK abattoirs.

Table 1.1: United Kingdom monthly numbers of livestock slaughtered (Thousand head)

	September 2019	July 2020	August 2020	September 2020	yr on yr
	30 days	31 days	31 days	30 days	% change
Steers	89	88	81	87	-2.4%
Heifers	68	68	65	67	-2.8%
Young Bulls	16	24	18	15	-8.8%
Cows and Adult Bulls	59	60	56	63	5.9%
Calves	14	5	5	7	-48%
Clean Sheep	1192	1292	1239	1211	1.6%
Ewes and Rams	142	154	123	127	-11%
Clean Pigs	900	969	895	910	1.1%
Sows and Boars	20	22	18	23	16%

1.2 Average weekly numbers of home killed livestock slaughtered

Table 1.2 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 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3, following this table.

Table 1.2: United Kingdom average weekly numbers of livestock slaughtered (Thousand head)

	2019	2019	2019	2019	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Steers	21	22	22	18	20	20	21	20	19	20	20	18	20
Heifers	16	17	17	14	16	17	17	16	16	15	15	15	16
Young Bulls	4	3	3	2	3	3	3	4	4	5	5	4	3
Cows and Adult Bulls	14	17	16	13	14	13	13	11	10	14	13	13	15
Calves	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	1	1	1	1	2
Clean Sheep	278	294	289	269	235	202	209	218	200	231	292	280	282
Ewes and Rams	33	35	32	32	29	29	30	24	21	26	35	28	30
Clean Pigs	210	226	224	211	217	208	214	213	180	195	219	202	212
Sows and Boars	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	3	4	5	4	5

Figure 1.1 United Kingdom average weekly numbers of cattle slaughtered

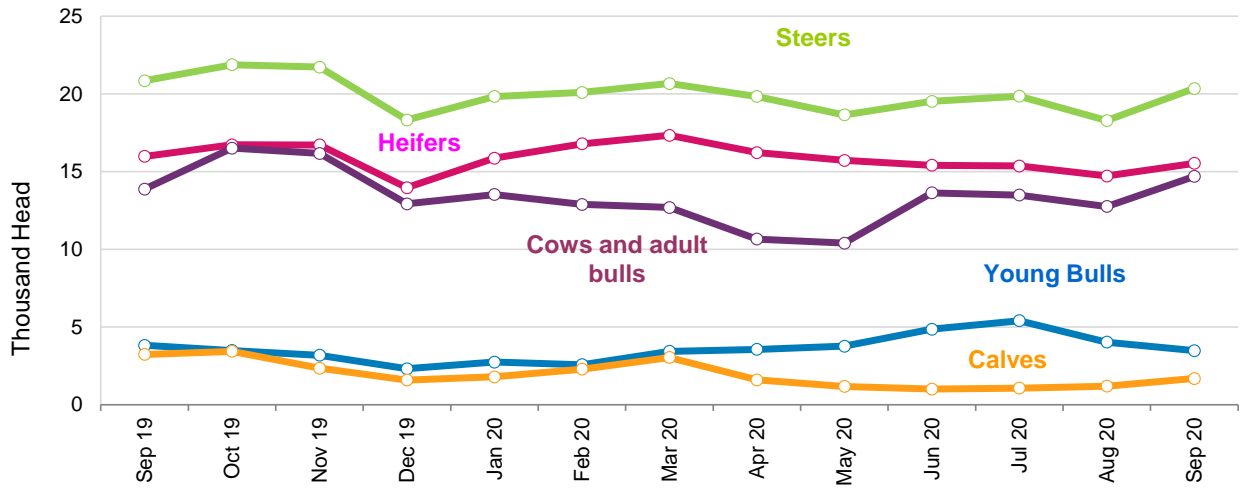


Figure 1.2 United Kingdom average weekly numbers of sheep slaughtered

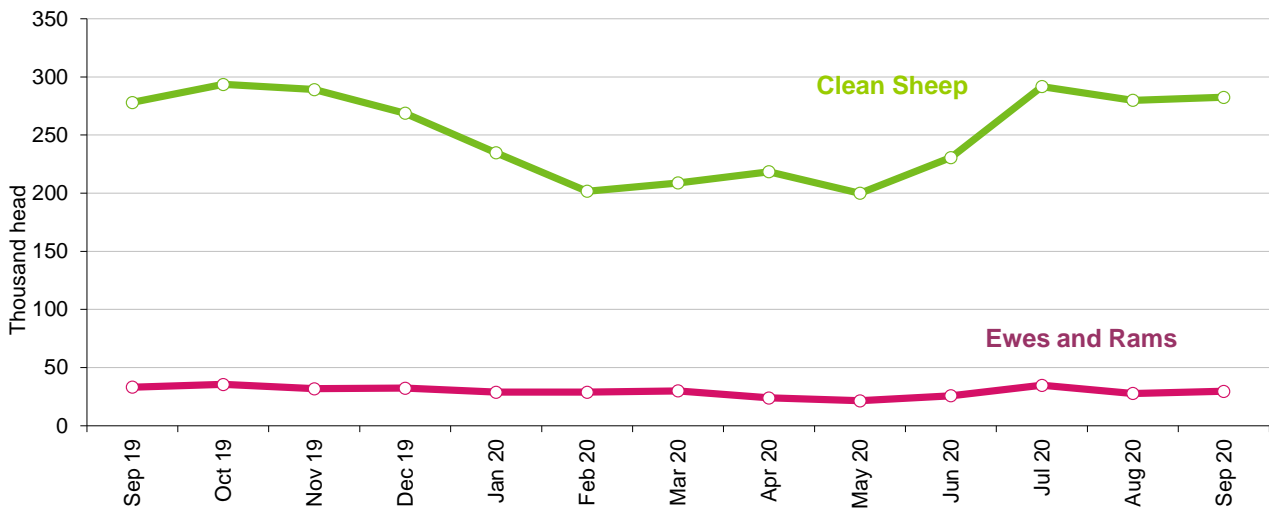
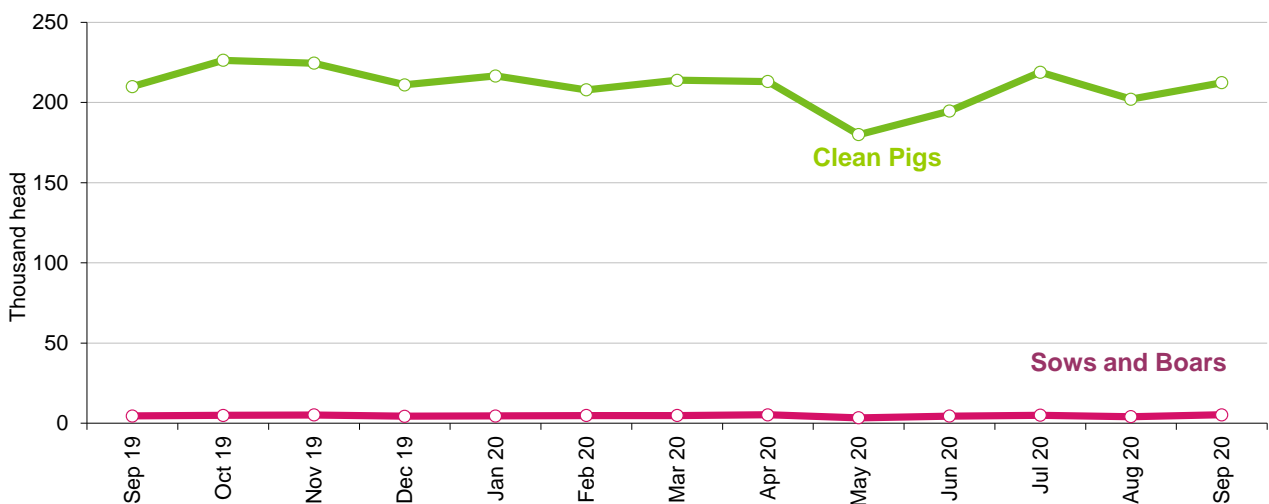


Figure 1.3 United Kingdom average weekly numbers of pigs slaughtered



1.3 Monthly numbers of home killed livestock slaughtered by country

Table 1.3 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 1.3: United Kingdom monthly numbers of livestock slaughtered by country (Thousand head)

	July 2020 31 days	August 2020 31 days	September 2020 30 days
England & Wales			
Steers	58	51	56
Heifers	46	43	45
Young Bulls	15	11	10
Cows and Adult Bulls	44	41	47
Calves	4	5	7
Clean Sheep	1142	1091	1068
Ewes and Rams	151	119	123
Clean Pigs	776	722	719
Sows and Boars	21	17	21
Scotland			
Steers	17	16	15
Heifers	12	12	11
Young Bulls	5	4	2
Cows and Adult Bulls	6	6	6
Calves	0	0	0
Clean Sheep	103	100	100
Ewes and Rams	1	2	2
Clean Pigs	31	31	30
Sows and Boars	1	1	1
Great Britain			
Steers	76	67	71
Heifers	58	55	56
Young Bulls	20	15	12
Cows and Adult Bulls	50	47	53
Calves	4	5	7
Clean Sheep	1244	1191	1168
Ewes and Rams	152	120	124
Clean Pigs	808	753	750
Sows and Boars	22	18	23
Northern Ireland			
Steers	12	14	16
Heifers	10	10	11
Young Bulls	4	3	3
Cows and Adult Bulls	10	9	10
Calves	0	0	0
Clean Sheep	48	48	42
Ewes and Rams	2	2	2
Clean Pigs	162	141	160
Sows and Boars	0	0	0

Section 2 – Average dressed carcass weights

2.1 Monthly average dressed carcass weights for cattle, sheep, and pigs

Table 2.1 shows the monthly average dressed carcass weight (DCW) of livestock slaughtered for meat for human consumption in the United Kingdom.

Table 2.1: United Kingdom average dressed carcass weights ⁽¹⁾ (kilogramme)

	September 2019	July 2020	August 2020	September 2020
Steers	360.9	359.3	358.5	356.5
Heifers	316.8	324.4	324.5	323.2
Young Bulls	342.2	348.7	350.6	342.2
Cows and Adult Bulls	306.0	317.0	312.1	306.5
Calves	56.6	85.8	98.1	73.8
Clean Sheep	19.5	19.3	19.2	19.3
Ewes and Rams	25.7	28.2	28.9	26.9
Clean Pigs	84.6	86.0	86.4	87.1
Sows and Boars	145.8	143.7	147.1	148.6

(1) Revised methodology for calculating cattle DCW has been applied from January 2018 onwards. Please see methodology for full details

Section 3 – Home killed meat production

3.1 Monthly volumes of home killed meat production

Table 3.1 shows the monthly volumes of meat produced in UK abattoirs

Table 3.1: United Kingdom monthly volumes of meat production (thousand tonnes)

	September 2019	July 2020	August 2020	September 2020	yr on yr % change
	30 days	31 days	31 days	30 days	
Beef	79	81	75	78	-1.3%
Mutton and Lamb	27	29	27	27	-0.5%
Pigmeat	79	87	80	83	4.7%

(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 – About these statistics

Methodology:

- 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 the [Economic Report on Scottish Agriculture webpage from Scottish government](#) (Tables A5 and A6). This website also contains contact details and more information. Northern Ireland results are available at the [Northern Ireland cattle sheep slaughterings webpage](#) and [Northern Ireland pig slaughterings webpage](#)
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

- To calculate the DCW of animals by category:
 - If the slaughterhouse includes KKCF in the total weight, a deduction of 3.9% occurs. This aligns to the UK DCW specification.
 - [Link to beef carcass classification scheme webpage](#)
 - If pigs are dressed to EC specification then an increase of 1.6% to the DCW occurs to align with UK specification.
 - [Link to pig carcass grade scheme webpage](#)
- 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.
- 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 livestock.statistics@defra.gov.uk.

Revisions policy:

- 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.

Data users:

- 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 the [Eurostat agriculture legislation webpage](#). European level statistics on meat products (which includes data tables showing results at EU Member State level) are available at the [Eurostat statistics on meat productions](#).
- 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 the [AHDB Beef and lamb webpage](#). The AHDB Pork site provides more in-depth analysis of pigmeat production statistics at the [AHDB pigmeat production webpage](#).

- Contact details are available on the front page of this notice, for you to send feedback or ask questions about the information provided.

Section 5 – Definitions

- 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”.

What you need to know about this release

Contact details

Livestock statistics team

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National Statistics Status

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

The continued designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in 2014 following a compliance check by the UK Statistics Authority (now the Office for Statistics Regulation) against the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Since the last review of these statistics in 2014, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made improvements including:

- Providing a detailed breakdown of livestock categories following user feedback
- Improved the data quality by updating guidance for data providers and carrying out enhanced validation checks on data received

For general enquiries about National Statistics, contact the National Statistics Public Enquiry Service:

Tel: 0845 601 3034

Email: info@statistics.gov.uk.

You can find National Statistics on the internet at the [UK government statistics webpage](#)

Future publications

This notice will be updated at 09:30 on Thursday 12th November 2020. Additional time series which include weekly slaughter averages, production and trade data can be found at the [UK government livestock statistics webpage](#).