



12th November 2020

United Kingdom Slaughter Statistics – October 2020

Due to the increased strain Covid-19 is having on the Livestock industry, our survey response were lower than usual at 88%. 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 carcase weight for cattle, sheep, and pigs; and monthly volumes of home killed meat production.

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

- **Cattle:** UK prime cattle (steers, heifers and young bulls) slaughterings in October 2020 were down 7.3% on October 2019 at 173,000 head. Beef and veal production was 81,000 tonnes, 6.6% lower than in October 2019.
- **Sheep:** UK clean sheep slaughterings were down 4.9% on October 2019 at 1236,000 head. Mutton and lamb production was 27,000 tonnes, 7.0% lower than in October 2019.
- **Pigs:** UK clean pig slaughterings were 2.1% lower than in October 2019 at 981,000 head. Pigmeat production was 90,000 tonnes, 1.2% higher than in October 2019.
- The response rate for October was 88% 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)

	October 2019	August 2020	September 2020	October 2020	yr on yr
	31 days	31 days	30 days	31 days	% change
Steers	97	81	88	91	-6.5%
Heifers	74	65	67	69	-6.3%
Young Bulls	15	18	15	13	-18%
Cows and Adult Bulls	73	56	63	68	-6.7%
Calves	15	5	7	7	-54%
Clean Sheep	1300	1239	1215	1236	-4.9%
Ewes and Rams	157	123	127	120	-24%
Clean Pigs	1002	895	909	981	-2.1%
Sows and Boars	22	18	23	23	4.9%

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	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Steers	22	22	18	20	20	21	20	19	20	20	18	20	20
Heifers	17	17	14	16	17	17	16	16	15	15	15	16	16
Young Bulls	3	3	2	3	3	3	4	4	5	5	4	3	3
Cows and Adult Bulls	17	16	13	14	13	13	11	10	14	13	13	15	15
Calves	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	1	1	1	1	2	2
Clean Sheep	294	289	269	235	202	209	218	200	231	292	280	283	279
Ewes and Rams	35	32	32	29	29	30	24	21	26	35	28	30	27
Clean Pigs	226	224	211	217	208	214	213	180	195	219	202	212	221
Sows and Boars	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	3	4	5	4	5	5

Figure 1.1 United Kingdom average weekly numbers of cattle slaughtered

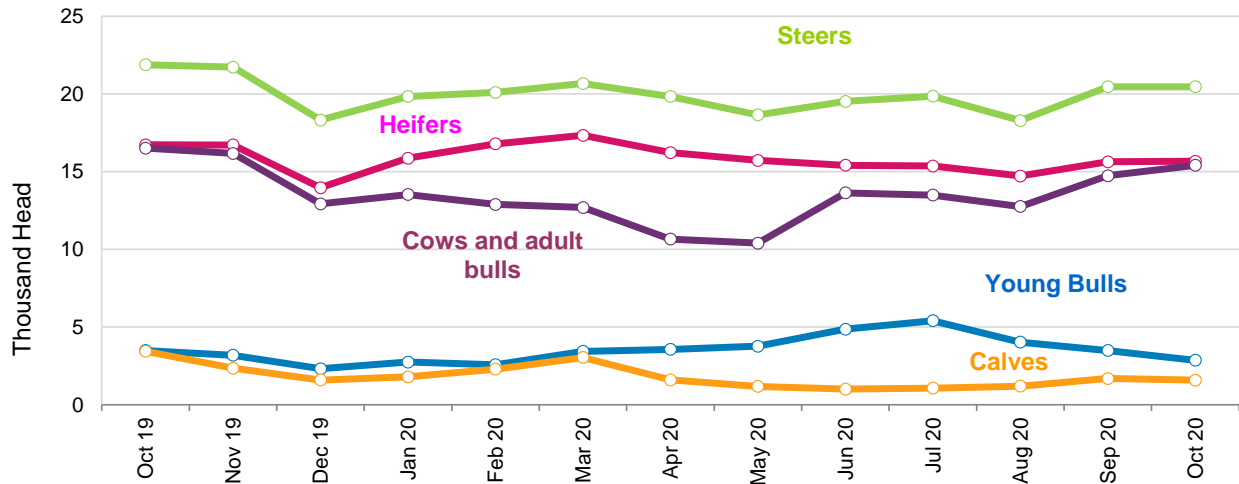


Figure 1.2 United Kingdom average weekly numbers of sheep slaughtered

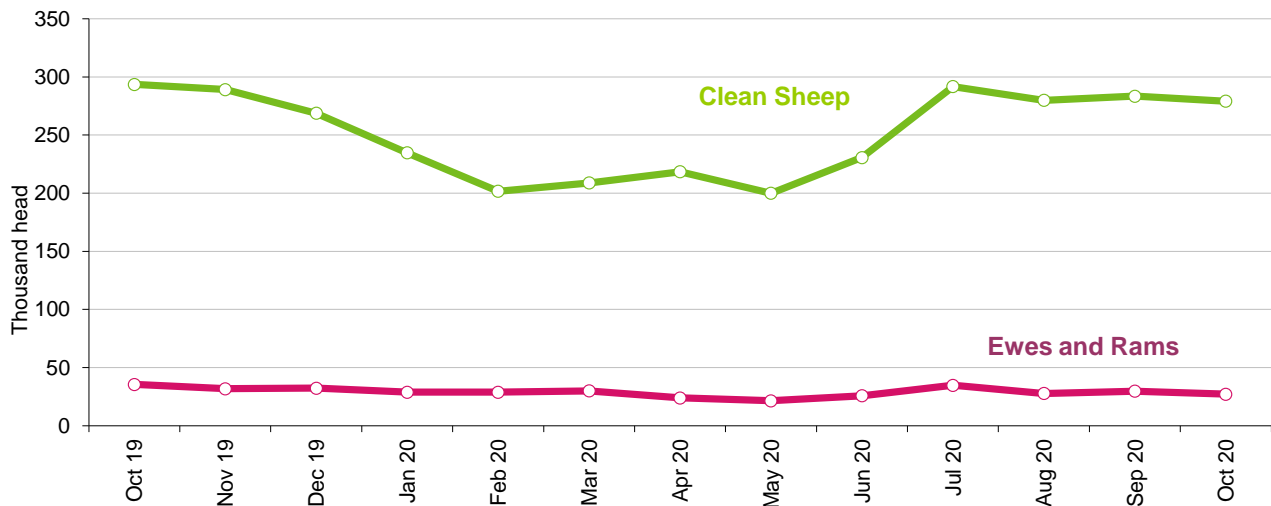
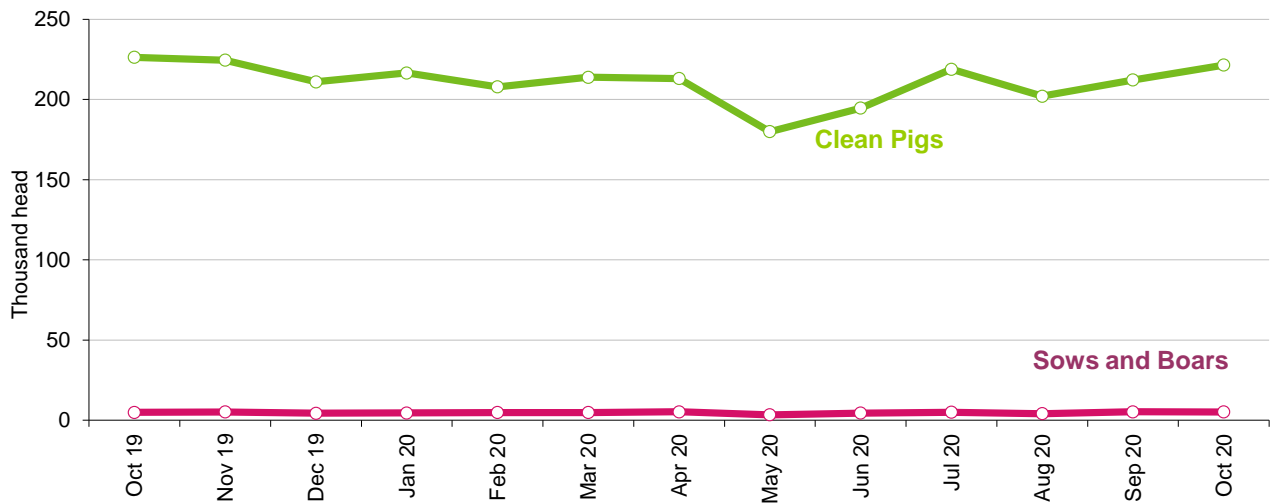


Figure 1.3 United Kingdom average weekly numbers of pigs slaughtered



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)

	August 2020 31 days	September 2020 30 days	October 2020 31 days
England & Wales			
Steers	51	56	55
Heifers	43	45	44
Young Bulls	11	10	8
Cows and Adult Bulls	41	47	50
Calves	5	7	7
Clean Sheep	1091	1068	1068
Ewes and Rams	119	123	116
Clean Pigs	722	718	769
Sows and Boars	17	21	22
Scotland			
Steers	16	16	18
Heifers	12	11	14
Young Bulls	4	2	2
Cows and Adult Bulls	6	6	7
Calves	0	0	0
Clean Sheep	100	104	124
Ewes and Rams	2	2	2
Clean Pigs	31	31	31
Sows and Boars	1	1	1
Great Britain			
Steers	67	72	73
Heifers	55	56	58
Young Bulls	15	12	10
Cows and Adult Bulls	47	53	57
Calves	5	7	7
Clean Sheep	1191	1172	1192
Ewes and Rams	120	124	117
Clean Pigs	753	749	801
Sows and Boars	18	23	23
Northern Ireland			
Steers	14	16	18
Heifers	10	11	12
Young Bulls	3	3	3
Cows and Adult Bulls	9	10	12
Calves	0	0	0
Clean Sheep	48	42	44
Ewes and Rams	2	2	2
Clean Pigs	141	160	180
Sows and Boars	0	0	0

Section 2 – Average dressed carcase weights

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

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

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

	October 2019	August 2020	September 2020	October 2020
Steers	358.8	358.5	356.6	357.6
Heifers	316.1	324.5	323.3	323.1
Young Bulls	334.1	350.6	342.2	346.7
Cows and Adult Bulls	304.5	312.1	306.6	308.7
Calves	54.5	98.1	73.8	64.9
Clean Sheep	19.5	19.2	19.3	19.5
Ewes and Rams	25.5	28.9	26.9	26.9
Clean Pigs	85.6	86.4	87.1	88.3
Sows and Boars	143.6	147.1	148.6	146.2

(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)

	October 2019	August 2020	September 2020	October 2020	yr on yr % change
	31 days	31 days	30 days	31 days	
Beef	86	75	78	81	-6.6%
Mutton and Lamb	29	27	27	27	-7.0%
Pigmeat	89	80	83	90	1.2%

(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 10th December 2020. Additional time series which include weekly slaughter averages, production and trade data can be found at the [UK government livestock statistics webpage](#).