



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

Livestock Demographic Data Group: Goat population report

**Livestock population density maps for GB, using
December 2024 data**

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Data year: December 2024

www.gov.uk/apha

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Contents

Who are these reports for and what is their purpose?	1
Who did this work?	1
What does the data show about the population?	1
What does the data not show about the population?	2
How accurate is the data?	2
How were the maps produced?	3
Acknowledgements.....	6
References	6
Annex 1: Data quality statement for goats	6
Introduction	6
Overview and purpose of source data used	7
Annex 2: Number of goat holdings and number of goats per county	11
Annex 3: Great Britain counties reference map	16

Who are these reports for and what is their purpose?

These reports are suitable for use in animal health and welfare policy work or by anyone who requires an estimate of the distribution and size of the goat population at Great Britain (GB) level. This type of population level information is often required to provide official statistical returns to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), assess the economic or social impact of particular animal health policies, for contingency, disease monitoring/control and resource planning, or to provide evidence to trading partners.

Who did this work?

The reports are produced by the Livestock Demographic Data Groups (LDDG). The LDDGs were formed in January 2014 and are made up of Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) representatives from data, epidemiology, species expert and GIS work groups.

What does the data show about the population?

The maps show the density of animals (Figure 1) and the density of holdings (Figure 2). The estimated number of holdings and number of goats per country is shown in Table 1. Compared to the December 2023 and January 2024 inventory, the numbers of goats and goat holdings in GB have decreased by 2.00% and 0.56% respectively (Table 1). The number of goat holdings has remained approximately the same in England but has decreased in Scotland by 5.19% and in Wales by 2.19%. The number of goats has decreased in England by 3.52% but has increased in Scotland by 2.63% and in Wales by 10.04%.

A livestock holding is defined as the location, including land and buildings, used to keep livestock and may be used by more than one business. Each holding has a unique County Parish Holding (CPH). A livestock business can have more than one holding, which can include permanent holdings (used for more than one year) and temporary holdings (used for less than one year).

The maps in Figures 1 and 2 show the density of the goat population in GB, and the density of goat holdings in GB. Figure 1 shows that there are a few areas of high goat population density, with more than 2 goats per km², in the south-west, south-east and northern parts of England, which are likely to be due to a small number of large dairy goat units. Outside of these areas the goat density is mostly less than one goat per km². Figure 2 shows that goat holdings are diffusely spread across England and Wales with areas of greater goat holding density (more than 10 holdings per 100km²) in the south-west, east, south-east, western and northern parts of England, and in south Wales. The density of goat holdings in Scotland is lower, with most areas having less than 4 holdings per 100km².

The data used is obtained from the annual Sheep and Goat inventory, which is carried out in December, and gathers data on the number of sheep and/or goats kept per holding.

What does the data not show about the population?

The Sheep and Goat inventory is carried out in December and therefore does not capture any seasonal variation in the goat population, although the change in number of goats due to seasonality of breeding is not of the same magnitude as for sheep.

According to the June 2024 Agricultural Survey, the total number of goats in GB in June 2024 was 106,716 ([Livestock populations in England - GOV.UK](#), [Survey of agriculture and horticulture: June 2024 | GOV.WALES](#), [Supporting documents - Results from the Scottish Agricultural Census: June 2024 - gov.scot](#)), which is similar to the total number of goats indicated by the December 2024 inventory – 112,531.

Due to the small size of the goat population in GB, the visual representation of population density is not very precise in areas of low density.

How accurate is the data?

There are important assumptions and uncertainties with these estimates which the user should take into consideration. Limitations of the dataset are discussed in detail in the data quality statement ([Annex 1](#)) and it is important that the user considers these in the context of their work. Population and holding density maps are each classified to different scales and units and due care must be taken regarding their interpretation.

The Sheep and Goat Inventory holds information about the location and animal count of goat holdings in GB in December. All sheep and goat keepers are required to register their holding, and it is a legal requirement to complete the annual sheep and goat inventory. This is described in the data quality statement ([Annex 1](#)). The results are summarised in Table 1 and visualised in Figures 1 and 2.

Requests to fill in the inventory were sent to 110,374 keepers in GB that were previously recorded as keeping sheep and/or goats in the previous year's inventory, new registrations and/or in Sam (APHA customer database). The questionnaire was completed by 80,158 respondents, giving an overall return rate of 72.6%: 12,347 holdings were keeping goats¹.

For England, the inventory request was sent to 78,172 previously recorded keepers, and responses were received from 57,586 respondents (73.7%): 10,239 holdings were keeping goats.

¹ Note that some respondents reported keeping sheep and/or goats at more than one holding (CPH) and one CPH may be reported by more than one business.

For Scotland, the inventory request was sent to 15,201 previously recorded keepers, responses were received from 9,733 respondents (64.0%): 768 holdings were keeping goats.

For Wales, the inventory request was sent to 17,001 previously recorded keepers, responses were received from 12,839 respondents (75.5%): 1,340 holdings were keeping goats.

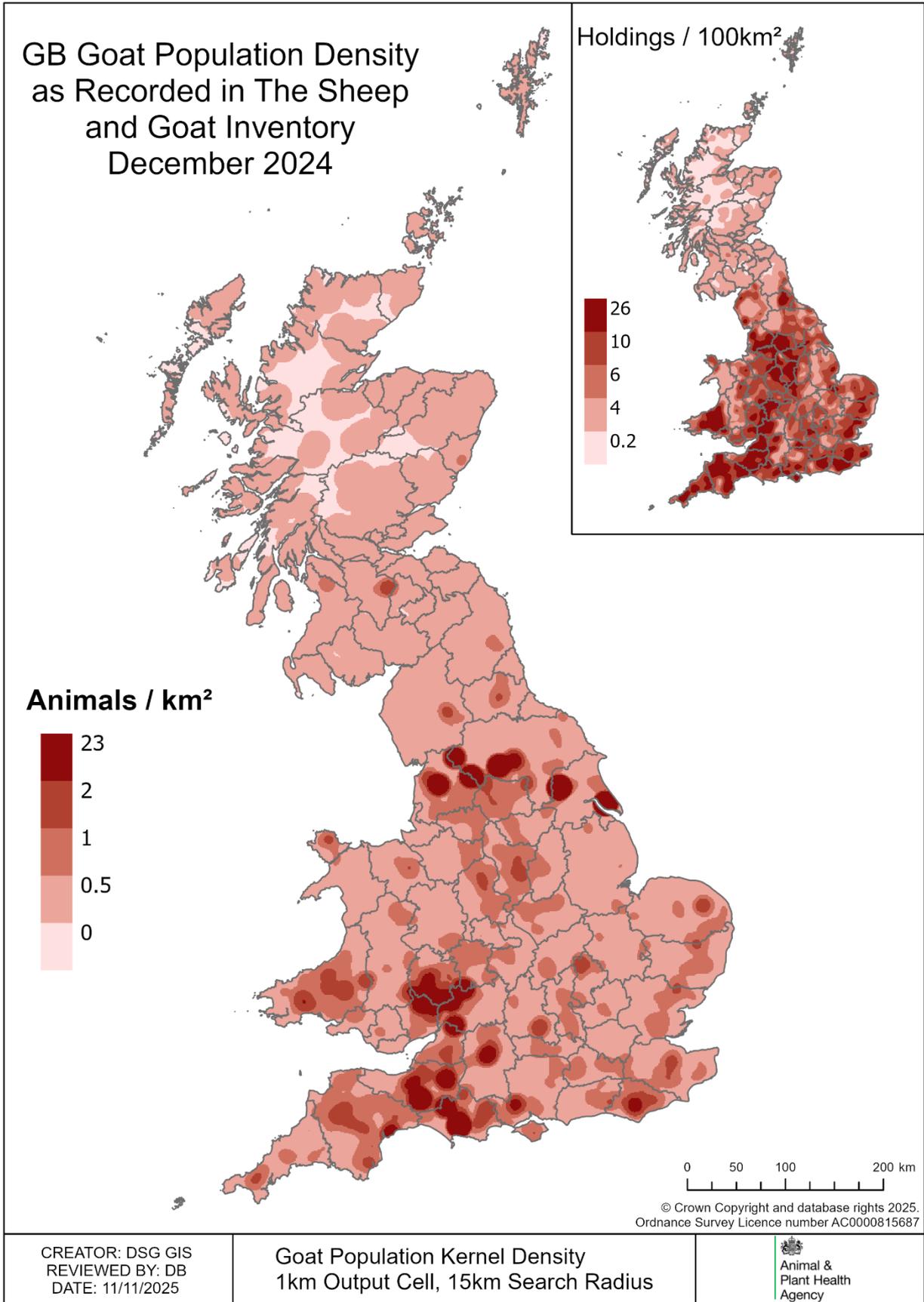
In comparison, the response rates for the previous year's inventory were 77.4% for England, 63.3% for Scotland and 78.2% for Wales. The response rate for Scotland was lower than for England and Wales but is similar to the rate for the 2023 and 2024 inventory, when Scotland changed to email reminders only and online only submissions (See [Annex 1](#)), although keepers could contact ScotEID if they had difficulty in completing the survey online. Wales changed to online only submissions for the December 2024 inventory, but the response rate only dropped from 78.2% to 75.5%. The characteristics of the non-responders are unknown, such as small ruminant holding type, and the effect of this missing data has not been evaluated, but assuming that many non-responders are no longer keeping sheep or goats, any underestimate in number of holdings and number of goats is likely to be small.

This sheep and goat inventory collected data on the number of animals kept on 1 December 2024 for all GB countries. Previous inventories collected data on 1 December for England and Scotland, and on 1 January for Wales. It is not expected that the change in collection date for Wales will affect the comparability of the data between December 2024 and previous years.

How were the maps produced?

The maps have been created using the kernel density function in ArcGIS software. This tool distributes population information over a defined radius, creating a smooth density surface. Two key parameters that require adjustment are the search radius distance (15 km radius for the maps presented within this report) and the size of the output surface grid; their selection is recognised as a subjective process (Pfeiffer et al., 2008). A search radius of 15 km was deemed sufficient to enable distinction between categories and a 1 km grid square was used for the density surfaces themselves. The legend categories were limited to five, to aid in cross-referencing with areas of the map.

Comparison between the maps was optimised by assigning similar parameters between the species. However, further refinement of the parameters for each dataset could represent the information more accurately. Note that the ArcGIS Kernel Density tool does not take into account edge effects, and as such density estimates in and around coastal areas may be underestimated (Charpentier & Gallic, 2016).



**Figure 1. Goat population density in GB (Sheep and Goat Inventory December 2024).
For a description of the figure see [What does the data show about the population?](#)**

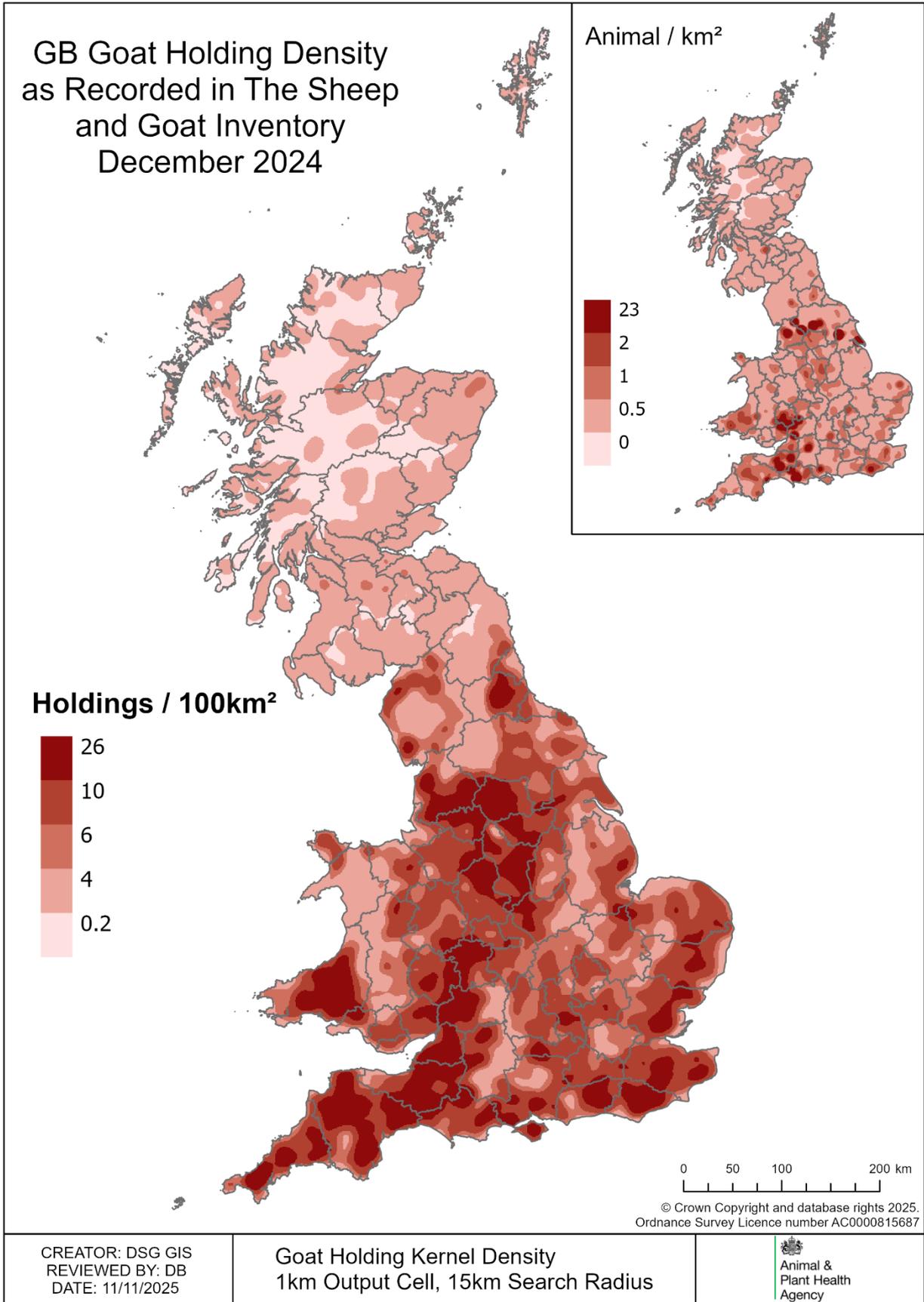


Figure 2. Goat holding density in GB (Sheep and Goat Inventory December 2024). For a description of the figure see [What does the data show about the population?](#)

Table 1: Number of goat holdings and number of goats by country in GB, December 2024 compared to December 2023 and January 2024. The number of goat holdings and number of goats per county in December 2024 is provided in [Annex 2](#) and a reference map of all counties across GB is provided in [Annex 3](#).

Country	Dec 23 & Jan 24 Holdings	Dec 24 Holdings	% Change	Dec 23 & Jan 24 goats	Dec 24 goats	% Change
England	10,236	10,239	0.03%	99,046	95,561	-3.52%
Scotland	810	768	-5.19%	5,290	5,429	2.63%
Wales	1,370	1,340	-2.19%	10,488	11,541	10.04%
GB Total	12,416	12,347	-0.56%	114,824	112,531	-2.00%

Acknowledgements

The LDDG is grateful to Defra, Scottish Government, Welsh Government, and APHA’s Data Systems Group (DSG) staff who handle the Sheep and Goat Inventory data and Rapid Analysis and Detection of Animal Related Risks (RADAR) data warehouse for their assistance in producing this report.

References

- Charpentier, A., & Gallic, E. (2016). Kernel density estimation based on Ripley’s correction. *Geoinformatica*, 20(1), 95–116. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10707-015-0232-z>
- Pfeiffer, D. U., Robinson, T. P., Stevenson, M., Stevens, K. B., Rogers, D. J., & Clements, A. C. A. (2008). *Spatial Analysis in Epidemiology* (1st ed.). Oxford University Press.

Annex 1: Data quality statement for goats

Introduction

This data quality statement provides an overview of the quality of the data used to underpin the kernel density holding and livestock maps. This statement is written in the context of the data being used to provide an overview of the livestock demographics within Great Britain. The statement may not necessarily relate to data quality for other purposes.

Overview and purpose of source data used

Data was supplied by the APHA Data Systems Group (DSG) and sourced from the Sheep and Goat Inventory via the Rapid Analysis and Detection of Animal-related Risks (RADAR) data warehouse for England and Wales, and directly from the Scottish government for Scotland.

The Sheep and Goat inventory was chosen to represent the sheep and goat data as this has the most inclusive coverage on holdings across GB. This dataset records the number of sheep and goats kept on all registered individual premises. The inventory data is collected once a year (on 1 December) by means of a questionnaire which every registered sheep and goat keeper in GB is requested to fill, and additional holdings recorded in Sam (APHA customer database). The questionnaire requests the number of sheep and/or goats kept per holding.

The Agricultural Survey was also considered as a source of data; however, response rates have been lower compared to the Sheep and Goat Inventory. This data is collected in the summer months and the survey only collects data on larger agricultural holdings, so smaller holdings are not represented. Additionally, it is only sent to a sample of holdings each year, with a full census only occurring every ten years. It was therefore decided that the sheep and goat inventory gave a better picture of all holdings in Great Britain, but the agricultural survey could be used if a summer count was required.

The Animal Movement Licensing System database (AMLS) was also considered as a source of data, but this only shows movements of batches of animals and not the number of animals on the holding so it was decided this was not suitable.

- 1. Relevance of data** *[degree to which data meets user needs in terms of currency, geographical coverage, content and detail]*

Spatial coverage: The data covers GB (England, Scotland and Wales).

Temporal coverage: The data presented is for 1 December 2024. The data was accessed in October 2025.

Key data items available: The dataset includes species (sheep or goat) and number of animals on holding, and CPH.

- 2. Timeliness** *[the degree to which data represents reality from the required time point]*

How often is the data collected? The data is collected annually. The England, Scotland and Wales surveys have been aligned to 1 December, a change implemented from December 2024 which is reflected in this report. For earlier reports, the inventory data was collected on 1 December for England and Scotland and 1 January for Wales.

When does the data become available? The data is available about 6 months after the surveys are collected, with England and Wales results uploaded into RADAR (subject to data upload scheduling).

Data reference period: The data is a snapshot at the date of the survey.

How often is the data updated? The data is updated annually.

3. Accuracy and precision *[extent of data error and bias and how well it portrays reality]*

How was the data collected? For England, questionnaires are sent once a year by post or by email to all holdings that have registered or are recorded as keeping sheep or goats. The questionnaire can be completed online or by post. For Scotland, all keepers were directed towards online survey completion operated by ScotEID and only emails were sent to remind keepers to complete the inventory. For the December 2024 inventory, Wales also changed to online only survey completion operated by EIDCymru, and emails as well as broadcast text messages through Rural Payments Wales (RPW) were sent to remind keepers to complete the inventory.

Sample & collection size: All holdings registered or recorded as keeping sheep or goats are required to complete the inventory, so the survey is intended to be a full census of all known potential goat holdings. It is not known how many other holdings are keeping goats that have not registered or been recorded in the England Livestock Information Service (LIS), ScotEID, EIDCymru or Sam. The counts of holdings and number of goats are obtained from all the holdings that have returned the inventory form.

Further information on rules for registering a holding where sheep and goats are kept:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-county-parish-holding-cph-number>,
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/register-livestock-to-get-a-flock-or-herd-mark>.

What steps have been taken to minimise processing errors? The data collected through the survey is subject to manual validation to check the data accuracy. Not all data that fails validation can be corrected/confirmed as the survey team cannot always contact the keeper. There are several different errors that can be detected such as incorrect flock number or illegible forms. The team checks every form and verifies the information where possible.

What are the response rates? Response rates for the surveys conducted in December 2024 were 73.7% for England, 64% for Scotland and 75.5% for Wales.

Are any parts of the population unaccounted for in the data collection? Returns were not received from around 26.3% of holdings in England, 36.7% of holdings in Scotland and 24.5% holdings in Wales to which the questionnaires were sent. However, it is not known whether non-respondents represent particular types of small ruminant keeper or those no

longer keeping small ruminants. There may also be holdings that are not registered or recorded, and therefore did not receive the request to complete the inventory form. In order to minimise the number of holdings not represented, information about the annual inventory and how to access the questionnaire is shared through various social media alerts. There is guidance on how to register your holding and flock or herd at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/sheep-and-goat-keepers-register-your-holding-and-flock-or-herd> and more information on how to keep and update a holding register in the annual sheep and goat inventory at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/sheep-and-goat-keepers-how-to-keep-a-holding-register>.

4. Comparability *[how well this data can be compared with data taken from the same dataset and with similar data from other sources]*

Within dataset comparability: The format and survey methods are similar between years. However, since December 2023, Scotland only uses email to request keepers to complete the inventory, and data is collected online only. Whereas in previous years, keepers were notified by post and could submit a paper questionnaire. For the December 2024 inventory, Wales also collected data online only.

The country-level surveys have been aligned to 1 December, in comparison to previous reports where the survey data was collected on 1 December for England and Scotland and 1 January for Wales. This change was implemented in December 2024 and is reflected in this report.

In this report, the number of goats per holding (CPH) represents the total number of goats kept at that holding on 1 December, whether they belong to only one or more than one keeper or business. In previous reports, this was also the case for England and Wales data, however for Scotland data, if multiple keepers kept goats at the same CPH, each keeper was counted as a separate holding. This anomaly has been corrected for this report, which may partly account for the decrease in the number of Scottish holdings but will not have affected the numbers of goats.

Other dataset comparability: The June 2024 Agricultural Survey indicated that the total number of goats in GB in June 2024 was 106,716. This total is similar to the total number of goats indicated by the December 2024 inventory – 112,531. The Animal Movement Licensing System (AMLS) holds movement data, which can compare information on holding locations and relative sizes. However, AMLS does not record the number of goats on the holding. Sam is a customer database in APHA, supporting registrations of customers, locations, units, temporary land applications and more, that contains data on usual stock numbers at the time the customer record was last updated, so may not reflect the current number of goats on the holding.

5. Coherence *[degree to which data can be or has been merged with other data sources]*

How consistent is the data over time? If there are differences, what are they and what is their impact? Have there been changes to the underlying data collection?

The list of keepers contacted in connection with their annual inventory obligation is derived from the list of holdings statutorily maintained by APHA for England, Scotland and Wales. Returns from those keepers who declare they are no longer keeping sheep or goats are used to update that list, and in turn update subsequent inventory-gathering exercises. For the December 2023 inventory, Scotland changed to online only data collection, whereas in previous years, keepers were notified by post and could submit a paper questionnaire and no longer requested keepers to declare they were no longer keeping sheep or goats or had the intention to keep sheep or goats in the future, potentially impacting the ability to maintain an up to date livestock keeper list.

Have any real-world events impacted on the data since the previous release? No.

What other data sources is this data comparable with? Location data is comparable between the Agricultural Survey, Sam and the Animal Movement Licensing System (AMLS). The Agricultural survey data has been used for total population and the AMLS for total holdings.

What other data sources in society report similar information? How do these data sources compare? Industry has its own datasets, but these are obtained from, for example, the sheep and goat inventory and Agricultural Survey. It is thought they are unlikely to offer any additional information.

6. Interpretability *[how well the data is understood and used appropriately]*

Is there a particular context that this data needs to be considered within? The sheep and goat inventory is conducted in December, but seasonality in the goat population is minimal so the data provided is unlikely to vary much by season.

What other information is available to help users better understand this data source? Information about the annual sheep and goat inventory is available here: [Sheep and goat keepers: complete your annual inventory - GOV.UK](#)

Are there any ambiguous or technical terms that may need further explanation? No.

7. Accessibility *[availability of relevant information and access to this data in a convenient and suitable manner]*

What data is shared and with whom? Addresses and coordinates of individual locations cannot be released without Confidentiality Agreements. DSG access data through RADAR or directly from Scottish Government.

Contact details for data source queries:

Agricultural Survey England: Farming-statistics@defra.gov.uk

Agricultural Survey Wales: Stats.agric@wales.gov.uk

Agricultural Survey Scotland: agric.stats@scotland.gov.uk

ScotEID Livestock Traceability: support@scoteid.com

Freedom of Information (FOI), Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) and Subject Access requests: enquiries@apha.gov.uk

Annex 2: Number of goat holdings and number of goats per county

Table 2: Total number of goat holdings and number of goats per county for England, based on the results from the GB Sheep and Goat Inventory for December 2024. Data for counties with 6 or fewer holdings has been excluded from this table for data protection reasons.

County	Number of goat holdings	Number of goats
Avon	198	1,024
Bedfordshire	84	922
Berkshire	98	533
Buckinghamshire	137	835
Cambridgeshire	175	1,179
Cheshire	207	1,005
Cleveland	35	127
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	416	1,718
Cumbria	342	1,969
Derbyshire	320	1,705
Devonshire	763	5,687
Dorset	262	7,664
Durham	178	884
East Sussex	201	1,904

County	Number of goat holdings	Number of goats
Essex	311	1,715
Gloucestershire	251	3,610
Greater London	71	402
Greater Manchester	159	813
Hampshire	308	2,175
Herefordshire	197	3,962
Hertfordshire	115	579
Humberside	230	11,538
Isle of Wight	61	433
Kent	362	1,891
Lancashire	314	5,483
Leicestershire	166	1,022
Lincolnshire	320	1,584
Merseyside	31	158
Norfolk	362	2,230
North Yorkshire	438	7,832
Northamptonshire	128	848
Northumberland	113	786
Nottinghamshire	128	673
Oxfordshire	155	1,091
Shropshire	231	1,058
Somerset	390	5,904

County	Number of goat holdings	Number of goats
South Yorkshire	159	733
Staffordshire	294	1,577
Suffolk	264	1,448
Surrey	141	921
Tyne & Wear	32	99
Warwickshire	139	764
West Midlands	65	341
West Sussex	181	783
West Yorkshire	278	1,381
Wiltshire	217	2,140
Worcestershire	212	2,431

Table 3: Total number of goat holdings and number of goats per county for Scotland, based on the results from the GB Sheep and Goat Inventory for December 2024. Data for counties with 6 or fewer holdings has been excluded from this table for data protection reasons.

County	Number of goat holdings	Number of goats
Aberdeenshire	84	563
Angus	26	326
Argyll	48	202
Ayrshire	49	404
Banffshire	20	104
Berwickshire	15	81
Bute	7	69

County	Number of goat holdings	Number of goats
Caithness	27	120
Dumbartonshire	8	51
Dumfriesshire	29	165
Fife	28	205
Inverness-shire	42	228
Kincardineshire	15	260
Kirkcudbright	36	243
Lanarkshire	45	642
Midlothian & Edinburgh	18	100
Moray	13	55
Orkney	22	168
Peebles	9	34
Perth	51	349
Renfrew	7	58
Ross & Cromarty	40	224
Roxburgh	28	241
Shetland	16	57
Stirling	13	71
Sutherland	23	129
West Lothian	11	82
Wigtown	19	113

Table 4: Total number of goat holdings and number of goats per county for Wales, based on the results from the GB Sheep and Goat Inventory for December 2024.

Data for counties with 6 or fewer holdings has been excluded from this table for data protection reasons.

County	Number of goat holdings	Number of goats
Clwyd	136	862
Dyfed	539	4,526
Gwent	124	2,492
Gwynedd	157	1,159
Mid Glamorgan	68	406
Powys	238	1,661
South Glamorgan	28	150
West Glamorgan	50	285

Annex 3: Great Britain counties reference map

