Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

National statistics

Livestock populations in the United Kingdom at 1 June

Updated 3 May 2023

Contents

OGL

This release contains the estimates of cattle, sheep, pig and poultry populations on agricultural holdings in the UK on 1 June 2022.

Information on data sources and methodology can be found in Section 2. In particular, Scotland have changed some data sources in place of June Survey results which are currently suspended while their Agricultural Statistic Transformation program runs. Northern Ireland have delayed publication of 2022 June survey results until January 2023; therefore 2021 data has been carried forward.

The result tables are available at Livestock populations in the United Kingdom (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/livestock-populations-in-the-united-kingdom). This dataset contains detailed breakdowns for all livestock, including other livestock.

Key points

- The total number of cattle and calves in the UK is 9.6 million in June 2022. The breeding herd saw a decrease of 0.9% and now stands at 3.3 million.
- In 2022, the total number of pigs in the UK decreased by 2.5% to 5.2 million animals. Breeding pigs decreased by 15%, while fattening pigs decreased by 1.1%.
- The total number of sheep and lambs increased by 0.3%, to just over 33.0 million. The female breeding flock increased by 1.0% to 15.8 million whilst the number of lambs saw little change and remains at 16.4 million.
- The total number of poultry decreased by 1.0% to 188 million in 2022. Broiler numbers saw a small decrease of 0.5%, to 126 million and the breeding and laying flock also fell by 0.5% to almost 53 million.

Section 1 – Detailed results

1.1 Cattle

The number of cattle and calves in the UK has increased by 0.3% between 2021 and 2022 and now stands at 9.6 million animals.

Figure 1: United Kingdom dairy and beef herd numbers

The breeding herd accounts for over a third of total cattle and fell by 0.9% to 3.3 million in 2022. The dairy herd fell by 0.4% and now stands at 1.8 million animals, accounting for just over half of the breeding herd. The beef herd has also decreased, falling by 1.5% to 1.5 million animals (Figure 1) continuing the downward trend seen in recent years.

1.2 Pigs

The number of pigs in the UK has decreased by 2.5% to 5.2 million in 2022. This is largely driven by a 15% fall in the number of breeding pigs. The female breeding herd account for almost 80% of breeding pigs and decreased by 14%, falling to 343 thousand. This is the lowest it has been in the past 20 years and large decreases were seen across all categories (Figure 2). Other breeding pigs also saw a decrease in 2022, falling by 20% from 104 thousand to 83 thousand. Fattening pigs decreased by 1.1% to just under 4.8 million.

Figure 2: United Kingdom breakdown of the female pig breeding herd

1.3 Sheep

The number of sheep and lambs in the UK has increased by 0.3% to 33 million in 2022.

Lambs account for half of all sheep and saw little change, remaining at 16.4 million. The female breeding flock accounts for a further 48% of all sheep and saw an increase in 2022, rising by 1.0% to 15.8 million sheep (Figure 3).

Figure 3: United Kingdom breakdown of total sheep

1.4 Poultry

The number of poultry in the UK has decreased by 1.0% to 188 million birds in 2022. The number of breeding and laying fowl decreased by 0.5% to 53 million. Broilers (table chickens) also saw a decrease of 0.5%, falling to 126 million birds, which accounts for just over two thirds of the total poultry flock.

Section 2 – About these statistics

2.1 Survey methodology

- Data from the June Survey help us monitor changes in livestock populations over time and the effects of e.g. CAP reform on the industry.
- The numbers are also used to make forecasts of meat and milk production to inform industry of the availability of supply which affects prices.
- Livestock distributions across the UK help assess the risk of veterinary disease and to control outbreaks.
- The data are also used heavily in calculations of the greenhouse gas and ammonia emissions inventories.

Results from the England June Survey of Agriculture and Horticulture also have a wide range of uses and users with requests for data being made daily. A document providing information of specific uses and users can be found on our guidance and notes (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/structure-of-the-agricultural-industry-survey-notes-and-guidance).

2.2 Other survey results and publications

More detailed results from the June Survey can be found on our Structure of the agricultural industry in England and the UK at June web page (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/structure-of-the-agricultural-industry-in-england-and-the-uk-at-june). This includes various time series of crop areas and livestock numbers dating back as early as 1866 and detailed geographical breakdowns of the results.

The results from the June Survey of Agriculture 2023 in England are expected to be published as follows:

- Cereal, oilseed and uncropped arable land areas and Livestock populations in August 2023.
- Agricultural land use and Agricultural workforce data expected to be available in September 2023.

Provisional cereal and oilseed harvest statistics for England are expected to be published in October 2023, with United Kingdom estimates expected in December 2023.

The definitive publication dates will be announced on the research and statistics (https://www.gov.uk/search/research-and-statistics) webpage on gov.uk.

2.3 Methodology: June Survey of Agriculture and Horticulture

Data on crop areas and livestock populations are collected in the June Survey of Agriculture and Horticulture carried out by each of the UK agriculture departments. The methodology adopted by each country is below.

England

England results are from the June Survey of Agriculture and Horticulture in 2022. The June Survey of Agriculture and Horticulture was historically a postal survey run annually. However, from 2011 onwards, the survey has been run predominantly online with an option for farmers to complete a paper form if they preferred. The last census was run in 2021.

The June 2022 survey was sent to a sample of 30,000 commercial holdings and responses were received from 17,600 holdings, representing a response rate of almost 60%. Commercial holdings are defined as those with more than five hectares of agricultural land, one hectare of orchards, 0.5 hectares of vegetables or 0.1 hectares of protected crops, or more than 10 cows, 50 pigs, 20 sheep, 20 goats or 1,000 poultry.

Table 1 provides details of the sample survey population broken down by farm size. The size of a farm is determined by its Standard Labour Requirement (SLR). i.e. the typical number of full-time workers required on the holding. In the SLR system, each livestock type and land-use has a theoretical amount of labour required each year. This value is multiplied by the land area or livestock numbers and then summed to give the SLR for the holding. For pig and poultry sectors, an additional data collection exercise was run to collect data from a central point for some of the largest companies.

Table 1: June 2022 population size and response rate

Stratum	Description	Sampling rate (%)	Population size
1	SLR < 0.5	12%	51,142
2	SLR >= 0.5 and < 1	20%	14,397
3	SLR >= 1 and < 2	35%	13,485
4	SLR >= 2 and < 3	51%	7,190
5	SLR >= 3 and < 5	70%	7,011
6	SLR >= 5	83%	7,658
10	SLR unknown	27%	5,739
	All	**28%**	**106,622**

Cattle results are sourced from the Cattle Tracing System (CTS). The data include returns from all holdings with cattle so are not subject to survey error. More information on the use of this administrative data can be found on the survey notes and guidance report (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/182225/defra-stats-foodfarm-landuselivestock-june-results-BovineRegisters.pdf)

The data are subject to rigorous validation checks which identify inconsistencies within the data or large year-on-year changes. Any records that have not been cleaned by the results production stage are excluded from the analysis.

Population totals are estimated for each question on the survey to account for the non-sampled and non-responding holdings. This survey uses the technique known as ratio raising, in which the trend between the sample data and base data (previous year's data) is calculated for each stratum. The calculated ratio is then applied to the previous year's population data to give England level estimates. For holdings where we do not have base data (new holdings or long-term non-responders) the sample estimates are raised according to the inverse sampling fraction.

Crop areas and cattle, sheep and pig populations from the England 2022 June Survey were published on 29 September 2022 and can be viewed on our Statistics about the structure of the agricultural industry web page

(https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/series/structure-of-the-agricultural-industry)

More details on the June Survey methodology can be found on the Structure of the agricultural industry: survey notes and guidance web page (https://www.gov.uk/structure-of-the-agricultural-industry-survey-notes-and-guidance)

Scotland

The June Agricultural Census 2022 (JAC 2022) did not take place. To meet legislative requirements estimates are being provided to Defra to account for the data which would usually be supplied. The table below gives a short explanation to the methods used to produce these estimates.

Items	Estimate	Explanation
Pigs	Single Application Form (SAF) data returns + scaling for non-brn holdings	11% of pigs were not included in SAF in 2021, 2022 SAF data were scaled to account for this
Sheep	2021 JAC figures scaled by change in Welsh 2022 figures	There were no 2022 data avaliable for Scotland. Wales has the most compariable sheep figures to Scotland therefore we used these to estimate the change for 2022.
Poultry	Survey forms for 2022 were sent to poultry companies. Estimate based on main poultry producers returns and scaling up to estimate small producer data not collected this year.	Small number of businesses produced the majority of Scotland poultry therefore these "composites" provide a good estimate of poultry numbers for Scotland
Cattle	2022 Cattle Tracing System (CTS) data used. No estimates required	-

Source: Scottish Government: RESAS Statistics (Agriculture)

For further details please contact Scottish Government: RESAS Statistics (Agriculture). Email: agric.stats@gov.scot

Wales

The Welsh population currently stands at around 25,000 active holdings. In 2022 a total of 10,500 survey forms were sent out. Final results were based on a response rate of 51%. Final results for Wales were published by the Welsh Government on 16 November 2022 at: https://gov.wales/survey-agriculture-and-horticulture (https://gov.wales/survey-agriculture-and-horticulture)

For further details contact Agricultural & Rural Affairs Statistics, Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ (telephone: Cardiff 03000 255049). E-mail: stats.agric@gov.wales

Northern Ireland

Cattle data is sourced from the APHIS system in Northern Ireland. For all other livestock categories June agricultural and horticultural census 2022 results due to be published in December 2022 have been delayed to allow extra time to quality assure the data. Results are now expected in January 2023. As this is too late for this publication, in agreement with Northern Ireland statisticians, results from the 2021 census have been carried forward to 2022. If you have any queries, please contact DAERAsurveys@daera-ni.gov.uk.

2.4 Feedback

We welcome feedback and any thoughts to improve the publication further. Please send any feedback to: farming-statistics@defra.gov.uk.

Section 3 - What you need to know about this release

3.1 Contact details

Responsible statistician: Sarah Thompson

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3.2 National Statistics Status

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.

The continued designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in 2014 following a full assessment (https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/statistics-on-agriculture/) by the UK Statistics Authority against the Code of Practice for Statistics (https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/).

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:

- Reviewed and amended the validation checks carried out on response data including validation against new administrative data sources to better assure ourselves of the quality of the statistics.
- Enhanced trustworthiness by removing pre-release access

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 on the GOV.UK website (http://www.statistics.gov.uk/).

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