

Livestock estimates, July 1, 2021

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Canadian cattle, hog and sheep inventories were all up on July 1, 2021, compared with the same date in 2020.

The Canadian livestock sector continued to cope with challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Meat processing facilities faced temporary closures to control COVID-19 outbreaks, disrupting supply chains as the third wave of the pandemic emerged in the spring. Labour disputes presented further challenges, particularly in the pork processing sector.

Despite disruptions to the beef sector, cattle slaughter was up in the first half of 2021 compared with the same period in 2020. Overall, cattle ending inventories were just above July 1, 2020, levels, because of more births, coupled with higher imports. Canadian cattle inventories have typically declined year over year since peaking on July 1, 2005.

Meanwhile, hog inventories were up year over year as stronger exports were more than offset by piglet births, as well as lower slaughter compared with July 2020. Canadian hog inventories have generally been trending upward since July 1, 2019, and they reached their highest level as of July 1 since 2007.

Sheep inventories were up year over year for the first time since July 2018, attributable to more births and higher imports, and to less slaughter and lower exports.

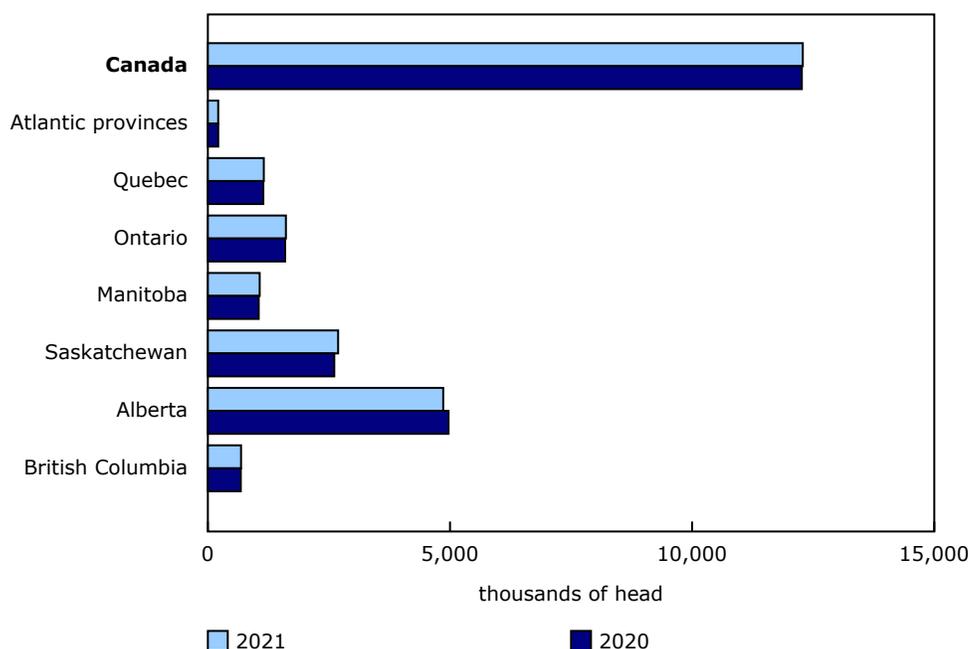
Data on inventories of cattle, hogs and sheep were collected during the early stages of the ongoing drought in Western Canada and the United States. The impacts of the drought on inventories, if any, are expected to be clearer in subsequent releases.

Export demand for beef supports cattle slaughter

Canadian farmers held 12.3 million cattle on their farms on July 1, 2021, up 0.2% from the same date a year earlier. This was the first year-over-year increase since July 2017.



Chart 1
Total cattle inventories, July 1, 2020 and 2021



Source(s): Table 32-10-0130-01.

Inventories were up 0.8% to 3.0 million head in Eastern Canada, but declined 0.1% to 9.3 million head in Western Canada. Alberta maintained the largest cattle inventories among the provinces on July 1, contributing 39.6% to the Canadian total, followed by Saskatchewan (21.9%) and Ontario (13.1%).

The number of cattle farms in Canada has generally been decreasing since 2004, largely because of business consolidations. As of July 1, 2021, 72,925 farms reported inventories of cattle and calves, down 0.1% from July 1, 2020.

As of July 1, 2021, cattle producers retained 0.1% less breeding stock compared with the same date in 2020, as the number of beef cows on Canadian farms fell 1.7% to 3.6 million head. This more than offset year-over-year increases in the number of dairy cows (+2.0% to 991,300 head), beef heifers for breeding (+3.8% to 654,700 head), dairy heifers for breeding (+0.8% to 445,500 head) and bulls (+4.2% to 226,800 head).

The inventory of calves on July 1 grew 1.4% to 4.1 million head, as births were up 2.8%, and imports of live calves from January to June more than doubled year over year to meet increased demand from feedlots in Western Canada.

Canadian farmers held 1.4 million dairy cows and heifers on their farms on July 1, 2021, up 1.6% from the same date a year earlier.

Producers held fewer feeder heifers (-0.6%) and steers (-1.8%) compared with July 1, 2020. Total cattle and calf slaughter from January to June was up 9.9% from the same period in 2020, when temporary plant closures attributable to COVID-19 disrupted the processing sector. Slaughter for the first half of 2021 was also 2.5% above pre-pandemic levels observed over the same period in 2019, because of strong export demand for Canadian beef.

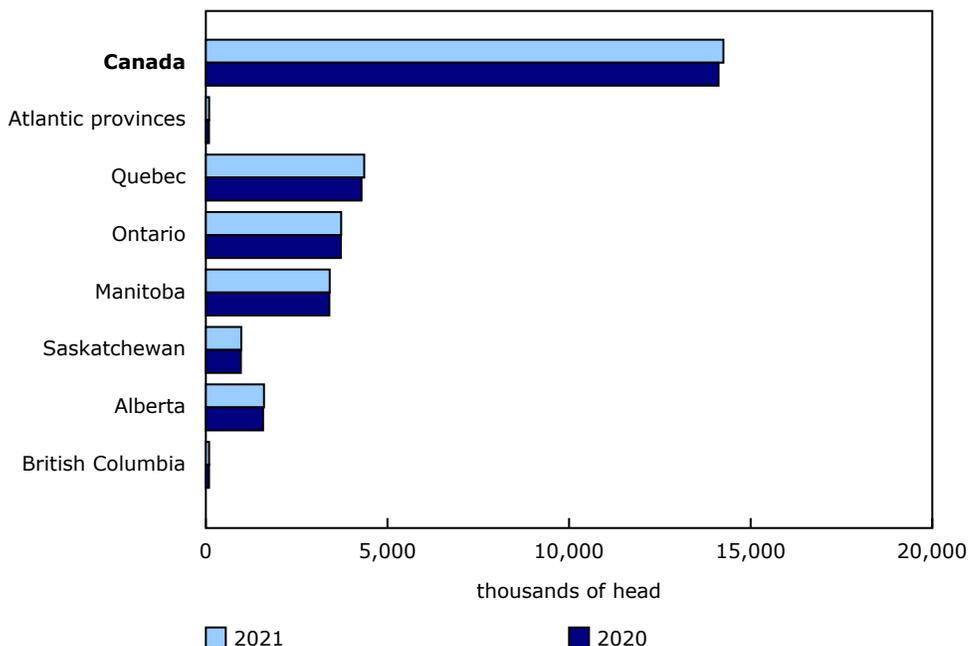
International exports of cattle and calves from January to June were down by one-quarter (-25.8%) year over year to 274,300 head. This is the lowest level since the bovine spongiform encephalopathy crisis of 2003 to 2005, which brought Canadian exports of live cattle to a halt. In the first half of 2021, drought conditions and herd reductions in the United States decreased the need for Canadian cattle imports.

Average prices for Canadian slaughter cattle were generally higher in the first half of 2021 compared with the same period in 2020. Feeder cattle prices were mixed as drought and feed costs became concerns in May and June 2021, particularly across Western Canada.

US demand for Canadian hogs remains strong

Hog producers reported 14.2 million hogs on their farms on July 1, up 1.0% from the same date in 2020. Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba held the largest inventories among the provinces on July 1. These three provinces are home to over 80% of Canada's hogs, with Quebec accounting for nearly one-third of Canadian hog inventories, at 4.4 million head. Quebec has held Canada's largest hog inventories since 1991.

Chart 2
Total hog inventories, July 1, 2020 and 2021



Source(s): Table 32-10-0160-01.

As of July 1, 2021, 7,810 Canadian farms reported hog inventories, up 1.0% from the same date a year earlier. These farms reported 1.2 million sows and gilts, up 1.4%, while the number of boars increased 0.6% year over year to 16,900 head.

The pig crop reached 15.3 million from January to June 2021, representing the number of live piglets after weaning, the highest level for this period since 2008.

Labour issues and lower export demand for pork were the primary drivers behind the 1.2% year-over-year decrease in total slaughter from January to June 2021, to 11.1 million head. This decrease was most strongly felt in Ontario, where slaughter fell 10.5% to 2.7 million head. Despite the year-over-year drop at the national level, slaughter for the first half of 2021 remained 2.6% higher than pre-pandemic levels for the same period in 2019.

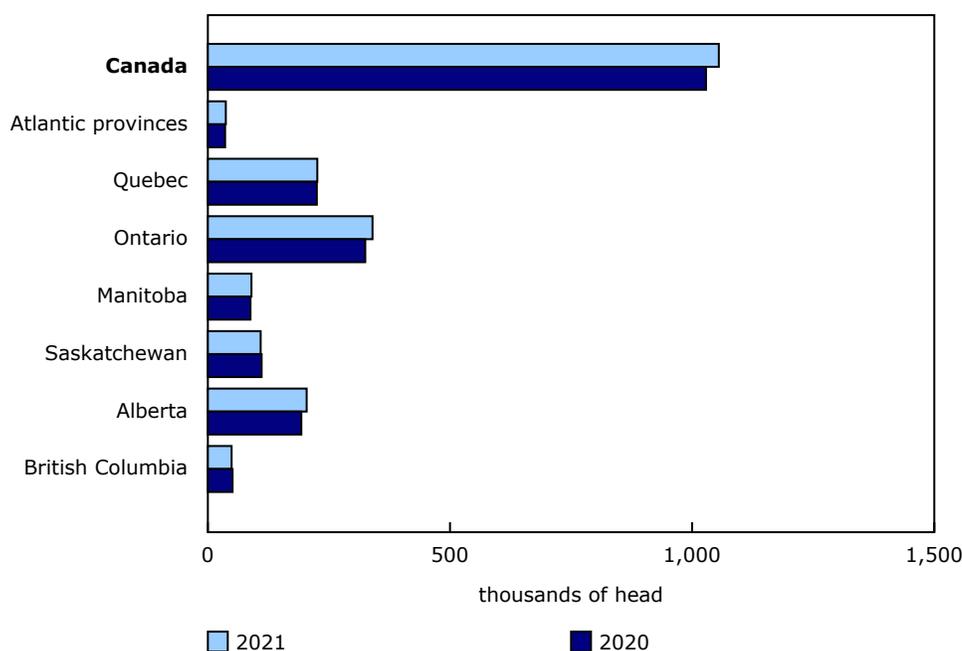
Canada exported 3.3 million live hogs in the first half of 2021, up 28.4% from the same period in 2020. Ontario posted the most significant increase in exports (+93.3% to 955,400 head), as processing disruptions redirected the flow of hogs destined for slaughter south to the United States, rather than east to Quebec.

Strong export demand from the United States for live hogs, as well as from the domestic pork processing sector, helped support Canadian producer prices in the first half of 2021.

High producer prices continue to support sheep and lamb farmers

Canadian inventories of sheep and lambs were up 2.6% year over year to 1.1 million head on July 1, 2021. Inventories remained 15.7% below the record high set in July 2002.

Chart 3
Total sheep inventories, July 1, 2020 and 2021



Source(s): Table 32-10-0129-01.

Ontario and Quebec were home to over half of Canada's sheep and lambs on July 1.

The sheep breeding herd rose 1.0% year over year to 622,300 head, as higher numbers of ewes (+1.0%) and replacement lambs (+1.8%) more than offset the 0.4% decline in the number of rams. The number of market lambs rose 4.9% year over year to 432,800 head on July 1, 2021, while lamb slaughter fell 1.5% year over year to 296,100 head.

Average prices for Canadian slaughter lambs were higher in the first half of 2021 compared with the same period in 2020, as tight supplies and holiday demand helped support producer prices, which at times reached record highs.

Limited domestic supplies and strong prices also affected international trade of sheep and lambs. International exports fell 88.6% year over year to 800 head, and they remained 80.4% below the previous 10-year average from January to June. Meanwhile, international imports of live animals totalled 12,000 head, the highest levels for the January-to-June period since 2010.

Note to readers

Livestock estimates are available for Canada and the provinces, as well as for the United States.

Products

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Available tables: [32-10-0125-01](#), [32-10-0126-01](#), [32-10-0129-01](#), [32-10-0130-01](#), [32-10-0139-01](#) to [32-10-0141-01](#) , [32-10-0151-01](#), [32-10-0160-01](#) and [32-10-0200-01](#) to [32-10-0204-01](#) .

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3460](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinformedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).