

Year-end Slaughter Data Are In

The Daily Livestock Report *provides key observations in year-end report.*

Story by

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The December editions of USDA's *Livestock Slaughter* and *Poultry Slaughter* reports were released Jan. 24 and provide the first official estimates of total 2012 slaughter for all species. The data appear in Table 1. Since we already had monthly data for January through November and weekly data for December, there is no big shock factor in the information — just as there hardly ever is for the monthly slaughter reports. They do provide important information, however, since the daily data represent only federally inspected slaughter and the weekly data are not easily synthesized into monthly, quarterly or even annual data.

Note that there was one fewer slaughter day this December than in December 2011.

Some highlights of the report are:

- December federally inspected cattle slaughter of 2.5 million head was sharply lower than both last year (-7.6%) and November (-8.8%). December commercial slaughter — the sum of federally inspected and other (i.e., state-inspected) slaughter — were down by similar percentages.
- 2012 commercial cattle slaughter finishes the year 3.3% lower than that of 2011.
- Commercial calf slaughter was down roughly 10% for December vs. one year ago and for the year. The 759,700 calves slaughtered in 2012 is the lowest number since 2007. Lower calf slaughter is a major contributor to higher levels of beef production per cow. Nearly 4.7 million calves were slaughtered as recently as 1977 and more than 7 million calves were slaughtered annually on a regular basis in the 1950s. Harvesting those animals as 1,200- to 1,500-pound (lb.) fed cattle instead of 200- to 300-lb. calves is a big boost to beef output.
- December commercial hog slaughter numbered 9.465 million head, 4.8% lower than last year and 6.3% lower than in November. Annual slaughter ended the year 2.1% higher than last year. Those numbers were pushed higher by the surge of slaughter back in August and September. We believe that process has caused hogs to be marketed in a very timely manner the rest of 2012 and actually pulled a few hogs forward that would have normally been harvested in early January. That doesn't mean we will see a "hole" in marketings — at least not until lower feed prices encourage feeding to higher weights or hot weather forces longer feeding periods to reach desirable

Table 1: Livestock and poultry slaughter

	Dec. 2011	Nov. 2012 (1,000 head)	Dec. 2012	Dec. 12 as % of		January-December		
				Dec. 2011	Nov. 2012	2011	2012 (1,000 head)	% change
Cattle								
• Federally inspected	2,706.3	2,740.3	2,500.1	92.4	91.2	33,554.8	32,425.4	96.6
• Other	47.1	43.5	43.4	92.1	99.8	531.8	525	98.7
• Commercial	2,753.4	2,783.8	2,543.5	92.4	91.4	34,086.6	32,950.4	96.7
Calves								
• Federally inspected	71.8	69.4	64.5	89.8	92.9	838.8	759.7	90.6
• Other	1.1	1.1	0.9	81.8	81.8	13.8	12.4	89.9
• Commercial	73.0	70.5	65.4	89.6	92.8	852.5	772.1	90.6
Hogs								
• Federally inspected	9,867.6	10,030.4	9,393.3	95.2	93.6	109,956.3	112,265.3	102.1
• Other	74.2	74.9	71.9	96.9	96.0	903.7	886.8	98.1
• Commercial	9,941.8	10,105.3	9,465.2	95.2	93.7	110,860.0	113,152.2	102.1
Chickens								
• Young	658,722	674,146	642,807	97.6	95.4	8,537,060	8,428,814	98.7
• Mature	11,560	10,408	11,636	100.7	111.8	146,007	147,347	100.9
• Total	670,282	684,554	654,443	97.6	95.6	8,683,067	8,576,161	98.8
Turkeys								
• Young	18,897	22,084	17,694	93.6	80.1	245,450	248,590	101.3
• Old	102	114	153	150.0	134.2	1,394	1,602	114.9
• Total	18,999	22,198	17,847	93.9	80.4	246,844	250,192	101.4
Ducks								
	2,233	2,071	2,112	94.6	102.0	24,472	24,183	98.8

market weights. Neither of those will happen soon.

- What was once a rare occasion — a decline in broiler slaughter — has now occurred two successive years. Young chicken (i.e., broiler) slaughter fell 1.3% in 2012 to 8.429 billion birds. That decline follows a similar reduction in 2011. It appears that "4% more broilers" is no longer as sure a bet as death and taxes.
- Turkey slaughter grew by 1.4% for the year. This increase follows a 1.7% increase in 2011 and puts turkey slaughter at its highest level since 2008. Recall that the industry downsized by more than 9% in 2009. We do not see that kind of draconian cut this year, but it appears that the past two years' growth will be difficult to sustain.
- December beef production is estimated to be 2.02 billion lb., 5% lower than one year ago. That figure brings 2012 beef output to 25.912 billion lb., down 1.1% from 2011.
- Pork output in December was 1.954 billion lb., down 5.4% from last year. Annual pork production for 2012 is pegged at 23.25 billion lb., 2.2% larger than one year ago.
- Total "red" meat production, which includes 118 million lb. of veal and 156.2 million lb. of lamb/mutton, was 49.436 billion lb. in 2012. That figure is virtually unchanged from one year earlier.
- Broiler output in December amounted to 2.853 billion lb., ready-to-cook (RTC) weight. That figure is virtually identical to one year ago. It brings annual production to 37.035 billion lb., RTC weight, 0.4% lower than last year.
- Turkey production in December was 4% smaller than last year. Annual turkey production of 5.935 billion lb., RTC was up 3%.

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