



# **Ireland**

## **National Sheep and Goat Census**

### **December 2020**



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# National Sheep and Goat Census

## December 2020

In accordance with the requirements of Council Regulation (EC) No. 21/2004, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) has carried out an annual census of sheep and goats since 2005. This census report records the number of sheep and goats kept in Ireland on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 and is based on data submitted to the Department by 15<sup>th</sup> April 2021.

Data from the 2020 census returns record that a total of 3.88 million sheep were kept in 35,592 registered herds in the country at the end December 2020. This represents an increase of approximately 69,000 (2%) on the total numbers recorded for December 2019.

2020 goat census returns record a total of 9,403 goats kept in 732 registered herds at end December 2020. This represents an increase of approximately 629 (7%) on the figures recorded in respect of December 2019.



# Sheep

2020 sheep census forms were issued to 46,332 sheep keepers registered with DAFM. This included approximately 1,500 new sheep herds approved by the Department in 2020, along with a further 500 herd numbers reactivated for sheep.

A response rate of 90% was achieved with returns received from

- 35,592 herds where sheep were kept; and
- 6,233 herds where no sheep were kept at the time of the census.

Just under 700 respondents without sheep indicated that they did not intend to re-enter sheep farming in the near future.

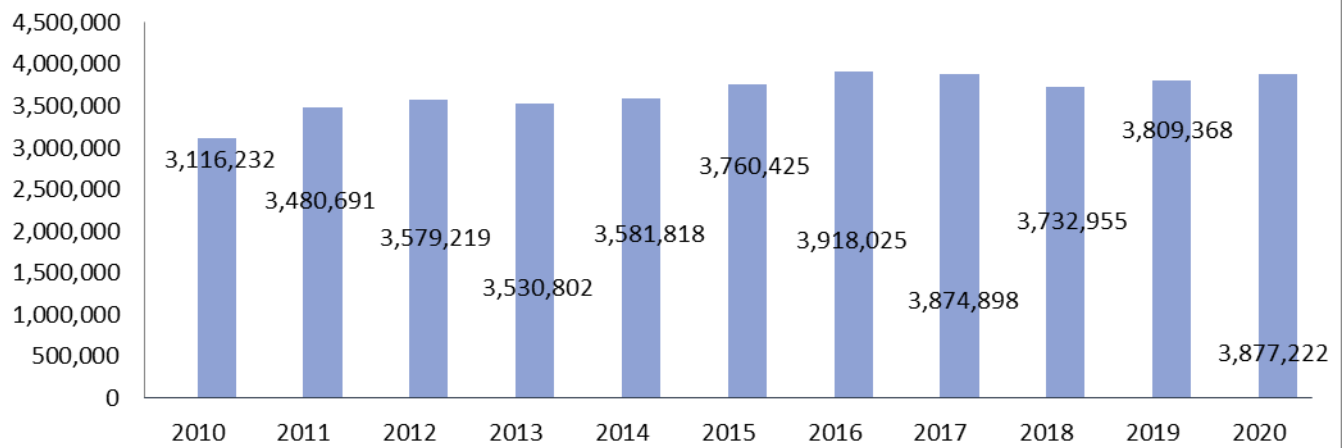
Approximately 39% of 2020 returns (14,000) were submitted online via the Department's agfood.ie service. Over 12,000 were submitted directly by keepers, with some 2,000 submitted by agents on behalf of keepers. In total, 2020 online responses increased by around 3,000 on 2019 returns. The online system provides immediate confirmation to keepers when the information submitted has been received by the Department. Furthermore, the online service provides keepers with a facility to view all census data provided in previous years.

The census returns indicate that, in the State on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020

- 3.88 million sheep (3,877,222) were kept across 35,592 registered holdings, representing an increase of 1.8% (67,854) on the December 2019 sheep population figure of 3.81 million.
- there were 2.64 million breeding ewes over 12 months of age, which is an increase of approximately 72,000 (2.8%) on the previous year's breeding ewe population of 2.57 million.
- a total of 87,063 breeding rams were recorded.
- 1.14 million other sheep were recorded (including lambs, wethers, cull ewes etc.).
- the number of registered holdings keeping sheep increased by 654 (2%) on the December 2019 figure of 34,938.
- overall, the greatest number of sheep was kept in Donegal with a sheep population of 535,949.
- the greatest number of mountain sheep (223,575) was kept in Mayo.
- Donegal contained the greatest number of mountain cross sheep with 109,977.
- the greatest number of lowland (119,466) and lowland cross (160,410) breeds were in Galway.
- the average number of sheep per flock was 109, which was the same in 2019; and
- a total of 66% of flocks (23,407) kept 100 sheep or less.



## Total Sheep - Dec 2010 to Dec 2020



## Number of Flocks Keeping Sheep - by County December 2020

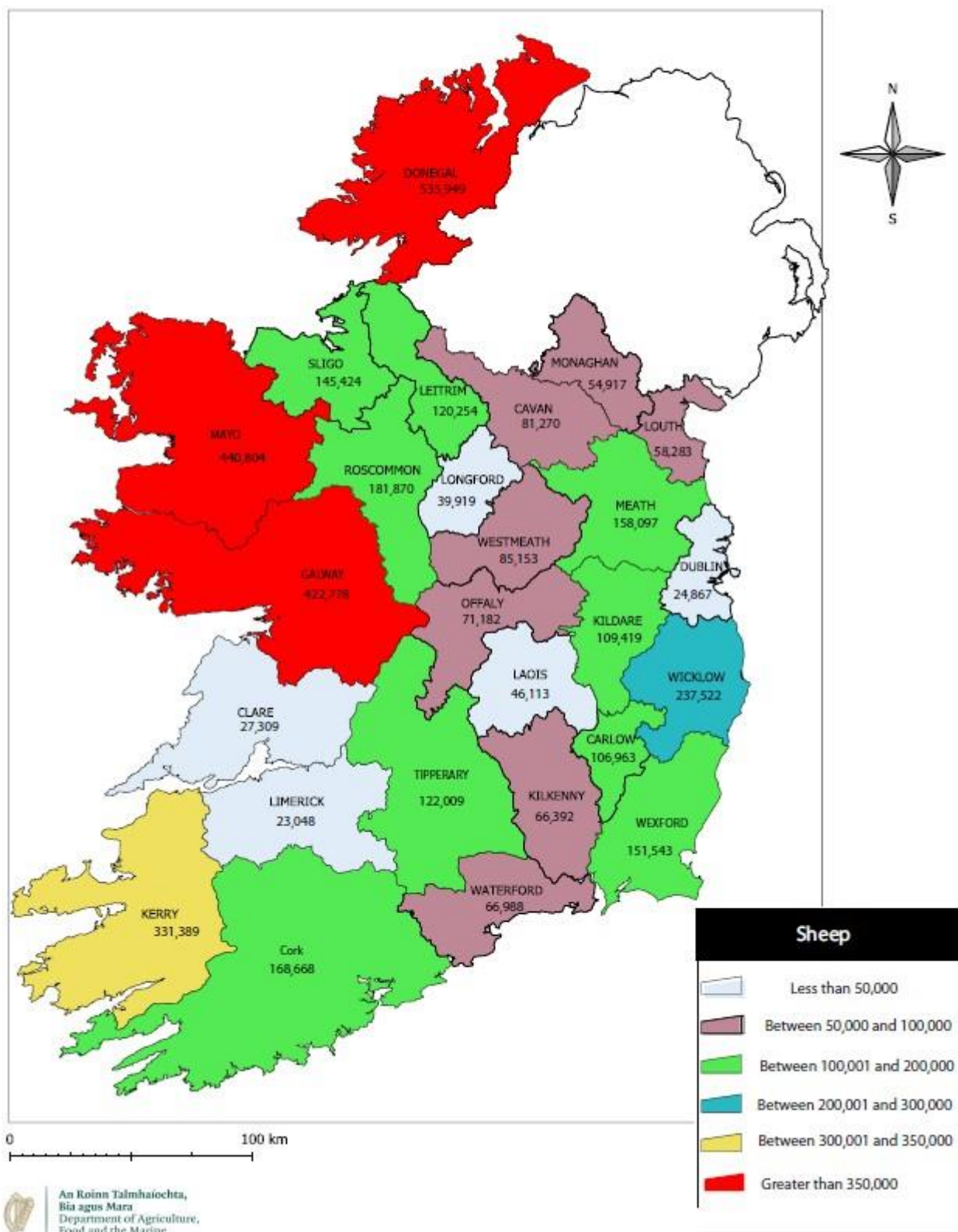
County	No. of Flocks	Average Flock Size	Ewes	Rams	Other	Total
Carlow	706	152	73,051	2,683	31,229	106,963
Cavan	971	84	53,977	2,089	25,204	81,270
Clare	597	46	18,469	760	8,080	27,309
Cork	1,717	98	120,929	3,652	44,097	168,678
Donegal	6,121	88	366,478	12,099	157,372	535,949
Dublin	205	121	17,919	633	6,315	24,867
Galway	4,109	103	283,588	9,356	129,824	422,768
Kerry	2,493	133	248,508	6,332	76,563	331,403
Kildare	670	163	73,509	2,474	33,436	109,419
Kilkenny	485	137	43,367	1,599	21,426	66,392
Laois	434	106	30,131	1,276	14,706	46,113
Leitrim	1,179	102	86,391	2,985	30,878	120,254
Limerick	235	98	14,282	516	8,238	23,036
Longford	438	91	26,513	953	12,453	39,919
Louth	363	161	36,240	1,159	20,884	58,283
Mayo	4,939	89	317,634	9,719	113,431	440,784
Meath	1,015	156	103,456	3,498	51,143	158,097
Monaghan	540	102	31,328	1,296	22,293	54,917
Offaly	579	123	46,364	1,482	23,341	71,187
Roscommon	1,775	103	123,232	3,997	54,716	181,945
Sligo	1,629	89	105,389	3,613	36,420	145,422
Tipperary	889	137	77,343	3,361	41,019	121,723
Waterford	391	171	46,507	1,296	19,185	66,988
Westmeath	745	114	55,047	2,015	27,514	84,576
Wexford	1,072	141	87,638	2,938	60,862	151,438
Wicklow	1,295	183	155,254	5,282	76,986	237,522
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35,592</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>2,642,544</b>	<b>87,063</b>	<b>1,147,615</b>	<b>3,877,222</b>





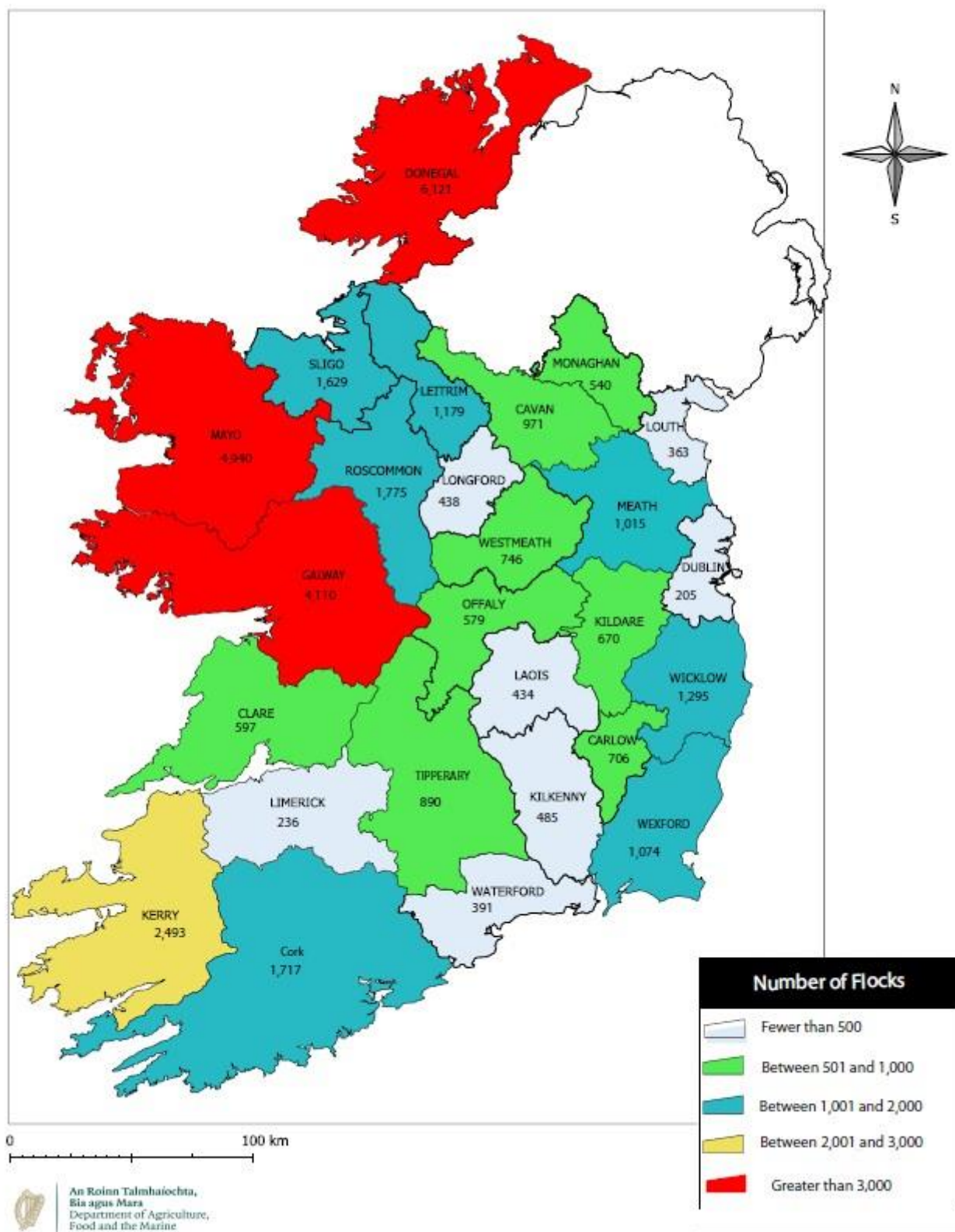
# Total Number of Sheep by County

## December 2020



# Total Number of Sheep Flocks by County

## December 2020

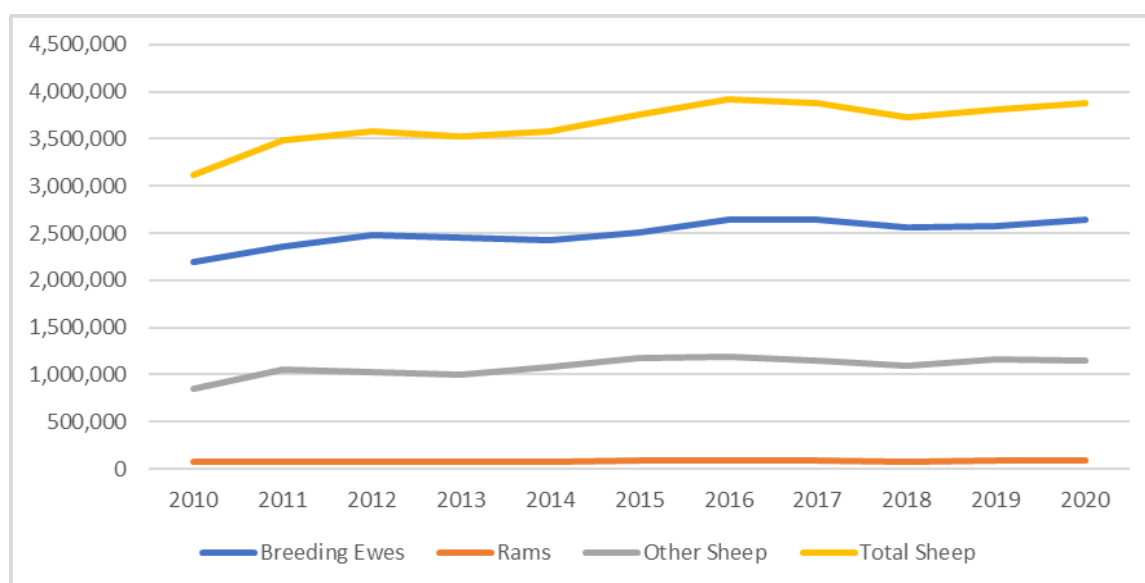


## Breakdown of National Flock by Breeding Ewes, Breeding Rams and Other Sheep

Data on breakdown of the national flock according to breeding ewes, breeding rams and other sheep collected as part of the annual census since 2009 show that, following a general increase in numbers between 2009 and 2016, the number in each category has levelled out and is fluctuating at around 2016/2017 levels.

Year	Breeding Ewes		Rams		Other Sheep		Total Sheep	
	No.	% change	No.	% change	No.	% change	No.	% change
2009	2,189,504		69,162		816,131		3,074,797	
2010	2,200,526	0.5%	70,118	1.4%	845,588	3.6%	3,116,232	1.3%
2011	2,355,881	7.1%	76,113	8.5%	1,048,660	24.0%	3,480,654	11.7%
2012	2,473,871	5.0%	80,107	5.2%	1,025,241	-2.2%	3,579,219	2.8%
2013	2,458,600	-0.6%	76,569	-4.4%	995,633	-2.9%	3,530,802	-1.4%
2014	2,420,374	-1.6%	80,432	5.0%	1,081,012	8.6%	3,581,818	1.4%
2015	2,503,011	3.4%	84,931	5.6%	1,172,483	8.5%	3,760,425	5.0%
2016	2,640,048	5.5%	83,572	-1.6%	1,194,405	1.9%	3,918,025	4.2%
2017	2,646,078	0.2%	82,688	-1.1%	1,146,132	-4.0%	3,874,898	-1.1%
2018	2,560,180	-3.2%	80,007	-3.2%	1,092,768	-4.7%	3,732,955	-3.7%
2019	2,570,870	0.4%	82,055	2.6%	1,156,443	5.8%	3,809,368	2.0%
2020	2,642,544	2.8%	87,063	6.1%	1,147,615	-0.8%	3,877,222	1.8%

All % figures have been rounded for reporting purposes





## Breakdown of Breeding Ewes, Breeding Rams and Other Sheep According to Breed Category

The following tables provide a more detailed breakdown by county of breeding ewes, breeding rams and other sheep according to breed category i.e. Mountain, Mountain Cross, Lowland and Lowland Cross.

All % figures have been rounded for reporting purposes

Breeding Ewes over 12 months of Age by Breed Type Category									
County	Mountain		Mountain Cross		Lowland		Lowland Cross		Total Ewes
	No.	% of County	No.	% of County	No.	% of County	No.	% of County	
Carlow	10,210	14%	11,929	16%	17,991	25%	32,921	45%	73,051
Cavan	7,750	14%	11,703	22%	14,425	27%	20,099	37%	53,977
Clare	969	5%	1,888	10%	6,324	34%	9,288	50%	18,469
Cork	46,156	38%	32,913	27%	16,511	14%	25,349	21%	120,929
Donegal	146,425	40%	73,432	20%	45,389	12%	101,232	28%	366,478
Dublin	4,536	25%	3,021	17%	4,283	24%	6,079	34%	17,919
Galway	79,293	28%	21,786	8%	74,588	26%	107,921	38%	283,588
Kerry	143,625	58%	68,393	28%	12,269	5%	24,221	10%	248,508
Kildare	13,674	19%	9,259	13%	18,196	25%	32,380	44%	73,509
Kilkenny	1,803	4%	4,460	10%	15,906	37%	21,198	49%	43,367
Laois	1,694	6%	2,741	9%	11,599	38%	14,097	47%	30,131
Leitrim	27,090	31%	38,448	45%	6,849	8%	14,004	16%	86,391
Limerick	4,657	33%	1,829	13%	4,077	29%	3,719	26%	14,282
Longford	1,646	6%	2,755	10%	8,288	31%	13,824	52%	26,513
Louth	8,211	23%	7,720	21%	7,201	20%	13,108	36%	36,240
Mayo	172,083	54%	48,803	15%	34,330	11%	62,418	20%	317,634
Meath	4,629	4%	6,432	6%	34,787	34%	57,608	56%	103,456
Monaghan	1,182	4%	1,321	4%	9,381	30%	19,444	62%	31,328
Offaly	962	2%	3,211	7%	18,656	40%	23,535	51%	46,364
Roscommon	5,764	5%	8,607	7%	44,419	36%	64,442	52%	123,232
Sligo	36,072	34%	24,080	23%	17,278	16%	27,959	27%	105,389
Tipperary	21,690	28%	11,816	15%	21,939	28%	21,898	28%	77,343
Waterford	26,828	58%	6,839	15%	4,103	9%	8,737	19%	46,507
Westmeath	2,314	4%	7,112	13%	15,177	28%	30,444	55%	55,047
Wexford	7,476	9%	9,020	10%	23,388	27%	47,754	54%	87,638
Wicklow	61,070	39%	43,055	28%	14,773	10%	36,356	23%	155,254
Total	837,809	32%	462,573	18%	502,127	19%	840,035	32%	2,642,544



Breeding Rams by Breed Type Category									
County	Mountain		Mountain Cross		Lowland		Lowland Cross		Total Rams
	No.	% of County	No.	% of County	No.	% of County	No.	% of County	
Carlow	370	14%	178	7%	1,501	56%	634	24%	2,683
Cavan	164	8%	224	11%	1,148	55%	553	26%	2,089
Clare	23	3%	24	3%	509	67%	204	27%	760
Cork	713	20%	504	14%	1,815	50%	620	17%	3,652
Donegal	3,139	26%	1,166	10%	5,556	46%	2,238	18%	12,099
Dublin	101	16%	29	5%	406	64%	97	15%	633
Galway	1,836	20%	343	4%	5,043	54%	2,134	23%	9,356
Kerry	2,430	38%	881	14%	2,261	36%	760	12%	6,332
Kildare	251	10%	55	2%	1,761	71%	407	16%	2,474
Kilkenny	29	2%	55	3%	1,122	70%	393	25%	1,599
Laois	22	2%	228	18%	895	70%	131	10%	1,276
Leitrim	512	17%	759	25%	1,139	38%	575	19%	2,985
Limerick	92	18%	23	4%	282	55%	119	23%	516
Longford	34	4%	49	5%	731	77%	139	15%	953
Louth	132	11%	80	7%	719	62%	228	20%	1,159
Mayo	3,266	34%	730	8%	4,109	42%	1,614	17%	9,719
Meath	56	2%	159	5%	2,695	77%	588	17%	3,498
Monaghan	26	2%	41	3%	912	70%	317	24%	1,296
Offaly	31	2%	16	1%	1,186	80%	249	17%	1,482
Roscommon	114	3%	151	4%	2,617	65%	1,115	28%	3,997
Sligo	769	21%	212	6%	1,788	49%	844	23%	3,613
Tipperary	608	18%	440	13%	1,291	38%	1,022	30%	3,361
Waterford	558	43%	45	3%	585	45%	108	8%	1,296
Westmeath	35	2%	30	1%	1,555	77%	395	20%	2,015
Wexford	111	4%	119	4%	1,997	68%	711	24%	2,938
Wicklow	1,113	21%	617	12%	2,962	56%	590	11%	5,282
Total	16,535	19%	7,158	8%	46,585	54%	16,785	19%	87,063

All % figures have been rounded for reporting purposes



### Other Sheep by Breed Type Category

County	Mountain		Mountain Cross		Lowland		Lowland Cross		Total Other Sheep
	No.	% of County	No.	% of County	No.	% of County	No.	% of County	
Carlow	2,448	8%	6,077	19%	8,674	28%	14,030	45%	31,229
Cavan	3,070	12%	7,079	28%	5,381	21%	9,674	38%	25,204
Clare	324	4%	669	8%	2,973	37%	4,114	51%	8,080
Cork	12,322	28%	10,210	23%	8,425	19%	13,140	30%	44,097
Donegal	46,957	30%	35,379	22%	21,738	14%	53,298	34%	157,372
Dublin	1,675	27%	1,102	17%	1,354	21%	2,184	35%	6,315
Galway	24,750	19%	14,884	11%	39,835	31%	50,355	39%	129,824
Kerry	37,145	49%	22,309	29%	4,792	6%	12,317	16%	76,563
Kildare	5,664	17%	6,327	19%	7,527	23%	13,918	42%	33,436
Kilkenny	2,664	12%	2,443	11%	7,477	35%	8,842	41%	21,426
Laois	652	4%	2,882	20%	4,374	30%	6,798	46%	14,706
Leitrim	9,047	29%	12,780	41%	2,851	9%	6,200	20%	30,878
Limerick	2,038	25%	1,703	21%	1,740	21%	2,757	33%	8,238
Longford	305	2%	1,522	12%	4,515	36%	6,111	49%	12,453
Louth	4,364	21%	5,001	24%	3,516	17%	8,003	38%	20,884
Mayo	48,226	43%	20,162	18%	17,450	15%	27,593	24%	113,431
Meath	6,049	12%	8,253	16%	14,240	28%	22,601	44%	51,143
Monaghan	959	4%	3,500	16%	6,354	29%	11,480	51%	22,293
Offaly	1,640	7%	2,879	12%	8,779	38%	10,043	43%	23,341
Roscommon	2,485	5%	5,482	10%	19,536	36%	27,213	50%	54,716
Sligo	10,737	29%	7,469	21%	7,157	20%	11,057	30%	36,420
Tipperary	9,480	23%	8,276	20%	9,496	23%	13,767	34%	41,019
Waterford	10,582	55%	3,075	16%	2,435	13%	3,093	16%	19,185
Westmeath	1,740	6%	6,572	24%	6,564	24%	12,638	46%	27,514
Wexford	3,395	6%	10,831	18%	15,226	25%	31,410	52%	60,862
Wicklow	20,252	26%	24,320	32%	9,338	12%	23,076	30%	76,986
Total	268,970	23%	231,186	20%	241,747	21%	405,712	35%	1,147,615

All % figures have been rounded for reporting purposes



### All Sheep by Breed Type Category

County	Mountain		Mountain Cross		Lowland		Lowland Cross		Total Sheep
	No.	% of County	No.	% of County	No.	% of County	No.	% of County	
Carlow	13,028	12%	18,184	17%	28,166	26%	47,585	44%	106,963
Cavan	10,984	14%	19,006	23%	20,954	26%	30,326	37%	81,270
Clare	1,316	5%	2,581	9%	9,806	36%	13,606	50%	27,309
Cork	59,191	35%	43,627	26%	26,751	16%	39,109	23%	168,678
Donegal	196,521	37%	109,977	21%	72,683	14%	156,768	29%	535,949
Dublin	6,312	25%	4,152	17%	6,043	24%	8,360	34%	24,867
Galway	105,879	25%	37,013	9%	119,466	28%	160,410	38%	422,768
Kerry	183,200	55%	91,583	28%	19,322	6%	37,298	11%	331,403
Kildare	19,589	18%	15,641	14%	27,484	25%	46,705	43%	109,419
Kilkenny	4,496	7%	6,958	10%	24,505	37%	30,433	46%	66,392
Laois	2,368	5%	5,851	13%	16,868	37%	21,026	46%	46,113
Leitrim	36,649	30%	51,987	43%	10,839	9%	20,779	17%	120,254
Limerick	6,787	29%	3,555	15%	6,099	26%	6,595	29%	23,036
Longford	1,985	5%	4,326	11%	13,534	34%	20,074	50%	39,919
Louth	12,707	22%	12,801	22%	11,436	20%	21,339	37%	58,283
Mayo	223,575	51%	69,695	16%	55,889	13%	91,625	21%	440,784
Meath	10,734	7%	14,844	9%	51,722	33%	80,797	51%	158,097
Monaghan	2,167	4%	4,862	9%	16,647	30%	31,241	57%	54,917
Offaly	2,633	4%	6,106	9%	28,621	40%	33,827	48%	71,187
Roscommon	8,363	5%	14,240	8%	66,572	37%	92,770	51%	181,945
Sligo	47,578	33%	31,761	22%	26,223	18%	39,860	27%	145,422
Tipperary	31,778	26%	20,532	17%	32,726	27%	36,687	30%	121,723
Waterford	37,968	57%	9,959	15%	7,123	11%	11,938	18%	66,988
Westmeath	4,089	5%	13,714	16%	23,296	28%	43,477	51%	84,576
Wexford	10,982	7%	19,970	13%	40,611	27%	79,875	53%	151,438
Wicklow	82,435	35%	67,992	29%	27,073	11%	60,022	25%	237,522
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,123,314</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>700,917</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>790,459</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>1,262,532</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>3,877,222</b>

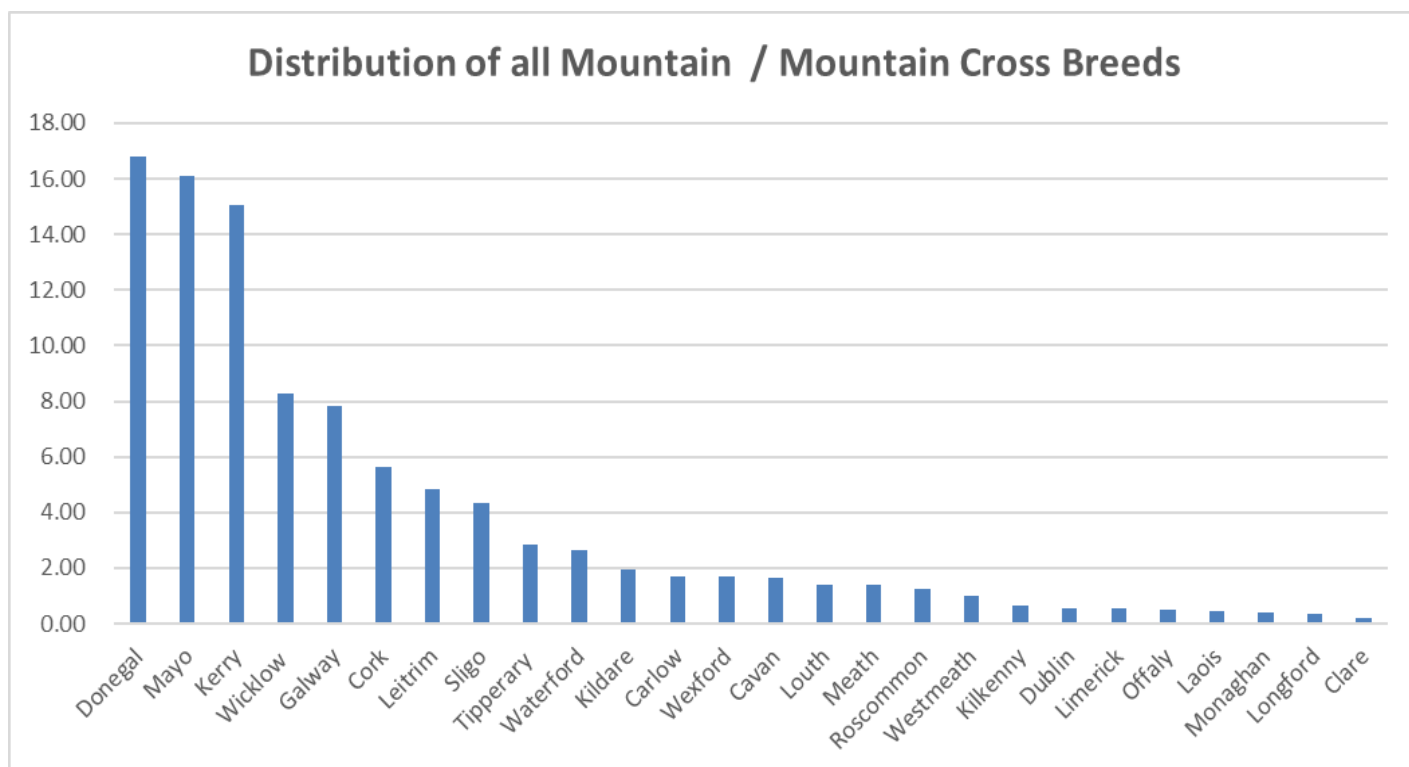
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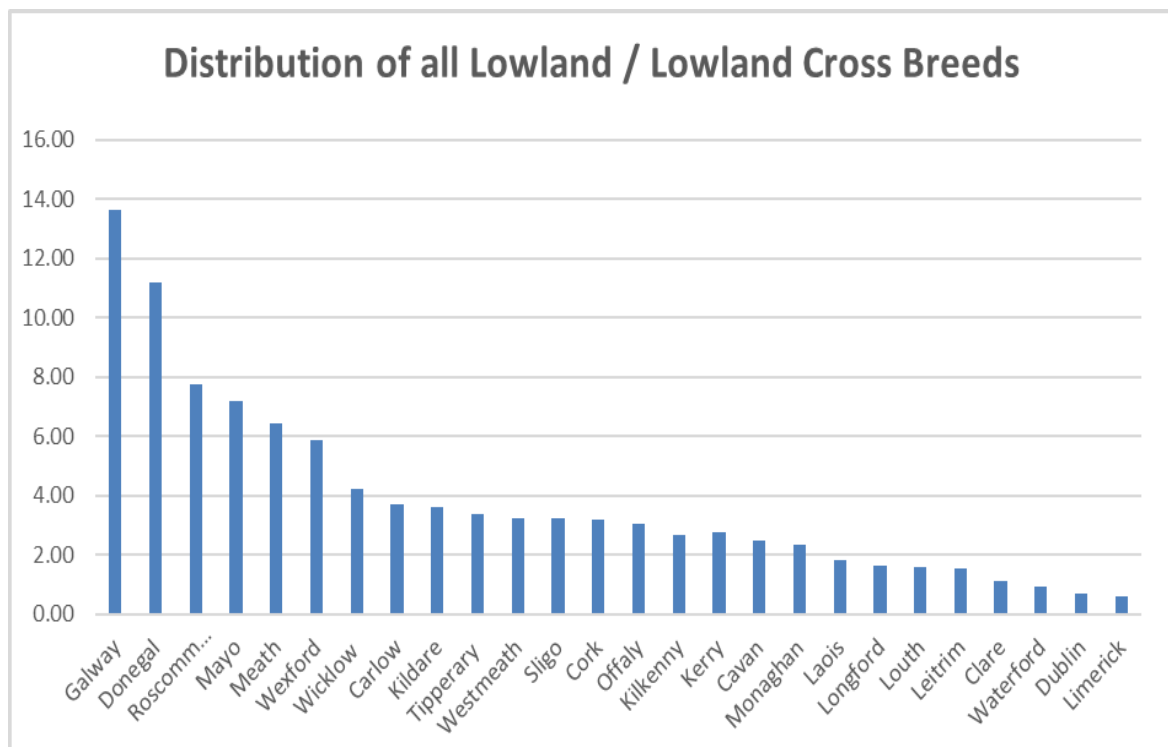
## Distribution of all Mountain / Mountain Cross Breeds by County

The distribution of all mountain breeds, i.e. mountain and mountain cross, by county is set out below. As in 2016 to 2019 the data shows that Donegal, and Mayo each account for approximately 16% of all mountain sheep, and when combined with Kerry's 15%, the total for the three counties accounts for almost half (48%) of all mountain sheep in the country.



## Distribution of all Lowland / Lowland Cross Breeds by County

The distribution of all lowland breeds, i.e. lowland and lowland cross, by county is set out below. As in 2016 to 2019 the data show that Galway has the highest number of lowland sheep and accounts for 14% of all lowland sheep followed by Donegal with 11% and Roscommon with 8%.



## Number of Flocks within certain Flock Sizes

The distribution of the national flock in terms of flock sizes has remained relatively stable over the last number of years as set out in the following tables.

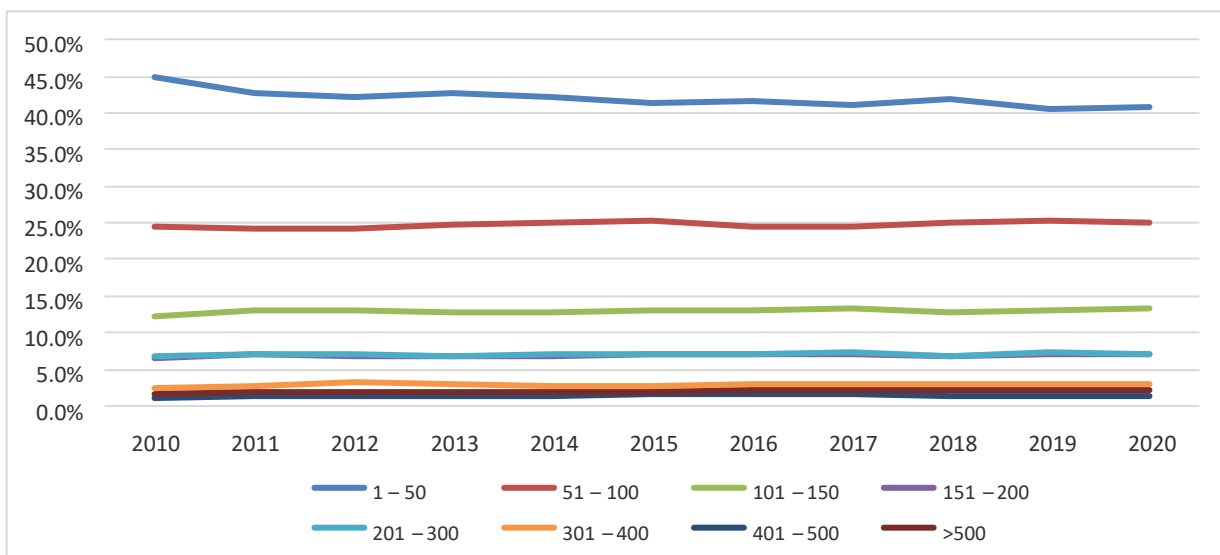
Number of Flocks within certain Flock Sizes									
Flock Size	1 – 50	51 – 100	101 – 150	151 – 200	201 – 300	301 – 400	401 – 500	>500	Total Flocks
2010	14,436	7,872	3,913	2,074	2,184	822	381	494	32,176
2011	14,392	8,192	4,397	2,350	2,412	941	457	625	33,766
2012	14,393	8,232	4,466	2,353	2,388	1,067	480	669	34,048
2013	14,676	8,518	4,354	2,306	2,339	999	466	646	34,304
2014	14,579	8,667	4,436	2,347	2,428	984	447	661	34,549
2015	14,591	8,892	4,571	2,471	2,507	982	526	714	35,254
2016	15,102	8,891	4,740	2,552	2,589	1,109	549	781	36,313
2017	14,735	8,789	4,724	2,545	2,578	1,064	567	775	35,777
2018	14,739	8,788	4,523	2,439	2,409	1,047	499	742	35,186
2019	14,202	8,816	4,600	2,451	2,529	1,056	505	779	34,938
2020	14,516	8,891	4,758	2,535	2,506	1,047	526	813	35,592



### % of flocks within certain Flock Sizes

Flock Size	1 – 50	51 – 100	101 – 150	151 – 200	201 – 300	301 – 400	401 – 500	>500
2010	44.9%	24.5%	12.2%	6.4%	6.8%	2.6%	1.2%	1.5%
2011	42.6%	24.3%	13.0%	7.0%	7.1%	2.8%	1.4%	1.9%
2012	42.3%	24.2%	13.1%	6.9%	7.0%	3.1%	1.4%	2.0%
2013	42.8%	24.8%	12.7%	6.7%	6.8%	2.9%	1.4%	1.9%
2014	42.2%	25.1%	12.8%	6.8%	7.0%	2.8%	1.3%	1.9%
2015	41.4%	25.2%	13.0%	7.0%	7.1%	2.8%	1.5%	2.0%
2016	41.6%	24.5%	13.1%	7.0%	7.1%	3.1%	1.5%	2.2%
2017	41.2%	24.6%	13.2%	7.1%	7.2%	3.0%	1.6%	2.2%
2018	41.9%	25.0%	12.9%	6.9%	6.8%	3.0%	1.4%	2.1%
2019	40.6%	25.2%	13.2%	7.0%	7.2%	3.0%	1.4%	2.2%
2020	40.8%	25.0%	13.4%	7.1%	7.0%	2.9%	1.5%	2.3%

All % figures have been rounded for reporting purposes





## Goats

Goat census returns were received from 1,032 registered goat keepers, representing a response rate 80%.

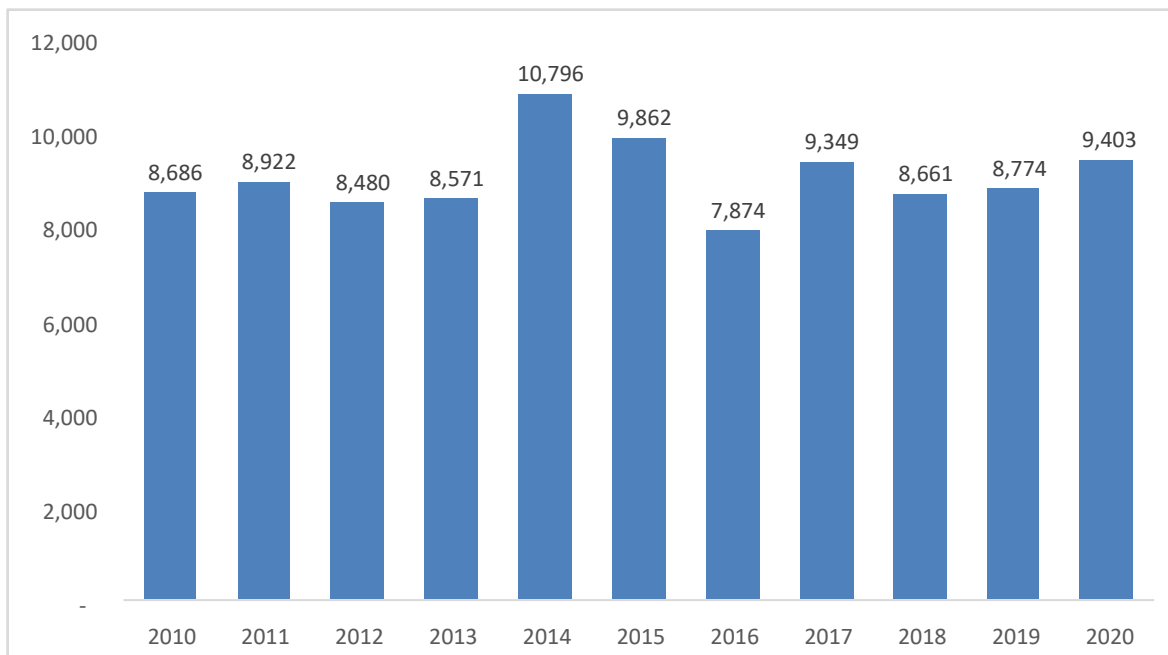
A total of 9,403 goats were recorded - an increase of approximately 7% (629 goats) on the December 2019 figure.

732 respondent keepers declared that they had goats in December 2020. This is an increase of 43 on the 689 herds recorded keeping goats in 2019.

With 105 herds, Cork had the greatest number of goat herds.

The greatest number of goats was kept in Tipperary where 923 goats were recorded, closely followed by Cavan with 903.

**Goat Census Data 2010 - 2020**



## Number of Goats and Number of Goat Herds by Size of Herd

As in previous years the vast majority of domestic goats are kept in very small numbers on a non-commercial basis, with only 28 herds in the country containing over 50 goats. The total number of goats held in those 28 herds accounts for 57% of the total goat population which is unchanged from 2019.

No. of Goat Herds with	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1 - 5 goats	716	760	710	357	403	448	469	490
6 - 10 goats	101	102	115	98	115	114	105	123
11 - 50 goats	74	86	80	70	68	80	87	91
51 - 100 goats	14	16	14	10	10	11	13	13
101 - 200 goats	4	7	3	5	5	5	4	4
201 - 300 goats	7	10	7	3	7	5	7	6
> 300 goats	4	5	6	6	6	6	4	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>920</b>	<b>986</b>	<b>935</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>669</b>	<b>689</b>	<b>732</b>

Total Goats in herds with	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1 - 5 goats	1599	1745	1637	909	1052	1150	1197	1257
6 - 10 goats	744	762	865	722	849	871	772	922
11 - 50 goats	1426	1730	1695	1469	1445	1755	1800	1896
51 - 100 goats	1019	1208	1058	667	745	722	850	859
101 - 200 goats	566	941	442	670	687	721	548	614
201 - 300 goats	1812	2632	1847	777	1907	1215	1817	1511
> 300 goats	1405	1778	2318	2660	2664	2227	1790	2344
<b>Total</b>	<b>8571</b>	<b>10796</b>	<b>9862</b>	<b>7874</b>	<b>9349</b>	<b>8661</b>	<b>8774</b>	<b>9403</b>



## Total Number of Goats and Number of Goat Herds by County 2020

County	Number of Herds	% of Total Herds	Number of Goats	% of Total Goats
Carlow	9	1%	77	1%
Cavan	12	2%	903	10%
Clare	30	4%	787	8%
Cork	105	14%	858	9%
Donegal	44	6%	716	8%
Dublin	12	2%	136	1%
Galway	66	9%	554	6%
Kerry	54	7%	392	4%
Kildare	17	2%	206	2%
Kilkenny	13	2%	214	2%
Laois	14	2%	47	0%
Leitrim	30	4%	117	1%
Limerick	15	2%	232	2%
Longford	16	2%	90	1%
Louth	13	2%	493	5%
Mayo	57	8%	286	3%
Meath	20	3%	408	4%
Monaghan	10	1%	195	2%
Offaly	10	1%	28	0%
Roscommon	33	5%	336	4%
Sligo	33	5%	226	2%
Tipperary	27	4%	927	10%
Waterford	29	4%	193	2%
Westmeath	17	2%	629	7%
Wexford	24	3%	178	2%
Wicklow	22	3%	175	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>732</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>9,403</b>	<b>100%</b>

