

Major drop in Scottish pig numbers

The Scottish pig population has fallen significantly, according to the latest figures from the Scottish government.



Total headcount in Scotland dropped 12% compared to the same period last year, with the total population recorded at 319,400 in the annual June census, compared to 363,000 in 2012.

The news comes on the back of an 11% rise in total pig numbers in England, to just less than 4.1 million, announced by DEFRA last month.

In its weekly pig market bulletin, BPEX said the drop in Scotland was largely a result of the 13% decline in the number of pigs for fattening, as more pigs have been transported to England for finishing, following the closure of the Hall's of Broxburn abattoir last autumn.

Numbers of breeding pigs fell 9% to 35,200, while sows in pig fell 10% to 18,300.

However, gilts in pig rose 13%, to 6,100, and maiden gilts were up 5% to 5,500, which BPEX said indicated Scottish farmers may be looking to increase production in the near future.

Stuart Ashworth, head of economic services at Quality Meat Scotland (QMS), told Farmers Weekly: "The 12% decline was due to a combination of Vion's closure of its abattoir in Broxburn, Vion choosing to restructure its sow operation, and independents who took the opportunity of a bit of confusion to depopulate their herd."

However, he said that despite the significant fall in total pig numbers, due to what you might call "exceptional circumstances", the independent pig sector in Scotland was in reasonably robust health, in part due to the work of the major pig co-operatives in marketing Scottish pig producers.

"For the independent producer, after getting through the tidal-wave of confusion, they can now see how they are going to operate in Scotland," he added.

Source: [Farmers Weekly](#)

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