

Alberta Livestock Industry in 2008

Cattle and Calves

The size of the cattle and calf herd in Alberta decreased in 2008. Estimates, as of July 1, 2008, showed annual numbers down 6.2 per cent to 6.0 million head, from 6.4 million head in 2007. Lower inventories were typical of all cattle classes, with the exception of calves, dairy cows and dairy heifers (replacements). The overall inventory decline is largely attributed to a number of factors including high feed costs, the continued strength of the Canadian dollar and strong marketings of animals over the past year.

The provincial beef breeding herd comprised of cows and heifers, contracted by 5.8 per cent to 2.2 million head. The number of beef cows fell 5.8 per cent to 2.0 million head, while beef heifers for replacement decreased 6.0 per cent from a year ago, to 267,000 head. Steers on farms fell 19.5 per cent, to 805,000 head after a record high of 1.0 million head the previous year. Heifers for slaughter were down 10.2 per cent, to 750,000 head. Total calves on farms increased marginally by 0.8 per cent, to 2.0 million head. With respect to the size of the provincial dairy herd (cows and heifers), numbers rose 4.1 per cent, to 126,000 head. Milk cows increased 3.6 per cent, while replacement dairy heifers increased 5.3 per cent, to an estimated 86,000 head and 40,000 head, respectively.

The July 1 Canadian cattle and calf inventory fell by 4.3 per cent from a year ago, to 15.2 million head. Alberta continues to lead the nation in cattle and calf inventories (6.0 million head), followed by Saskatchewan (3.4 million head), and Ontario (1.9 million head). Currently, Alberta accounts for 51.5 per cent of the Western Canadian herd of 11.7 million head, and 39.6 per cent of the national total of 15.2 million head.

Preliminary data pegged Alberta's annual total cattle slaughter (excluding calves), in federally and provincially inspected plants at 2.3 million head in 2008, a 3.9 per cent increase from 2007. Steers and heifers made up the bulk of the slaughter, and together accounted for 81.7 per cent of the total. Cow slaughter increased to 415,040 head, up 14.5 per cent from 2007.

Nationally, in 2008, cattle slaughter (excluding calves), in federally and provincially inspected plants totalled 3.5 million head, with Alberta accounting for 66.5 per cent. Also, Alberta contributed 89.2 per cent to the total Western Canadian kill of 2.6 million head.

Slaughter cattle prices were up in 2008, compared to 2007. For slaughter steers, the average price increased 0.3 per cent to \$88.57 per cwt., while the price for slaughter heifers rose 0.1 per cent to \$88.44 per cwt. Average slaughter bull price strengthened to \$52.33 per cwt., or 46.0 per cent above the 2007 level. Average slaughter cow prices (D1/D2), increased by 14.5 per cent to \$43.56 per cwt.

Total live cattle and calf shipments from Alberta in 2008, as per brand inspection records, decreased 20.8 per cent from a year earlier to 690,170 head. This was fuelled largely by a decline in live cattle exports to the United States. Cattle and calf shipments are comprised of feeders, slaughter, and breeding animals.

Live feeder cattle and calf shipments to all destinations in 2008 totalled 214,498 head, 17.0 per cent lower than in 2007. A total of 128,486 head were shipped to other provinces, with the remainder exported to the United States and other regions.

Total shipments of cattle and calves for slaughter fell 22.5 per cent to 457,159 head compared to a year ago. Of the total shipments destined for slaughter, 85.7 per cent were shipped to the United States.

Shipments of live replacement cattle and calves fell by 21.7 per cent, to 18,513 head. The majority of replacement cattle (92.8 per cent) were shipped to other Canadian provinces.

Pigs

As of July 1, 2008, the estimated number of pigs on farms in Alberta was 1.7 million head, down 15.2 per cent from 2.0 million head in 2007. The market hog inventory declined to 1.5 million head, down 15.8 per cent from a year earlier. Alberta's breeding stock inventory of boars, sows, and bred gilts fell 9.8 per cent to 171,000 head, marking the sixth consecutive decline on a "year-over-year" basis for breeding stock. Boar numbers fell to 6,000 head from 6,900 head a year earlier, due to increased usage of artificial insemination.

Among the provinces, Alberta continued to rank fourth in pig inventories behind Quebec (4.1 million head), Ontario (3.2 million head) and Manitoba (2.7 million head). For Western Canada, the size of the pig herd was 5.5 million head, with Alberta accounting for 30.5 per cent. Alberta also accounted for 12.9 per cent of the national pig inventory of 13.0 million head.

In 2008, hog slaughter in federally and provincially inspected plants in Alberta totalled 2.7 million head, or 8.0 per cent lower than in 2007. Decreasing, as well, were slaughter hog marketings (or hogs of Alberta origin slaughtered in Canada), which

fell 9.2 per cent to 3.0 million head. The 2008 average Alberta index 100 hog price decreased 0.8 per cent from 2007, to \$1.18 per kilogram.

Sheep and Lambs

Inventory estimates as of July 1, 2008, show the size of the provincial of sheep and lamb flock falling to 185,000 head, down 9.8 per cent from a year earlier. Declines in numbers were noted for all animal classes. Among the provinces, Alberta ranked third in sheep and lamb inventories after Ontario (295,000 head), and Quebec (290,000 head). The size of the Western Canadian flock was 436,000 head as of July 1 2008, with Alberta accounting for 42.4 per cent of the total. Nationally, there were 1.1 million head of sheep and lambs on farms with Alberta contributing 17.4 per cent.

Apiculture

The estimated number of beekeepers in Alberta decreased in 2008, falling 3.6 per cent from 2007, to 700. The number of colonies went up to 240,000, from 237,000 in 2007.

Preliminary estimates peg Alberta honey production in 2008 at 9,800 tonnes, down 25.3 per cent from 2007. Nationally, total honey production in 2008 was estimated at 28,112 tonnes, down 10.7 per cent from 2007. Alberta accounted for 34.9 per cent of the national honey production in 2008, while only possessing 9.9 per cent of Canada's beekeepers. Alberta accounts for 41.0 per cent of the national number of colonies. In addition, the average colony in Alberta had an estimated yield of 41 kilograms of honey, down 25.5 per cent from 55 kilograms in 2007.