



Sheep and Goats Methodology and Quality Measures

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Scope and Purpose: The January Sheep and Goats Survey is conducted annually and targets sheep and goat producers in the United States. The survey collects data for total sheep and goat inventories and components of that total, including breeding animals, market inventory, market lambs by weight group, goat inventory by type, lamb and kid crops, and wool and mohair production and value. In addition, data are collected for death loss from previous year, on farm slaughter, and breeding and market animal values. Every five years a Sheep and Lamb Predator and Non-Predator Loss Survey is conducted nationally and incorporated as part of the January Sheep and Goats Survey. Sheep estimates are published for 32 states and New England and goat estimates are published for 32 states and New England.

Survey Timeline: The reference date for the January Sheep and Goats Survey is January 1, with a data collection period of approximately 15 calendar days. Regional Field Offices (RFOs) may begin data collection one day prior to the reference date. Data collection continues until a scheduled ending date and RFOs have about 4 or 5 business days to complete editing and analysis, execute the summary, and interpret survey results. The Agricultural Statistics Board must perform the national review, reconcile state estimates to the national estimates, and prepare official estimates for release in 5 or 6 business days. The estimates are released to the public on the last business day in January.

Sampling: The target population for the Sheep and Goats Survey is all agricultural establishments with one or more sheep or goats owned by the operation. NASS uses a dual frame approach, consisting of list frame and area frame components, to provide complete coverage of this target population. The Sheep and Goats Survey is conducted in every state.

The list frame includes all known agricultural establishments. Livestock inventory numbers of each establishment are maintained on the list frame to allow NASS to define list frame sampling populations for specific surveys and to employ efficient sampling designs. Only list frame records with positive sheep or goat inventory data are included in the list frame population. The list frame for sheep and goat population covers approximately 89 percent of sheep inventory and 82 percent of goat inventory in the United States.

The area frame contains all land in the state and, as such, is complete. The land is stratified according to intensity of agriculture using satellite imagery. The land in each stratum is divided into segments of roughly one square mile. Segments are optimally allocated and sampled to effectively measure crops and livestock. The sampled segments are fully enumerated in June. All farms and ranches found operating tracts in these segments are checked to see if they are included in the list frame sheep and goat population. The farms and ranches that are not included in the list frame sheep and goat population, called nonoverlap tracts, are sampled for the January Sheep and Goats Survey so that the target population is completely represented. The area frame for sheep and goat population covers approximately 11 percent of sheep inventory and 18 percent of goat inventory in the United States.

The Sheep and Goats Survey list frame sample is selected using a hierarchical stratified sampling design with strata defined by total sheep and goats. The sample is designed to achieve a National standard error of 2 percent of the point estimate for total sheep and 4 percent for total goats and kids. The Sheep and Goats Survey nonoverlap sample uses a stratified sample design based on data collected in the June Area Frame Survey. Each sampling unit from the list and area frames is assigned a sampling weight which is used to create the survey estimates.

Data Collection and Editing: For consistency across modes, the paper version is considered the master questionnaire and the Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI), Computed Assisted Self Interview (CASI), and Mobile Computer Assisted Personal Interview (mCAPI) instruments are built to model the paper instrument. Questionnaire content and format are evaluated annually through a specifications process where requests for changes are evaluated and approved or

disapproved. Input may vary from question wording or formatting to a program change involving the deletion or modification of current questions or addition of new ones. If there are significant changes to either the content or format proposed, a NASS survey methodologist will pre-test the changes for usability. Prior to the start of data collection, all modes of instruments are reviewed and the paper, mCAPI, CASI and CATI instruments are thoroughly tested.

All federal data collections require approval by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). NASS must document the public need for the data, apply sound statistical practice, prove the data do not already exist elsewhere, and ensure the public is not excessively burdened. The questionnaire must display an active OMB number that gives NASS the authority to conduct the survey, a statement of the purpose of the survey and the use of the data being collected, a response burden statement that gives an estimate of the time required to complete the form, a confidentiality statement that the respondent's information will only be used for statistical purposes in combination with other producers, and a statement saying that response to the survey is voluntary and not required by law.

In addition to asking the specific sheep and goat items, all instruments collect information to verify the sampled unit, determine any changes in the name or address, identify any partners to detect possible duplication, verify the farm still qualifies for the target population, and identify any additional operations operated by the sampled operator.

Sampled farms and ranches receive a pre-survey letter explaining the survey and informing them that they will be contacted for survey purposes only. The letter provides the questions to be asked to allow respondents to prepare in advance and also provides a pass code they can use to complete the survey on the internet. All modes of data collection are utilized for sheep and goat surveys. RFOs are given the option of conducting a mail out/mail back phase. While mail is the least costly mode of collection, the short data collection period and the uncertainty of postal delivery times limit its effectiveness. Most of the data are collected by computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) by individual RFOs and Data Collection Centers. Limited personal interviewing is done, generally for large operations or those with special handling arrangements. A program is run to determine if any sampled farms are in multiple on-going surveys, so data collection can be coordinated.

Survey Edit: As survey data are collected and captured, they are edited for consistency and reasonableness using automated systems. The edit logic ensures the coding of administrative data follows the methodological rules associated with the survey design. Relationships between data items on the current survey are verified and, in certain situations, those items may be compared to data from earlier surveys to ensure relationships are logical. The edit will determine the status of each record to be either "dirty" or "clean." Dirty records must be updated and reedited or certified by an analyst to be clean. If updates are needed, they are reedited interactively. Only clean records are eligible for analysis and summary.

Analysis Tools: Edited data are processed through an interactive analysis tool which displays data for all reports by item. The tool provides scatter plots, tables, charts, and special tabulations that allow the analyst to compare an individual record to other similar records within their state. Outliers and unusual data relationships become evident and RFO staff will review them to determine if they are correct. The tool also allows comparison to a farm's previously reported data to detect large changes in the operation. Suspect data found to be in error are corrected, while data found to be correct are kept.

Nonsampling Errors: Nonsampling errors are present in any survey process. These errors include reporting, recording, editing, and imputation errors. Steps are taken to minimize the impact of these errors, such as questionnaire testing, comprehensive interviewer training, validation and verification of processing systems, detailed computer edits, and the analysis tool.

Estimators: Each farm and ranch in the sample has an initial sampling weight. This is the inverse of the sampling fraction. For example, if a stratum has 1,000 farms in the population and 200 are sampled for this survey, each sampled farm has a weight of 5. In other words, each sampled farm represents 5 farms. The nonoverlap tracts sampled to measure the sheep and goats not accounted for by the list have a weight determined by adjusting their original area frame weight by any second stage sampling weight.

Response to the January Sheep and Goats Survey is voluntary. Some producers refuse to participate in the survey. Others cannot be located during the data collection period, and some submit incomplete reports. These nonrespondents must be

accounted for if accurate estimates of sheep and goats are to be made. For the Sheep and Goats Survey, nonrespondents are accounted for by adjusting the weights of the respondents. The adjustment occurs by stratum as the bounded strata represent homogeneous groupings of similar sized farms. The adjustment is also performed by individual item on the questionnaire (total sheep, total goats, sheep death loss, etc.) so adjustments for item nonresponse (partial reports) and unit nonresponse (refusals and inaccessibles) are done in a single calculation. Using the previous example, if 180 of the original 200 respond, the weights of the 180 will be adjusted to 1,000 divided by 180, or 5.56. The largest stratum is unbounded and consists of large and, often unique, farms. Nonrespondents in this stratum and the nonoverlap tracts must be manually imputed by RFO statisticians, and their weights are not adjusted.

Two estimators are used to compute direct measures of the sheep and goat items. The "reweighted" estimator and the "adjusted" estimator are computationally identical except in how the nonresponse adjustments are made. The reweighted estimator uses a global weight adjustment across all usable reports. The nonresponse weight adjustment for the adjusted estimator uses an additional piece of information. When a sampled farm refuses to cooperate, interviewers will probe to determine the presence of sheep and/or goats even though the number is not known. This presence/absence indicator is used in the weight adjustment.

Point estimates, called direct expansions, for both estimators are calculated by multiplying the reported value by the nonresponse adjusted weight and summing to a stratum total. A variance estimate is also computed at the stratum level. The nonoverlap tracts are treated as an additional stratum. Totals and variances are additive across strata to form a state estimate and states are additive to a national estimate.

Ratio estimates are also computed for many items. For example, market lambs can be estimated as a percent of total market sheep and lamb inventory. Ratio estimates use the reweighted estimator described above for the numerator and denominator. Both the numerator and denominator must be complete for that record to be included in the ratio estimator.

Estimation: When all samples are accounted for, all responses fully edited, and the analysis material is reviewed, each RFO executes the summary for their state. When all RFOs have run summaries, Headquarters executes the National summary. Since all states conduct identical surveys, the samples can be pooled, and National survey results computed. The summary results provide multiple point estimates and their standard errors for each data series being estimated. It also provides information used to assess the performance of the current survey and evaluate the quality of the survey estimates, such as strata level expansions, response rates, and percent of the expansion from usable reports.

RFOs are responsible for performing a detailed review of their survey results. Any irregularities revealed by the summary must be investigated and, if necessary, resolved. Using the historical relationship of the survey estimates to the official estimate, RFOs interpret the survey results and submit a recommended estimate to Headquarters. The data are viewed in tabular and graphical form and a consensus estimate is established. RFOs see their survey results only and do not have access to other states' results. For some data series, information from other sources is also utilized in the process of establishing estimates.

For the National estimates, NASS assembles a panel of statisticians to serve as the Agricultural Statistics Board (ASB) which reviews the National results and establishes the National estimates. Since larger sample sizes yield more precise results, NASS employs the "top-down" approach by determining the National estimates first and reconciling the state estimates to the National number for sheep and goat inventories, lamb and kid crops, and wool and mohair production. The ASB has the advantage in being able to examine results across states, compare the state recommendations, and utilize administrative data available only at the National level. The same estimators used in the state summaries are produced by the National summary. The ASB follows the same approach the states do in determining the National estimate. The historical relationship of the survey estimates to the official estimate is evaluated over time to determine accuracy and bias using tables and graphs. Every five years NASS conducts the Census of Agriculture, which is an exhaustive data collection effort for all known farm operations across the United States. The information gathered from the Census of Agriculture is used to establish benchmark levels by which the survey estimators can be compared, and bias determined. Survey based estimators can also be impacted by "outliers" - individual reports that have "excessive influence" on the results due to either improper classification or extremely unusual data for a given operation (i.e., operation is not representative of other operations). NASS thoroughly reviews the survey data to identify these situations and consider their impact on the survey results when establishing the official estimates.

External information (administrative data) is also utilized in the process of setting estimates. To be considered, these data must be deemed to be reliable and come from unbiased sources. The most common administrative data is commercial slaughter. NASS employs a balance sheet approach whenever possible to ensure that estimates are as accurate as possible. This approach typically is limited to National-level estimates. A balance sheet and its components are reviewed when the inventory numbers are established. Commercial slaughter is an important element of the balance sheet at the National level since its high degree of reliability is based on a near-actual count of animals slaughtered. Live U.S. imports and exports to other countries are also considered.

Subtracting the disposition components of the balance sheet from supply components should, theoretically, give the current inventory. However, each component of the balance sheet has varying degrees of possible estimation error. To be most useful as an indication of inventory, therefore, each component should be estimated based on all available information. The supply components of the National balance sheet are the beginning inventory, births, and imports (inshipments for State balance sheets). From this supply, the disposition components - commercial slaughter (marketings at State level), farm slaughter, deaths, and exports - are subtracted. The result is the indicated number on hand at the end of the period or year.

Quality Metrics for Sheep and Goats

Purpose and Definitions: Under the guidance of the Statistical Policy Office of the Office of Management and Budget, the United States Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service provides data users with quality metrics for its published data series. The metrics tables below describe the performance data for all surveys contributing to the publication. The accuracy of data products may be evaluated through sampling and non-sampling error. The measurement of error due to sampling in the current period is evaluated by the coefficient of variation for each estimated item. Nonsampling error is evaluated by response rates and the weighted item response rates.

Sample size is the number of observations selected from the population to represent a characteristic of the population. Operations that did not have the item of interest or were out of business at the time of data collection have been excluded.

Response rate is the proportion of the above sample that completed the survey.

Weighted item response rate is a ratio of reported survey data expanded by the original sampling weight compared to final nonresponse adjusted summary totals.

Coefficient of variation provides a measure of the size for the standard error relative to the point estimate and is used to measure the precision of the results of a survey estimator.

Sheep and Goats Survey Sample Size and Response Rates: To assist in evaluating the performance of the estimates in the sheep and goats report, the sample size and response rates are displayed.

Sheep and Goats Survey Sample Size and Response Rate – United States: January 1, 2025-2026

	Sample size		Response rate	
	2025	2026	2025	2026
	(number)	(number)	(percent)	(percent)
United States	23,528	23,195	49.4	37.4

Sheep and Goats Survey Quality Metrics – United States: January 1, 2025-2026

	Weighted item response rate		Coefficient of variation	
	2025	2026	2025	2026
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
All sheep and lambs	51.1	40.2	2.7	2.7
Breeding sheep and lambs	51.7	41.1	2.4	2.5
Market sheep and lambs	49.6	37.9	4.5	4.7
Lamb crop	51.7	41.6	3.0	3.0
Wool production	38.5	22.2	1.9	2.9
All goats and kids	52.7	42.8	3.8	11.0
Angora goats and kids	53.2	41.8	15.8	17.1
Milk goats and kids	50.3	38.7	6.6	7.8
Meat and other goats and kids	53.3	43.8	4.4	13.9
Kid crop	52.1	42.6	4.7	11.8
Mohair Production	39.4	35.5	19.8	26.9

**Sheep and Goats Survey Sample Size and Response Rates – States and United States:
January 1, 2025-2026**

	Sample size		Response rate	
	2025	2026	2025	2026
	(number)	(number)	(percent)	(percent)
Alabama	511	481	45.2	32.0
Arizona	201	192	71.6	27.1
Arkansas	330	321	46.1	34.3
California	1,013	1,028	26.3	30.6
Colorado	785	788	47.4	31.1
Florida	383	372	43.1	29.3
Georgia	510	479	43.3	31.9
Idaho	440	426	45.2	39.4
Illinois	477	483	48.6	34.0
Indiana	520	525	43.3	29.0
Iowa	817	779	46.1	44.2
Kansas	484	468	41.1	32.3
Kentucky	565	575	59.8	38.6
Michigan	503	504	49.1	29.2
Minnesota	651	627	40.7	36.7
Mississippi	374	352	50.3	36.9
Missouri	619	608	41.0	39.1
Montana	552	578	54.9	42.0
Nebraska	461	461	48.8	41.4
Nevada	169	171	32.5	38.6
New England ¹	668	665	61.1	31.3
New Mexico	339	339	42.5	29.5
New York	401	372	45.4	30.6
North Carolina	565	569	57.0	42.2
North Dakota	258	256	43.0	36.7
Ohio	776	751	44.1	35.7
Oklahoma	666	660	63.1	48.0
Oregon	640	631	52.3	43.3
Pennsylvania	592	601	52.0	34.3
South Carolina	370	360	46.5	26.4
South Dakota	745	738	36.0	40.2
Tennessee	696	665	53.3	39.7
Texas	1,921	1,949	58.8	46.2
Utah	757	759	65.3	43.0
Virginia	584	591	50.9	41.5
Washington	357	343	43.4	33.8
West Virginia	369	361	69.9	38.2
Wisconsin	589	563	42.3	43.0
Wyoming	825	769	67.2	42.5
Other States ²	1,045	1,035	42.4	31.8
United States	23,528	23,195	49.4	37.4

¹ New England includes Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

² Individual state estimates not available for states not shown but are included in Other States.

Quality Metrics for All Sheep and Lambs – States and United States: January 1, 2025-2026

	Weighted item response rate		Coefficient of variation	
	2025	2026	2025	2026
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
Arizona	75.9	23.2	17.2	15.8
California	23.0	29.4	21.3	9.3
Colorado	55.1	13.5	4.7	5.0
Idaho	58.9	52.2	5.3	6.3
Illinois	55.3	35.8	17.9	7.4
Indiana	36.8	44.4	29.9	40.6
Iowa	51.7	54.9	10.7	13.7
Kansas	48.2	37.9	7.9	9.0
Kentucky	66.8	43.8	12.6	27.0
Michigan	39.3	55.0	24.7	24.5
Minnesota	46.8	44.8	11.5	12.4
Missouri	45.8	37.4	19.2	17.9
Montana	56.3	49.4	4.8	5.2
Nebraska	46.0	60.4	12.1	12.5
Nevada	22.2	29.1	0.7	1.3
New England ¹	67.1	31.0	11.5	13.3
New Mexico	33.2	26.2	8.0	10.2
New York	58.7	45.4	9.1	20.9
North Carolina	60.2	35.7	13.6	16.5
North Dakota	42.3	31.6	14.0	13.5
Ohio	42.1	39.0	20.2	12.0
Oklahoma	68.9	50.5	9.1	11.3
Oregon	52.4	38.8	9.4	7.6
Pennsylvania	60.7	41.1	18.3	12.0
South Dakota	29.3	30.6	4.7	5.0
Tennessee	59.0	43.0	9.0	9.4
Texas	63.9	51.2	4.8	11.7
Utah	67.3	36.1	7.5	5.2
Virginia	54.2	48.0	7.9	10.8
Washington	40.1	39.8	29.7	34.0
West Virginia	71.2	48.7	16.0	16.2
Wisconsin	49.5	44.1	11.2	11.5
Wyoming	57.6	48.5	4.0	5.1
Other States ²	48.8	34.0	7.9	10.4
United States	51.1	40.2	2.7	2.7

¹ New England includes Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

² Individual state estimates not available for states not shown but are included in Other States.

Quality Metrics for Angora Goats – States and United States: January 1, 2025-2026

	Weighted item response rate		Coefficient of variation	
	2025	2026	2025	2026
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
Arizona	77.2	34.6	32.6	51.0
New Mexico	52.5	29.4	66.2	57.0
Texas	53.8	42.7	20.4	25.8
Other States ¹	48.8	46.5	15.1	23.0
United States	53.2	41.8	15.8	17.1

¹ Individual state estimates not available for states not shown but are included in Other States.

Quality Metrics for Milk Goats – States and United States: January 1, 2025-2026

	Weighted item response rate		Coefficient of variation	
	2025	2026	2025	2026
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
Alabama	43.7	33.9	22.7	24.4
Arkansas	45.2	43.0	32.4	33.7
California	37.7	51.4	11.7	26.1
Colorado	36.8	16.5	42.0	46.9
Florida	44.1	36.9	17.0	33.1
Georgia	46.6	35.5	32.9	49.8
Idaho	66.2	47.3	26.8	23.4
Illinois	25.0	19.0	40.9	43.1
Indiana	38.8	32.4	14.7	51.5
Iowa	45.7	38.1	13.7	11.7
Kansas	45.3	34.3	25.2	35.0
Kentucky	59.1	44.8	32.5	32.6
Michigan	55.7	52.1	15.3	27.5
Minnesota	53.2	45.1	18.2	20.3
Missouri	37.1	40.4	34.3	33.0
Nebraska	55.9	45.2	23.6	28.1
Nevada	88.3	87.7	4.8	5.0
New England ¹	73.7	49.3	14.1	11.2
New York	57.4	21.5	27.1	25.1
North Carolina	46.5	35.6	18.4	23.5
Ohio	29.5	28.0	39.4	30.3
Oklahoma	66.4	51.2	22.5	26.8
Oregon	47.4	19.8	33.1	34.2
Pennsylvania	19.1	14.0	64.3	62.7
South Carolina	54.5	46.0	22.1	63.6
Tennessee	51.2	37.0	25.6	30.7
Texas	65.9	55.9	30.5	34.7
Virginia	67.4	22.0	41.6	47.2
Washington	55.4	20.1	24.0	24.2
Wisconsin	57.8	43.6	16.7	22.4
Other States ²	61.6	40.5	17.0	19.3
United States	50.3	38.7	6.6	7.8

¹ New England includes Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

² Individual state estimates not available for states not shown but are included in Other States.

Quality Metrics for Meat and Other Goats – States and United States: January 1, 2025-2026

	Weighted item response rate		Coefficient of variation	
	2025	2026	2025	2026
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
Alabama	69.1	44.8	25.4	34.9
Arizona	78.2	31.0	27.5	32.2
Arkansas	47.0	32.1	22.5	21.7
California	16.4	59.6	9.9	32.0
Colorado	41.7	24.9	9.1	11.7
Florida	42.9	27.5	13.8	19.8
Georgia	50.7	31.4	12.5	14.1
Illinois	31.2	18.0	20.5	26.0
Indiana	39.8	29.5	18.8	21.5
Iowa	41.5	50.5	21.2	14.1
Kansas	45.1	38.0	11.4	10.0
Kentucky	66.1	50.3	19.8	23.1
Minnesota	48.8	41.7	12.2	15.0
Mississippi	53.2	37.3	17.7	16.1
Missouri	24.8	50.0	27.6	27.4
Nebraska	56.0	52.9	18.7	21.6
North Carolina	63.4	36.3	15.1	16.1
Ohio	24.8	38.1	43.6	11.7
Oklahoma	70.3	43.1	9.7	8.1
Oregon	45.1	36.5	24.7	17.4
Pennsylvania	43.4	28.2	30.9	31.2
South Carolina	50.9	26.4	9.7	11.5
Tennessee	52.5	38.0	9.2	11.2
Texas	62.2	48.1	9.6	32.1
Virginia	70.1	59.8	36.6	26.2
Wisconsin	26.1	39.3	31.2	29.7
Other States ¹	53.6	31.3	9.0	8.9
United States	53.3	43.8	4.4	13.9

¹ Individual state estimates not available for states not shown but are included in Other States.

Information Contacts

Process	Unit	Telephone	Email
Estimation	Livestock Branch	(202) 720-3570	HQ_SD_LB@usda.gov
Data Collection	Survey Administration Branch	(202) 720-3895	HQ_CSD_SAB@usda.gov
Questionnaires	Data Collection Branch	(202) 720-6201	HQ_CSD_DCB@usda.gov
Sampling and Editing	Sampling Editing and Imputation Methodology Branch	(202) 690-8141	HQ_CSD_SB@usda.gov
Summary and Estimators	Summary Estimation and Disclosure Methodology Branch	(202) 690-8141	HQ_SD_SMB@usda.gov
Dissemination	Data Dissemination Office	(202) 720-3869	HQSDOD@usda.gov
Media Contact and Webmaster	Public Affairs Office	(202) 720-2639	HQOAPAO@usda.gov

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