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MASSEY UNIVERSITY TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

Number of Livestock by type in New Zealand

HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Livestock have a major effect on the environment, which can impact human health**
- **Total livestock decreased by over 1 million between 2014 (41 million) and 2015 (40 million)**

Source: MfE & Statistics New Zealand, 2015

- **Total livestock decreased by over a fifth between 2002 (51 million) and 2015 (40 million)**

Agricultural use of the land has a major effect on the environment

Animals such as cattle, sheep and deer, which are farmed for agricultural purposes have a very important role in the New Zealand economy. However, this agricultural use of the land can have a major effect on the environment. Rivers, lakes and coastal waters that are used for recreational activities such as swimming, boating and fishing can become contaminated. Water that is contaminated can pose risks to human health and impact on our ability to use these waters. For example (MfE & Statistics New Zealand, 2015):

- The run-off of effluent into water sources can affect water quality and cause gastrointestinal or respiratory diseases
- Excess nutrients, such as nitrogen from fertiliser or livestock urine, can be washed into waterways and pose a negative impact on the water quality.
- Intensive farming consumes large amounts of water for irrigation and as stock water, which affects the water levels in rivers and groundwater supplies.
- Additionally, agriculture is a large contributor of greenhouse gas emissions. The methane (CH_4) produced by dairy cattle and sheep can contribute to climate change.

Table 1: Number of Livestock by type in New Zealand, 2014-2015

Livestock Type	Number of Livestock (million)		2014-2015 change (%)	
	2014*	2015*		
Sheep	29.8	29.1	- 2.3	↓
Dairy cattle	6.7	6.5	- 3.2	↓
Beef cattle	3.7	3.5	- 3.3	↓
Deer	1.0	0.9	- 6.1	↓
Total	**41.0**	**40.0**	**- 2.6**	↓

Source: Statistics New Zealand, 2016

* year to 30 June

Total Livestock decreased by over 1 million between 2014 and 2015

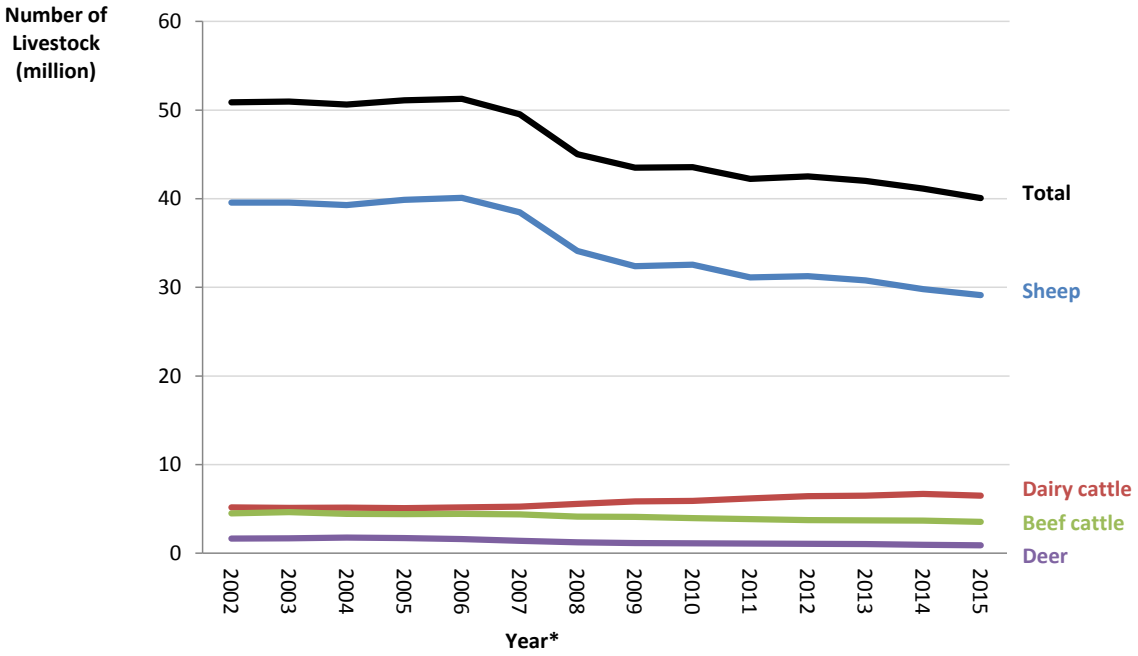
In 2015, there were over 40 million livestock (including sheep, dairy cattle, beef cattle and deer) in New Zealand (Table 1). Sheep were the predominant group, accounting for almost 73% of total livestock. Compared to 2014, the total number of livestock decreased by almost 3%. The largest decrease was in the number of deer, which were reduced by over 6% to approximately 0.9 million. For the first time since 2005, the number of dairy cattle has decreased.

Number of Livestock by type in New Zealand

Total Livestock decreased by over a fifth between 2002 and 2015

Between 2002 and 2015, the number of total livestock in New Zealand decreased by 21%, from 50.9 million to 40.1 million (Figure 1). In this time frame, the number of sheep was reduced by over one quarter, from 39.6 million to 29.1 million. In contrast, the number of dairy cattle increased by one quarter, from 5.2 million to 6.5 million. The number of deer was continuously decreasing since 2004 and almost halved between 2004 and 2015.

Figure 1: Number of Livestock by type in New Zealand, 2002-2015



Source: Statistics New Zealand, 2016

* year to 30 June. 2002, 2007 and 2012 data based on Agricultural Census. 2003-2006, 2008-2010, 2013-2015 data based on Agricultural Production Survey.

References:

Ministry for the Environment & Statistics New Zealand .(2015). New Zealand's Environmental Reporting Series: Environment Aotearoa 2015. Available from www.mfe.govt.nz and www.stats.govt.nz (accessed on 27/05/2016)

Statistics New Zealand .(2016). Agricultural Production Statistics: June 2015 (final). Data available from http://nzdotstat.stats.govt.nz/wbos/index.aspx (accessed on 27/05/2016)

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