

**Salt Spring Island
Livestock Production Study**

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1. Purpose of the Study

This report provides the results of the livestock production survey conducted in June and July 2009 on Salt Spring Island. Livestock includes: 1) animals—sheep, cattle, pigs, goats; and 2) poultry—chickens, turkeys, geese and ducks. The primary objectives of the study were:

- To gather data on the number of animals and poultry that farmers raised on Salt Spring Island in 2008, the number of breeding stock in 2009, and the planned increases and decreases for 2010;
- To assess the number of animals and poultry raised for meat in 2008;
- To compare the current numbers with data collected in the 2005 *Gulf Islands Livestock Processing Feasibility Study*, and assess increases and/or decreases;
- To gather data on farmers' satisfaction with slaughtering and butchering services; and
- To report key findings to the agriculture community and the community-at-large.

2. Survey Methods

This study was conducted by Margaret Thomson and Patricia Reichert. The survey they developed contained three sets of questions having to do with the number of animals and poultry raised in 2008 by type, the uses (e.g. for meat, breeding stock) and plans for increases or decreases in 2010. It also asked which slaughter and butchering services farmers are using and their satisfaction with them.

The survey was conducted by telephone, by volunteers¹, in June and July 2009. A thorough search was undertaken to identify and contact livestock farmers on Salt Spring Island.² Seventy-four farmers were contacted: 2 did not respond; 7 no longer had livestock; 65 were raising animals and/or poultry and participated in the survey. It is estimated that the survey includes at least 95% of the animals and poultry that farmers raised on Salt Spring Island throughout 2008.

3. Number of Farms

Table 1 shows that among the 65 farmers/farms that responded to the survey, most (57%) are raising either animals or poultry. Still, a large minority (43%) are raising both. Overall, 51 farms are raising animals and 42 farms are raising poultry.

Table 1 Number of farms raising animals and poultry on Salt Spring Island, 2008

| Mixed cattle, sheep &/or pigs & goats | Cattle only | Sheep only | Mixed animals & poultry | Poultry only | Total |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| 4 (6%) | 6 (9%) | 13 (20%) | 28 (43%) | 14 (22%) | 65 (100%) |

¹ Thank you to Patricia Donnelly and Roland Cook for assisting with the survey.

² Sources included: farm organization membership lists; notices through community list serves; poultry club and sheep breeders lists; list of farmers surveyed in the 2004-05 study; word-of-mouth and local farm knowledge.

4. Number of Animals

Table 2 shows that **1,451 animals were raised on Salt Spring in 2008**, including cattle, sheep, pigs and goats. It shows that sheep comprised 90% of the total number of animals that were raised.

About 55% of the all the animals were raised for meat with somewhat fewer (49%) sold for meat. Ninety-four percent of the animals sold for meat were sheep.

The survey indicates that farmers estimate an overall net increase of 11% in the number of animals they will raise through the next year and a half. This would bring the total number of animals to almost 1,600. Respondents predict that most of the increase will be sheep, estimating a 13% increase by the end of 2010. In contrast, those raising cattle estimated they will decrease their herds by 11%.

Table 2 Number of Salt Spring Island farmed animals, 2008

Number of farms: 51

| | Sheep | Cattle | Pigs | Goats | TOTAL |
|--|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Total number of animals | 1302 (90%) | 123 (8%) | 16 (1%) | 10 (1%) | 1451 (100%) |
| Number of animals raised for meat | 740 (57%) | 48 (39%) | 16 (100%) | -- | 804 (55%) |
| Number of animals sold for meat | 664 (51%) | 26 (21.1%) | 15.6 (100%) | -- | 705.6 (47%) |
| Number of meat sales that were culls | 37 | 2 | | 1 | 40 |
| Number of female breeders at January 2009 | 705 | 65 | | 12 | 782 |
| Planned increases by end of 2010 | 177 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 185 |
| Planned decreases by end of 2010 | 4 | 16 | | 3 | 23 |
| Net increase/decrease predicted for 2010 | 173 (13.3%) | -14 (-11.4%) | 2 (12.50%) | 1 (10%) | 162 (11.2%) |

5. Number of Poultry

Table 3 shows that **4,585 poultry were raised on Salt Spring in 2008**, including chickens, turkeys, geese and ducks. It shows that 92.5% of these were chickens.

Almost two-thirds of the poultry were raised for meat and about 44% were sold for meat. One-third of the poultry were raised for eggs. Chickens comprise 92% of the total number of poultry sold for meat and 97% of those raised for eggs.

The survey found that farmers are predicting a net increase in poultry of about 27% over the next year and half. Table 3 shows that this increase is predicted across all types of poultry with chickens comprising most of the increase.

Table 3 Number of Salt Spring Island poultry, 2008

Number of farms: 42

| | Chickens | Turkeys | Ducks | Geese | TOTAL |
|--|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Total number of poultry | 4219 (92.5%) | 237 (5.2%) | 104 (2%) | 25 (.5%) | 4585 (100%) |
| Number raised for meat | 2633 (62.4%) | 185 (78%) | 47 (45.2%) | 0 | 2865 (63%) |
| Number sold for meat | 1829 (43.4%) | 156 (65.8%) | 20 (19.2%) | 0 | 2005 (44%) |
| Number of meat sales that were culls | 39 | 0 | 0 | 0 | -- |
| Number raised for eggs | 1508 | 0 | 32 | 10 | 1550 (34%) |
| Number of female breeders at January 2009 | 272 | 61 | 32 | 6 | -- |
| Planned increases by end of 2010 | 1479 | 102 | 25 | 22 | 1628 (36%) |
| Planned decreases by end of 2010 | 362 | 20 | | | 382 (8%) |
| Net increase/decrease predicted for 2010 | 1117 (26.5%) | 82 (34.6%) | 25 (24%) | 22 (88%) | 1246 (27.2%) |

6. Comparison with 2005 Livestock Study

A comparison of the data collected in this survey with the data reported in the 2005 *Gulf Islands Livestock Processing Feasibility Study*³ shows some significant differences. The 2004-05 study surveyed 99 Salt Spring farmers which were estimated to represent about 95% of livestock producers on the island at that time. As noted previously, the current survey was conducted with 65 farmers which also represented about 95% of livestock producers. This difference indicates that there has been a 35% reduction in the number of animal and poultry producers on Salt Spring in the past four years.

Table 4 shows that the number of animals being raised has declined in all categories except for goats. Goats are, however, less than 1% of the total number of animals. The overall decline is almost 50%. The largest decrease is in the number of sheep being raised with 1,040 fewer sheep raised on the island in 2008 compared with three and a half years earlier.

³ *The Gulf Islands Livestock Processing Feasibility Study* (2005) was conducted by the Salt Spring Island Farmers Institute in cooperation with the Pender Island Farmers Institute, the Mayne Island Agricultural Society and the Island Natural Growers (Gulf Islands chapter of Canadian Organic Growers). The study is available at www.bcfpa.ca

Table 4 Number of animals in 2008 compared with the number in 2005, Salt Spring Island

| | Number in 2008 | Number in 2005 | Change |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Sheep | 1302 | 2342 | -44% (-1040) |
| Cattle | 123 | 219 | -43.8% (-96) |
| Pigs | 16 | 26 | -38.5% (-10) |
| Goats | 10 | 8 | 25% (2) |
| TOTAL | 1451 | 2595 | -44% (-1144) |

A comparison with the data collected in 2008 indicates that poultry sold for meat in 2008 is half of what it was in 2004. (The 2005 study does not provide comparable information about the number of animals that were sold for meat.) **Table 5** shows that while there was an increase in turkeys in 2008 this increase was more than offset by the reduction of almost 2200 chickens since 2004.

Table 5 Number of poultry sold for meat in 2008 compared with 2004, Salt Spring Island

| | 2008 sold for meat | 2004 sold for meat | Change |
|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Chickens | 1829 | 4000 | -54% (-2171) |
| Turkeys | 156 | 82 | +99% (+74) |
| Ducks | 20 | 91 | -8% (-71) |
| Geese | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 2,005 | 4,173 | -52% (-2168) |

7. Slaughter and Butchering Services

- Among the participants who responded to this set of questions, most (17) said for slaughtering they take their animals to Hidden Valley Processing operated by Mark Cardin, at Duncan. The next most frequently used slaughtering facility is the Village Butcher operated by Mike Windle and owned by Bernie Nikkels, at Metchosin. A couple of respondents said they have tried the George Gomerich facility at Nanaimo.
- In terms of butchering services, about an equal number of respondents used either Hidden Valley Processing in Duncan or Glenwood Meats in Langford. One said they have used Robin Kerone at Duncan and two had tried the Gomerich facility in Nanaimo.
- A small number of survey participants said the slaughter and butchering processes work “okay”. One person said they like that the facility is inspected. A few respondents said services are okay except for the travel. One person said they are happy with the service but not the price.
- The vast majority of respondents, however, said there are many problems with the slaughter services. Most commonly, they said going off-island is expensive and time-consuming. They said

it is stressful both for themselves and their livestock. Some said it's very hard to get bookings. One person said, "not much of it works".

- Most of the survey respondents identified problems with the butchering. The problems they cited were: their animals get mixed up with others; the labeling is often incorrect; the cutting isn't done right; and package sizes aren't appropriate.

8. Summary of Key Findings

- 65 Salt Spring farms participated in the survey. Based on a thorough and comprehensive search, it is estimated that these farms represent about 95% of all livestock (sheep, cattle, pigs, goats and poultry) producers on Salt Spring Island in 2008-09. 94% of the farms that participated in this study are raising sheep and/or poultry
- Salt Spring farms raised just over 1,450 sheep, cattle, pigs and goats and 4,585 chickens, turkeys, geese and ducks in 2008.
- Sheep comprise 90% of the total number of animals being raised on Salt Spring and chickens comprise 93% of the poultry.
- Among all the animals and poultry raised on Salt Spring in 2008, about 49% of the animals and about 44% of the poultry were sold for meat.
- 36 fewer farms are raising sheep, cattle, pigs, goats and/or poultry now compared with 2005. This is a decrease of about 35% in three and a half years.
- There are about 1000 fewer sheep on Salt Spring farms now, compared with 2005. This is a decrease of about 44%. The total number of animals (cattle, sheep, pigs, goats) on Salt Spring farms has also decreased by about 44% since 2004-05.
- The number of poultry sold for meat on Salt Spring farms has decreased by about 52% since 2004. This includes a reduction of almost 2,200 chickens. The overall net decrease takes into account that the number of turkeys has doubled but is more than offset by the reduction all other types of poultry.
- Even with the increase that farmers are predicting for 2010, there would still be 38% fewer sheep on Salt Spring than in 2005. And whether or not this increase actually happens is questionable given that the increase that farmers predicted in the 2005 has *not* come to fruition.
- Most farmers who participated in the study indicated that taking animals and poultry off-island for slaughter and butchering is expensive and time-consuming, and is stressful for both the farmers and livestock.