

National Sheep And Goats Census, December 2007

Council Regulation (EC) No. 21/2004 obliges all Member States to carry out a census of sheep and goats, at least annually. This national census is the third such census, the first being carried out in December 2005.

Sheep census forms for 2007 were sent to 38,351 sheep flock-keepers on this Department's database. Returns were received from 37,014, a response rate of 96.5%. A total of 3,337 respondents had no sheep, with 1,710 of this number indicating that they do not intend to return to sheep keeping in the future.

Goat census forms were sent to 382 registered goat keepers and returns were received from 349, a response rate of 91.4%. A total of 63 respondents had no goats with 35 indicating that they do not intend to return to goat keeping.

Sheep

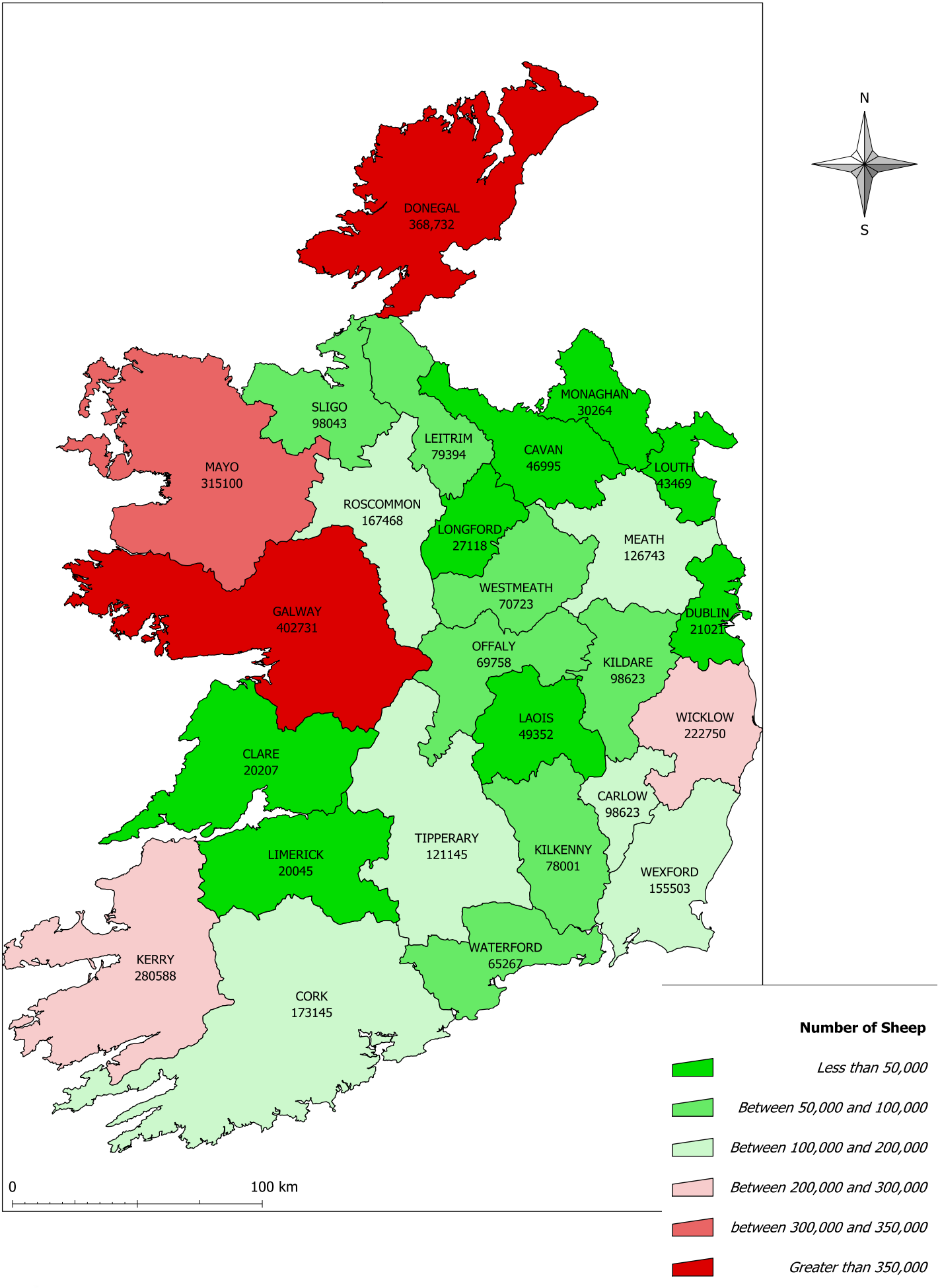
Census returns indicate that at December 2007 Ireland had over 3.2 million sheep (3,269,876) in 33,677 flocks, an average of 97 sheep per flock. A total of 77% of flocks contain sheep numbers **below** this average.

This was a significant reduction of 9.2% on the number of sheep in Ireland in the twelve months since December 2006 (3,600,715) and a reduction of 18.4% since December 2005 (4,006,744). Sheep numbers have fallen in every one of the 26 counties, the scale of the reduction varied from county to county, from a low of 0.2% in Monaghan to a high of 18.9% in Kilkenny. A reduction of sheep numbers higher than the national figure (9.2%), is seen in every county in Leinster, except Dublin.

The number of sheep flocks in December 2007 (33,677) has also fallen since December 2006 (35,277) by 4.5%. Again the number of sheep flocks was down in every county, with no particular regional pattern emerging.

The national average flock size decreased from 102 sheep per flock in December 2006 to 97 sheep per flock in December 2007. The numbers of flocks with 50 sheep or under increased to 45%, while the number of large flocks (over 200 sheep) fell to 11.4%. Thus similar to the 2006 census, the falling numbers do not indicate any shift towards larger commercial flocks or significant consolidation in the sheep sector.

Total Number of Sheep by County



Total number of sheep by county

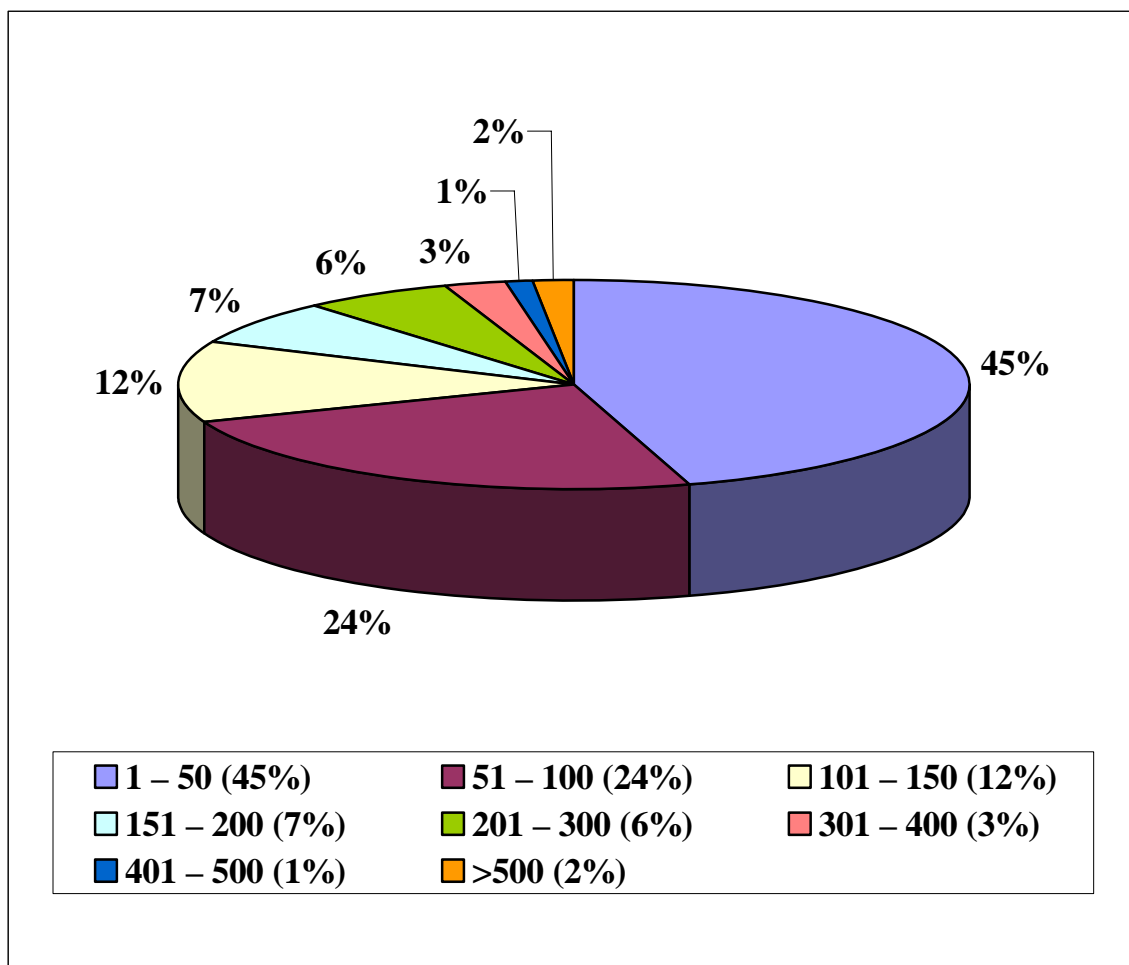
County	Number of sheep
Carlow	117,691
Cavan	46,995
Clare	20,207
Cork	173,145
Donegal	368,732
Dublin	21,021
Galway	402,731
Kerry	280,588
Kildare	98,623
Kilkenny	78,001
Laois	49,352
Leitrim	79,394
Limerick	20,045
Longford	27,118
Louth	43,469
Mayo	315,100
Meath	126,743
Monaghan	30,264
Offaly	69,758
Roscommon	167,468
Sligo	98,043
Tipperary	121,145
Waterford	65,267
Westmeath	70,723
Wexford	155,503
Wicklow	222,750
Total	3,269,876

Total number of sheep flocks by county

County	Number of flocks
Carlow	789
Cavan	756
Clare	589
Cork	1,825
Donegal	4,896
Dublin	191
Galway	4,444
Kerry	2,227
Kildare	624
Kilkenny	654
Laois	481
Leitrim	865
Limerick	261
Longford	417
Louth	350
Mayo	4,365
Meath	1,013
Monaghan	381
Offaly	625
Roscommon	1,822
Sligo	1,374
Tipperary	1,031
Waterford	450
Westmeath	782
Wexford	1,211
Wicklow	1,254
Total	33,677

Total number of sheep flocks by size of flock

Number of sheep in flock	Number of flocks	% of total
1 – 50	15,190	45.1
51 – 100	8,071	24.0
101 – 150	4,189	12.4
151 – 200	2,354	7.0
201 – 300	2,092	6.2
301 – 400	842	2.5
401 – 500	402	1.1
>500	537	1.6
Total Flocks	33,677	



Average flock size by county

County	Average flock size
Clare	34
Cavan	62
Longford	65
Sligo	71
Mayo	72
Donegal	75
Limerick	77
Monaghan	79
Westmeath	90
Galway	91
Leitrim	92
Roscommon	92
Cork	95
Laois	103
Dublin	110
Offaly	112
Tipperary	118
Kilkenny	119
Louth	124
Meath	125
Kerry	126
Wexford	128
Waterford	145
Carlow	149
Kildare	158
Wicklow	178

Total number of rams by county

County	Number of rams
Dublin	588
Clare	768
Monaghan	843
Limerick	848
Longford	851
Laois	1,233
Louth	1,260
Waterford	1,388
Cavan	1,409
Offaly	1,620
Kilkenny	1,872
Leitrim	2,102
Westmeath	2,362
Kildare	2,449
Sligo	2,759
Carlow	2,929
Tipperary	3,295
Wexford	3,368
Roscommon	3,808
Cork	4,068
Meath	4,221
Wicklow	5,296
Kerry	5,711
Mayo	8,176
Galway	9,486
Donegal	10,105
Total	82,815

Goats

Census returns indicate that at December 2007 there were 5,084 domesticated goats in Ireland in 286 herds, an average of 18 goats per herd. However, 61% of herds contain 5 goats or less. While there is slight reduction in this percentage since December 2006 (63%), and a corresponding increase in the percentage of herds containing between 6 and 10 goats (from 15% to 17%), it remains the case that the vast majority of goats in Ireland are kept on a non commercial basis. Only 20 herds in the country contained over 50 goats in 2007 (identical to the December 2006 census).

Total number of goats by county

County	Number of goats
Carlow	4
Cavan	910
Clare	861
Cork	479
Donegal	40
Dublin	190
Galway	249
Kerry	341
Kildare	61
Kilkenny	144
Laois	104
Leitrim	150
Limerick	48
Longford	82
Louth	169
Mayo	206
Meath	336
Monaghan	27
Offaly	40
Roscommon	61
Sligo	80
Tipperary	293
Waterford	73
Westmeath	41
Wexford	73
Wicklow	22
Total	5084

Total number of goat herds by county

County	Number of herds
Carlow	1
Cavan	11
Clare	20
Cork	47
Donegal	9
Dublin	5
Galway	14
Kerry	25
Kildare	4
Kilkenny	11
Laois	5
Leitrim	10
Limerick	8
Longford	9
Louth	3
Mayo	28
Meath	7
Monaghan	3
Offaly	7
Roscommon	13
Sligo	9
Tipperary	13
Waterford	8
Westmeath	4
Wexford	7
Wicklow	5
Total	286

Total number of goat herds by size of herd

Number of goats in herd	Number of herds	% of total
1 – 5	173	61
6 – 10	50	17
11 – 50	43	15
51 –200	13	5
201 – 300	4	1
>300	3	1
Total	286	