

# **Salt Spring Island Livestock Inventory Study 2015**



**Compiled for the Salt Spring Island Agricultural Alliance  
by  
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## Table of Contents

1.	Introduction .....	2
2.	Methodology.....	2
3.	Number of Farms .....	2
4.	Number of Animals .....	3
4.1	Sheep .....	3
4.2	Cattle .....	4
4.3	Pigs .....	4
4.4	Goats .....	4
4.5	Rabbits.....	4
4.6	Horses .....	4
5.	Numbers of Poultry.....	5
5.1	Meat Birds.....	5
5.2	Laying .....	6
5.3	Turkeys .....	6
5.4	Ducks .....	6
5.5	Geese .....	6
6.	Findings .....	7
7.	Sources of Historical Data.....	7
	Appendix 1 – Survey Form.....	8

### 1. Introduction

This report provides the results from a survey conducted in the winter of 2015/2016 to determine the number of animals (sheep, cattle, pigs, goats and rabbits) and poultry (chicken, turkeys, laying hens, geese, and ducks) being raised on Salt Spring Island for meat, milk or eggs. Where possible it compares the 2015 numbers with those reported in the 2005 Gulf Islands Livestock Processing Feasibility Study and the 2010 SSI Livestock Production Study. However the previous studies were done for different purposes. The first was focused on numbers of meat animals to determine the viability of a potential abattoir and the second to track the changes compared with the previous study. In effect the second study recorded the changes in numbers of livestock raised for meat following the implementation of the new BC meat regulations. The survey conducted in 2015 was intended as an inventory of all livestock being raised on Salt Spring regardless of purpose. Numbers from Prevost Island are not included.

### 2. Methodology

The survey was conducted by Margaret Thomson and Anne Macey. A survey form (see appendix 1) was circulated to members of Island Natural Growers, SSI Farmers' Institute, the poultry club and the sheep breeders club. Other potential respondents were identified by word of mouth. A total of 139 farms/backyard producers were identified as having livestock on their property in 2015. It is likely that the survey missed many who have just one or two animals or small laying flocks. The numbers reported represent data for 111 of the 139 identified therefore numbers reported should be considered as minimums.

## RESULTS

### 3. Number of Farms

**Table 1: Numbers of farms/ backyard producers identified as raising livestock on Salt Spring Island in 2015**

Mixed (3 or more types)	Poultry only	Sheep only	Cattle & sheep/Sheep & goats	Sheep & poultry	Rabbits & Poultry	Cattle or Pigs or goats & Poultry	Other single livestock type only
13	42	26	3/1	18	1	7	3

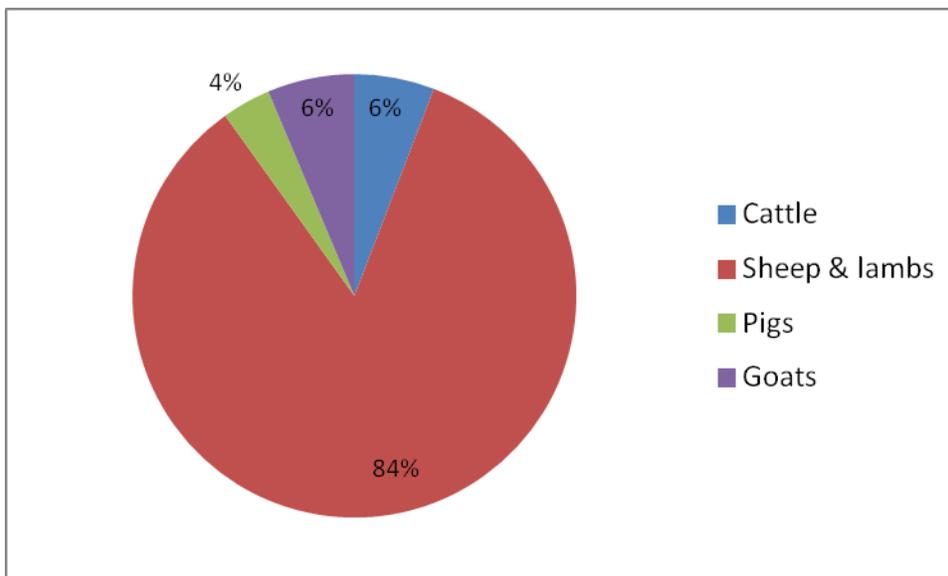
It should be noted that the total number of farms cannot be directly compared with numbers reported in 2010 (74) because more effort went into identifying laying flocks in 2015 compared with the 2009 survey which was focused on meat production. Any comparisons are made only for the different livestock types.

#### 4. Numbers of animals

**Table 2: Number of animals reported on Saltspring in 2015**

	Sheep	Cattle	Pigs	Goats	Rabbits
Number farms reporting	46	15	10	12	2
Number processed for meat	1117	42	78	65	80
Number of female breeders	850	?	4	67	?
Number – type undifferentiated		67		16	
Number for milk production		27		?	

**Figure 1: Relative numbers of different types of animals on SSI (N=2334)**



#### 4.1 Sheep (46 farms)

Flocks range in size from 2 to 80 ewes. A total of 843 ewes were reported with 7 farms having 40 or more; 8 with 20-39 ewes, 19 with 10-19 and 21 with less than 10 ewes. 1117 lambs were reported as butchered for meat in 2015. (Data from the Salt Spring Abattoir indicates only 40% of market lambs raised on Salt Spring were processed at the Salt Spring Abattoir in 2015). Numbers of ewes have increased by 20% since January 2009 but have not yet rebounded to 2004 levels. Historically peak production on Salt Spring was in the 1890's when sheep ran in large numbers on the western slopes of Mt.

Tuam and Mt. Bruce, as well as on the flanks of Mt. Erskine and Mt. Maxwell and 650 head were reported on farms in the Beaver Point area in 1892.

**Table 3: Numbers of Sheep on Salt Spring Island in 2015 compared with 2004 and 2008.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Ewes on SSI</b>	<b>Market lambs</b>
2004	1837	1881 (all SGI)
2008	705	740
2015	850	1117

#### **4.2 Cattle (15 farms)**

There were 27 dairy cows reported consisting of one Jersey herd and a few family milk cows. 67 beef animals were reported as well as 42 beef animals slaughtered for meat. There is some ambiguity in the data and it is impossible to determine how many of the 67 beef animals are breeding females, or if some are animals intended for meat. At least one known beef producer is missing from the data. Little if any change is expected from 2015 to 2016. These numbers also are very similar to 2008 when 48 were processed for meat and 65 female breeders were reported. The 2004 beef numbers were higher with 86 breeding females and 112 market animals reported for Salt Spring Island.

#### **4.3 Pigs (10 farms)**

At least 78 hogs were raised for meat in 2015, this is a 387% increase over 2008 (16 market hogs reported) and 310% more than 2004 (19 hogs). Two farms kept sows and some of the piglets they produced were sold as weaners to other farms on the island. More often farms brought in weaners from Vancouver Island where there has been increased availability in recent years.

#### **4.4 Goats (12 farms)**

Goats are raised on Salt Spring for milk, fibre and meat. Numbers reported include 67 breeders, 65 animals intended for meat and 16 wethers. Numbers show a significant increase since the previous surveys but it could simply be that not all the dairy and fibre animals were included in the earlier studies. In 2009 there were 12 female breeders and in 2004 only 7 reported but these would have been for meat only.

#### **4.5 Rabbits**

At least 80 rabbits were slaughtered for meat in 2015 but these numbers are known to be missing data from at least one rabbit producer. There may be several others who have yet to be identified. Rabbits were not included in the previous surveys.

#### **4.6 Horses**

Horse owners were not surveyed but 18 horses and 2 donkeys were reported by farms raising other livestock. The horse population on Salt Spring is estimated at 150-200. (A .Schmah, pers.com.).

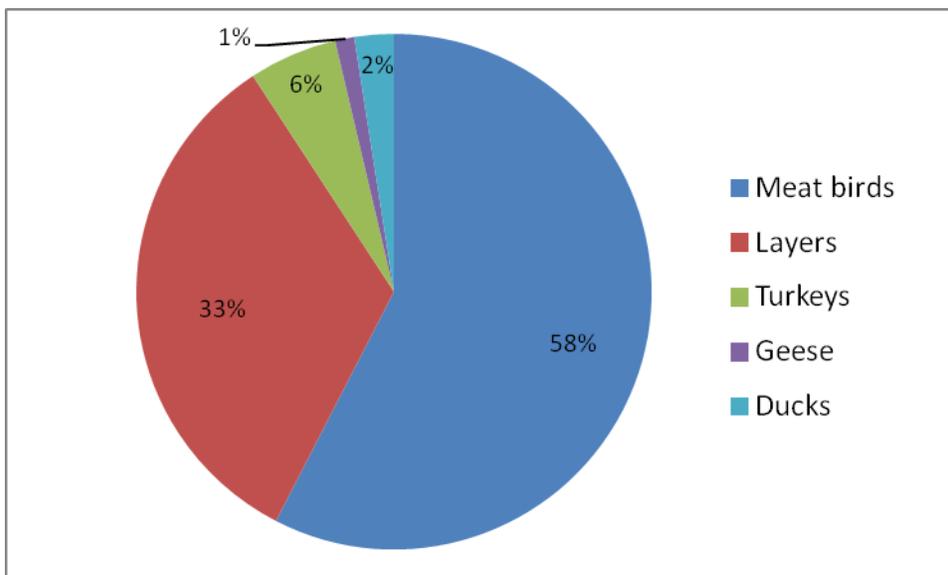
## 5. Numbers of Poultry

Poultry raised on Salt Spring includes chickens for meat and eggs, turkeys, geese and ducks. Quail are also known to be raised on the island but were not reported in the survey. The 2015 survey did not differentiate between birds raised for meat for personal use and those raised to sell.

**Table 3: Numbers of Poultry by type**

	<b>Meat birds</b>	<b>Laying hens</b>	<b>Turkeys</b>	<b>Geese</b>	<b>Ducks</b>
Number of farms/backyards	39	74	15	8	12
Number of birds for meat	5296		462	27	76
Number of birds for eggs		3055		?	
Number of female breeders		?	36	?	
Purpose unknown				84	151

**Figure 2: Relative numbers of different types of Poultry on SSI (N=9199)**



### 5.1 Meat Birds

Meat birds are raised on at least 39 properties on Salt Spring. Others are known to raise meat birds so the total will be more than the 5296 reported. Meat chicken numbers are 101% higher than the total reported for 2008 (2633). No direct comparison can be made between 2015 and 2008 with respect to the number of birds marketed. The 1829 marketed in 2008 was a decline of 54% from the 4000 reported as sold for meat in 2004.

## 5.2 Laying hens

74 properties reported a flock of laying hens with flock size ranging from 3 to the maximum numbers allowed for small flocks for a total of 3055 laying hens. There are no operations with egg quota. There were 19 farms with more than 50 layers; 27 with between 20 & 50 birds and 28 farms with a flock size of less than 20 birds.

If these were all commercial birds producing 300/eggs in their first year of lay these numbers would result in 76,375 dozen eggs a year. However heritage breeds will generally produce less and small flock owners often keep hens past peak production so the total number of eggs actually produced on Salt Spring is probably no more than to 63,400 dozen eggs if that.

- *In 1923 Canada's top producing hen produced 308 eggs in 365 days. It was a Barred Rock owned by L. Chaplin of Salt Spring Island; he had thousands of birds in the Vesuvius Bay area.*
- *In 1913 21,000 cases of eggs were shipped from Ganges wharf (315,000 dozen eggs assuming one case is 15 doz).*

## 5.3 Turkeys (15 farms)

15 farms reported raising turkeys with the flock size ranging from 3 to 65 birds. 462 were raised for meat. 6 farms kept breeding flocks; 12 toms and 36 females in total. The numbers are considerably higher than the 185 raised for meat in 2008 and the 82 reported for 2004. However numbers of female breeders have dropped from the 61 reported in January 2009.

## 5.4 Ducks (12 farms)

12 farms reported raising ducks in 2015 for both meat and eggs. 151 ducks were reported and 76 processed for meat. It is possible that some of the 76 are included in the 151. Numbers have increased since 2008 when 104 ducks were reported, 32 of which were female breeders.

## 5.5 Geese (8 farms)

A total of 111 geese were reported. The numbers include geese kept for eggs, meat and pets with at least 27 being processed for meat. A total of 25 geese were reported in 2008.

**Table 4: Numbers of poultry raised for meat in 2015 compared with 2008 & 2004**

Type	2015	2008	2004	Change 2008-2015
Chickens	5296	2633	>4000	+ 101%
Turkeys	462	185	82	+ 150%
Ducks	76	47	91	+ 61%
Geese	72	0	0	

## **6. Findings**

The results of the survey indicate a renewed interest in livestock raising on Salt Spring following what was probably an all-time low in 2008. The low numbers in 2008 were attributed to the change in the BC meat regulations outlawing on-farm slaughter for any meat not for personal consumption. Since then ewe numbers have increased by 20% and hog numbers by 387%. Goats also appear to have increased significantly but it may be more a factor that information on goats kept for milk and fibre was incomplete in the earlier studies. Growth in poultry numbers is also significant although perhaps subject to more year by year fluctuation.

The opening of the Salt Spring Abattoir in September 2012 for poultry and in January 2013 for lamb and goats, has clearly had a positive impact. It is the most likely contributing factor in the recent increase in numbers of poultry and lambs. However hog numbers have also increased significantly even though producers were still taking animals off island for slaughter in 2015. The increase in pork production may have been the result of increased availability of weaner pigs from two Salt Spring sources and others on southern Vancouver Island. Further increases in hog numbers may be expected with increased availability of local processing as of August 2016.

## **7. Sources of historical data:**

Farms Farmers Farming 1859-1839 The first 80 years of Agriculture on Salt Spring Island, (2016), Morton B. Stratton.

Salt Spring Island Livestock Production Study (January 2010), P. Reichert & M. Thomson

The Gulf Islands Livestock Processing Feasibility Final Report (April 2005), PM Associates Ltd.

## **Acknowledgements:**

With thanks to all the farmers and families raising livestock on Salt Spring who completed the survey. The authors would be pleased to hear from anyone whose livestock were not included in the numbers presented.

### Appendix 1 Salt Spring Island Livestock Production Survey 2015

An inventory of livestock was conducted on SSI in 2005 and again in 2009 – the information obtained has been invaluable for assessing needs as well as gaining support for the local abattoir and agriculture in general.

The results from those studies provided the following information about the numbers of market animals sold.

Year	Sheep	Cattle	Swine	Goats	Chickens	Turkeys
2004	1881	207	86	23	5390	82
2008	740	48	16	0	2633	156

Now it is time to update those numbers and the SSI Agricultural Alliance would like your help.

Please complete the following survey and return to Anne Macey (annemacey@shaw.ca, or 106 Old Scott Rd, SS1 V8K 2L6). Individual farm data will be kept confidential and only the total numbers published.

Name of Farm:				
	Size of Breeding Herd/Flock Jan 2015	Number raised/ marketed for meat 2015*	Estimated size of Breeding Herd/flock Jan 2016	Expected percentage increase/decrease in production in 2016 compared with 2015
Sheep				
Goats				
Cattle				
Pigs				
Chicken	n/a		n/a	
Turkey				
Geese				
Ducks				
Rabbits				

Number of Hens for Egg Production	
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*\* Include those marketed as well as any kept for personal consumption.*

If you have questions please contact Anne Macey or Margaret Thomson (windrush4669@shaw.ca).