Livestock Monitor

A Newsletter for Extension Staff

Livestock Marketing Information Center

State Extension Services in Cooperation with the USDA

Market Indicators . . .

September 25, 2026

Production

Week Ending 9/26/2026	Last	Year Ago
FI Cattle Slaughter (Thou Hd)	484	559
FI Hog Slaughter (Thou Hd)	2552	2533
FI Sheep Slaughter (Thou Hd)	36	37
Young Chicken Sltr. (Mil Hd)	168.0	175.0
Slaughter Cattle Live Weight	1450	1441
Slaughter Hog Live Weight	285	288
Slaughter Lamb/Sheep Live Wt.	111	111
Beef Production (Mil Pounds)	430.1	491.6
Pork Production (Mil Pounds)	542.9	542.6
Lamb, Mutton Prod. (Mil Lbs.)	2.0	2.1
Previous 6 Wk. Moving Avg.		
Total Beef (Mil Lbs)	462.1	482.6
Total Pork (Mil Lbs)	508.5	521.3
Total Lamb, Mutton (Mil Lbs)	2.0	2.1

Prices

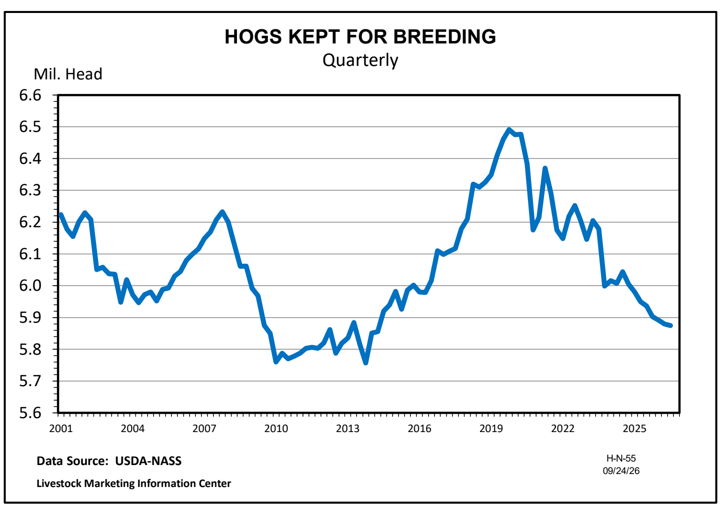
Weekly Average ($/Cwt)	Last	Week Ago	Year Ago
Live Steer	220.75	221.87	232.65
Dressed Steer	349.43	350.15	364.97
Choice Beef Cutout	377.50	374.26	376.60
USDA Hide/Offal	15.11	15.04	11.51
OK City Fdr. Str. (6-7 Cwt.)	374.60	375.54	395.35
National Negotiated Hogs	79.88	83.57	105.56
Natl. Net Hog Carcass	83.03	84.92	102.03
Feeder Pigs (40 Lbs) ($/Head)	50.59	47.64	77.65
Pork Cutout	87.31	87.63	112.42
Lamb Cutout	681.64	684.47	496.76
Cheddar, 40 lb Block($/lb)	1.54	1.58	1.79
Corn, Omaha ($/Bu)	5.00	4.99	3.96
Soybeans, Cntrl IL ($/Bu)	13.21	13.25	9.84

Source: Various USDA-AMS reports. Data are preliminary.

Trends…SEPTEMBER HOGS & PIGS SIGNALS TIGHTER SUPPLIES

The September Hogs and Pigs report was released by USDA-NASS last Thursday and all hogs and pigs were reported at 74.3 million head, down 1.1 million head (-1.5%) from last year. This was within the range of pre-report estimates but slightly lower than the average estimate, which was expecting a decline of less than one percent (-0.8%) from the prior year. Market hogs were lower than a year ago, falling nearly 1.1 million head (-1.5%) to just over 68.4 million head.

Declines were seen across the market weight hog categories, pointing to lower year-over-year weekly slaughter levels through the end of the year. Hogs weighing 180 pounds and over fell 207,000 head (-1.6%) from last year to 12.4 million head. Compared to last year, hogs weighing 120-179 pounds were down 216,000 head (-1.5%) to just over 14.1 million head. Hogs weighing 50-119 pounds were just under 20.0 million head, down 307,000 head (-1.5%) from last year. Market hogs weighing under 50 pounds were down 345,000 head (-1.6%) from last year to nearly 21.9 million head. The market hog weight categories were at the lower end of pre-report expectations.



The breeding herd was reported down nearly 62,000 head (-1.0%) from last year to 5.875 million head; analysts were expecting a decline in the breeding herd of -0.7%. This is the lowest breeding herd since 2013 when it was 5.816 million head. The June to August pig crop was down more than 536,000 head (-1.5%)

from last year to 34.508 million head. The lower pig crop was driven by a decline in the June to August farrowings, which were down about 79,000 head (-2.7%) from last year to 2.886 million head. A rise in the June to August pigs per litter partly offset the lower farrowings during the same period with an increase of +1.2% from last year to 11.96 compared to 11.82.

Farrowing intentions for the September to November period were reported at 2.855 million head (-1.8%) and for the December to February period at 2.795 million head (+2.1%). On average, analysts were expecting farrowing intentions for the September to November period to be down -0.8% and up marginally (+0.1%) for the December to February period. The continued upward trend of pigs per litter could partly offset farrowings remaining around 2.8 to 2.9 million head in the near term.

CATTLE ON FEED STAYS ELEVATED

Cattle on feed continues to remain above year-ago levels going into the fall. USDA-NASS reported September 1 cattle on feed at 11.163 million head, up 83,000 head (+0.7%) from last year but below analysts' expectations of a +1.8% increase. Cattle continue to spend more time on feed amid tight available feeder cattle supplies. According to the latest Kansas State University (KSU) Focus on Feedlots data, average days on feed for steers from January through July was 195 days, compared with 181 days over the same period last year, an increase of roughly two weeks (+7.6%).

Year-to-date through mid-September, steer dressed weights have also remained above year-ago levels. Average steer dressed weights were 976 pounds compared with 944 pounds during the same period last year, an increase of 32 pounds (+3.4%). Heavier dressed weights have been supported by data from KSU Focus on Feedlots average daily gains, which showed that year-to-date through July, dressed weights averaged 3.61 pounds per day compared with 3.55 pounds last year for steers, an increase of 0.06 pounds per day (+2%). The combination of longer days on feed and higher average daily gain has led to heavier carcass weights, allowing for beef production to partially offset the tighter supplies of cattle entering feedlots. Year-to-date through mid-September, weekly beef production has totaled 17.3 billion pounds, down 775 million pounds (-4%) from the same period last year.

USDA-NASS reported August cattle placements at 1.617 million head, down 163,000 head (-9.2%) from August 2025 and well below analysts' average expectation of a -3.3% decline from the previous year. Net placements, which account for cattle placed on feed minus other disappearances, totaled 1.57 million head in August, down 164,000 head (-9.5%) from last August. August marketings were reported at 1.519 million head, down 52,000 head (-3.3%) from August 2025 and in line with analysts' average expectation of a -3.7% decline.

CONSUMERS EATING MORE CHICKEN AT LOWER PRICES

Through the first half of the year, chicken consumption is up +5% from 2025. Demand for chicken has been good enough to reduce inventories in cold storage by almost -10% during the first half of the year. Exports over the first six months of the year were close to the same as a year earlier. The increase in consumption can be taken as a positive sign for consumer spending on food, as represented by retail sales at grocery stores and foodservice channels, slowing from close to a 5% growth rate last summer to slightly under 3% in the spring quarter. Summer quarter food sector retail sales bounced up to close to a +4% gain in July but slowed back to -2% in August as grocery store retail sales were below a year ago in August.

Grocery store chicken prices, according to the Department of Labor's Consumer Prices survey, averaged $2.40 per pound in each of the first two quarters of 2026. This compares to $2.44 and $2.47 in the first two quarters of 2025. Grocery store chicken prices in the third quarter of 2025 went to $2.48 per pound. July 2026 grocery store chicken prices averaged $2.39 per pound and then declined another $0.02 in August. Lower prices for chicken dark meat parts account for the majority of the decline this summer with leg prices averaging $1.67 per pound in August versus $1.80 last year.

How much lower chicken prices can go will be an interesting question. Feed costs are on their way to increasing for the fourth consecutive quarter. As noted in the media lately, transportation costs for getting chicken from the farm to the store are concerning as diesel prices move to historic levels, according to the U.S. Energy Information Center. Processor margins are down close to -30% from a year ago, which explains why the industry is trying to focus on value-added products instead of selling plain commodity chicken. There are early signs that the industry is moving to slow down production increases that will become more evident as the year comes to a close.