New Zealand Dairy Statistics 2024-25

LIC DairyNZ

New Zealand Dairy Statistics is also available online, at no charge, at: www.dairynz.co.nz

LIC
Private Bag 3016
Hamilton 3240
New Zealand
Telephone: 64-7-856 0700
Emal: communications@lic.co.nz
Website: **www.lic.co.nz**

DairyNZ
Private Bag 3221
Hamilton 3240
New Zealand
Telephone: 0800 4 DAIRYNZ
Email: info@dairynz.co.nz
Website: **www.dairynz.co.nz**

Contents

List of tables

List of graphs

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Kia ora and welcome to the 2024/25 edition of New Zealand Dairy Statistics.

New Zealand Dairy Statistics is the annual census of the national dairy herd, providing the largest and most comprehensive range of statistical analyses on current, historical and emerging trends in the New Zealand dairy sector.

This report includes the latest milk production, herd improvement, animal evaluation and reproduction statistics with regional breakdowns.

The 2024/25 Dairy Statistics show a 2.9% increase in total milksolids production, driven by a 3.5% rise in milksolids production per cow and a 0.5% decrease in cow numbers compared with the previous season. Average production per cow reached a new record of 414 kg milksolids per cow, supported in part by ongoing improvements in Breeding Worth and Production Worth across all dairy breeds. The trend towards fewer but larger herds continued in 2024/25, with 115 fewer herds than in the previous season. The proportion of Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbred cows also continued to rise, reaching 61.1%. In addition, the percentage of herd-tested cows and those artificially inseminated both increased (by 5.0 and 0.4 percentage points, respectively), likely reflecting farmers' continued focus on herd improvement during the 2024/25 season.

New Zealand dairy farmers have faced a range of challenges, especially around rising costs, but despite these pressures they continue to be focused on innovation, investment and strong management, which supports the sectors continued success, and ability to positively contribute to their regional communities and the national economy. This includes the continued focus and efforts around improving herd productivity, as the sector looks to remain globally competitive.

Campbell Parker
Chief Executive
DairyNZ

David Chin
Chief Executive
Livestock Improvement Corporation

This report has been jointly produced by DairyNZ and Livestock Improvement Corporation (LIC) since 2006/07.

LIC is a farmer-owned co-operative and world leader in pasture based dairy genetics and herd management. LIC exists to deliver superior genetics and technological innovation to help its shareholders sustainably farm profitable animals.

DairyNZ is the industry good organisation representing New Zealand's dairy farmers, funded by farmers through a levy on milksolids. DairyNZ helps farmers build sustainable businesses through research, innovation, and advocacy.

Data is sourced from the LIC Herd Improvement Database, New Zealand dairy companies, Dairy Industry Good Animal Database, Animal Evaluation database, TB Free New Zealand, Real Estate Institute of New Zealand, and Statistics New Zealand.

1.2. Executive Summary

This year's report highlights a 2.9% increase in total milksolids production for 2024/25, driven by an increase in milksolids production per cow (+14 kg MS/cow) and despite a 0.5% decrease in cow numbers. The trend towards fewer but larger herds continued this season.

The number of cows herd-tested and artificially inseminated increased by 5 percentage points in 2024/25, to 81.2%, reversing the decline observed in the previous season. This may be associated with the high milksolids payout in the 2024/25 season. The average co-operative payout of $10.75/kg milksolids was $1.61 higher than the five-year-average of $9.14/kg milksolids, and $0.90 higher than the inflation adjusted five-year-average of $9.85 per kg milksolids.

The decrease in total cow numbers along with the increase in total national milksolids production indicate that farmers are focused on rearing high-producing cows and improving milk quality (as manifested in the downward trend in somatic cell counts). This is shown in the 2024/25 season by the record-high percentages of milkfat (5.06%) and protein (4.00%) in herd-tested cows, and the lowest somatic cell count recorded (of 157,000 cells/mL), compared to previous years.

1.2.1. Milk Production

In the 2024/25 season, dairy companies processed 21 billion litres of milk containing 1.94 billion kilograms of milksolids. Compared with the previous season, this was a 2.3% (~ 471 million litres) increase in milk volume and a 2.9% (~ 55 million kg) increase in milksolids processed, indicating a higher concentration of milksolids in the milk supplied.

Average milk production per cow across the country was 414 kg of milksolids (made up of 234 kg of milkfat and 181 kg of protein). Average milksolids production per effective hectare increased in 2024/25, returning to the record level last avhieved in the 2020/21 season (1,137 kg/ha).

1.2.2. Cow Numbers

Cow numbers decreased.

Cow numbers decreased by 0.5% in 2024/25, to 4.68 million. This is about 2% below the five-year average of 4.75 million.

1.2.3. Number of Dairy Herds and Herd Size

The average herd size increased and the number of herds decreased for the third consecutive season.

There were 10,370 herds the 2023/24 season, 115 fewer than the previous season. The national average herd size increased slightly to 451, three more cows more than in the previous season.

1.2.4. Herd Improvement

1.2.4.1. Herd Testing - knowing your cows

The number of cows herd tested increased.

Herd testing enables farmers to collect information about individual cows in their herds, this includes information on milk production, milk composition and somatic cell count (an indicator of mastitis). The information gained from herd testing is used for effective herd management, monitoring and improving cow wellbeing and enhance on-farm decision making.

Herd testing data is also used (alongside other animal data) to inform animal evaluation. These are the critical evaluations that help farmers identify the best animals for breeding, which lifts the performance of their herds.

A total of 3.84 million cows were herd tested in 2024/25, a 5.0% increase from the previous season. That equates to 82.1% of cows in the national herd being herd tested in 2024/25. The percentage of total herds tested (77.2%) was higher than the five-year average of 75.6%.

1.2.4.2. Artificial Breeding – creating genetic gain through the next generation

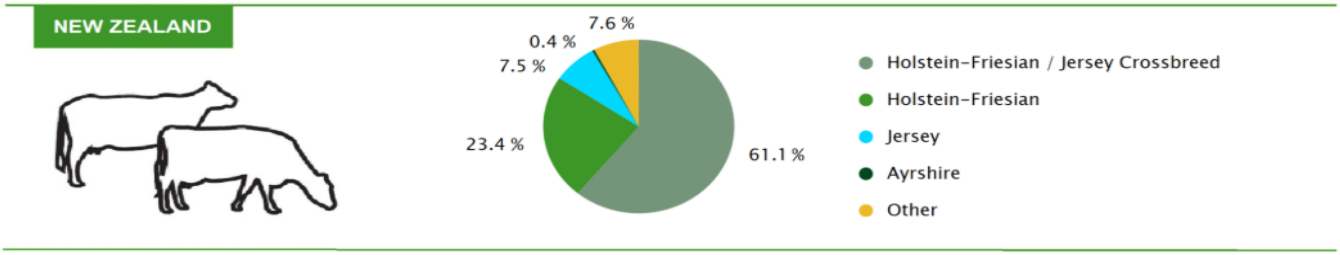
The percentage of cows mated to artificial breeding (AB) increased.

There were 3.8 million cows mated to AB in 2024/25. The percentage of cows mated to AB increased slightly, from 81.1% in 2023/24 to 81.5% in 2024/25 and was similar to the five-year average of 81.5%.

1.2.5. Cow Breed

Sixty one percent of cows are Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed.

More farmers are opting for crossbred cows to capture the benefits of hybrid vigour and combine the desirable traits of the two main dairy breeds. In 2024/25, 61% of cows were Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed, representing a 1% increase from the previous season. Holstein-Friesian cows accounted for 23.4% of the national herd, while Jersey cows made up 7.5%.



1.2.6. Milk Prices

The average dairy co-operative payout (including dividends) was $10.75 per kilograms of milksolids.

The average dairy co-operative payout in 2024/25 ($10.75 per kg milksolids) was $1.61 above the five-year average of $9.14. When adjusted for inflation, the 2024/25 payout was $0.90 above the five-year inflation-adjusted average of $9.85 per kg milksolids.

1.3. Commentary

The 2024/25 season marked another year of productivity gains across the New Zealand dairy sector, supported by improved herd performance, strong genetic progress, and favourable milk prices despite a small decline in cow numbers. Total milksolids production rose 2.9 percent to 1.94 billion kg MS, the fourth consecutive annual increase, while total cow numbers fell 0.5 percent to 4.68 million. Average milksolids production per cow reached a record 414 kg MS, up 14 kg on last season, reflecting ongoing improvements in herd genetics and management efficiency.

At the same time, the national herd continued to consolidate, with 115 fewer herds than in 2023/24 and an average herd size of 451 cows. Over the past decade, herd numbers have fallen by almost 1,600 (13 percent), while average herd size has increased by over 70 cows. Average milksolids production per effective hectare increased to 1,137 kg MS/ha, returning to the record level last seen in the 2020/21 season, confirming that productivity per unit of land remains strong.

Regional production patterns remained broadly consistent with previous years. The North Island accounted for nearly 70 percent of herds but only 57 percent of cows, while the South Island, particularly North and South Canterbury, continued to lead in per-cow and per-hectare production. North Canterbury again recorded the highest milksolids yield at 466 kg MS per cow and 1,577 kg MS per hectare, followed by South Canterbury and Southland.

Herd improvement activity strengthened notably. The percentage of herds herd-tested reached 77 percent, the highest level in the last 20 years and comparable to the early 2000s. Herd-test averages for milkfat, protein, and total milksolids yields and percentages were the highest ever recorded, while the average somatic cell count fell to 157,000 cells/mL—the lowest on record. Artificial breeding activity remained strong, with 81.5 percent of cows mated to AB. After a continuous decline in yearlings mated to AB, from 258,919 in 2018/19 to 203,275 in 2023/24, the number increased in 2024/25 to 218,572, indicating renewed investment in future herd genetics.

Reproductive performance also reached new milestones. The mean 6-week in-calf rate reached a record high of 70.0 percent, while the estimated mean rate rose to 65.7 percent, the highest since monitoring began in 2008/09. These results, together with increased herd testing and AB use, underline farmers' continued focus on fertility, health, and productivity improvement. Consistent with previous years, Breeding Worth (BW) continued to increase steadily across all breed categories, reinforcing ongoing genetic progress.

Breed composition trends continued their long-term shift toward crossbreeding. Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreeds made up 61.1 percent of the national herd, up 1 percentage point from last season and more than 25 points higher than in 2005/06. This reflects farmers' preference for hybrid vigour and balanced production traits that optimise milk quality and fertility.

Financial conditions were favourable. The average dairy co-operative payout of $10.75 per kg MS was $1.61 above the five-year average ($9.14) and $0.90 above the inflation-adjusted five-year average ($9.85). The number of dairy farms sold was higher than in the previous two seasons, and the average land price per hectare increased by 18 percent to $36,200, the highest in six years, signalling improved profitability and market confidence.

Overall, the 2024/25 season demonstrated the sector's resilience and ongoing efficiency gains amid structural consolidation. Fewer but larger herds, record-high cow productivity, rising genetic merit, and sustained reinvestment highlight New Zealand dairy farmers' commitment to innovation and continuous improvement in a globally competitive environment.

2. National dairy statistics

2.1. Industry statistics

2.1.1. Production

- Milk volume increased after two consecutive seasons of decline while milksolids production increased for the fourth consecutive season.

In 2024/25, dairy companies processed 21 billion litres of milk containing 1.937 billion kilograms of milksolids compared with 1.882 billion kilograms processed in the previous season (Table 2.1). Since 2013/14 season the quantity of milksolids processed has remained between 1.8 to 1.9 billion kilograms.

Table 2.1: Summary of milk production statistics

Season	Milk processed (million litres)	Milkfat processed (million kgs)	Protein processed (million kgs)	Milksolids processed (million kgs)
1987/88	6,921	333	245	579
1988/89	6,533	311	237	541
1989/90	6,868	330	242	572
1990/91	7,077	343	254	599
1991/92	7,454	365	270	637
1992/93	7,629	373	277	651
1993/94	8,603	423	313	736
1994/95	8,633	422	311	733
1995/96	9,325	452	335	788
1996/97	10,339	506	375	880
1997/98	10,651	513	378	891
1998/99	10,563	503	377	880
1999/00	11,630	560	421	981
2000/01	12,925	626	470	1,096
2001/02	13,607	657	495	1,152
2002/03	13,906	676	515	1,191
2003/04	14,599	716	538	1,254
2004/05	14,103	694	519	1,213
2005/06	14,702	724	543	1,267
2006/07	15,134	750	566	1,316
2007/08	14,745	722	548	1,270
2008/09	16,044	791	602	1,393
2009/10	16,483	817	622	1,438
2010/11	17,339	859	654	1,513
2011/12	19,129	954	731	1,685
2012/13	18,883	939	719	1,658
2013/14	20,657	1,034	791	1,825
2014/15	21,253	1,067	823	1,890
2015/16	20,914	1,050	812	1,862
2016/17	20,702	1,042	809	1,851
2017/18	20,724	1,035	804	1,840
2018/19	21,217	1,056	828	1,884

Season	Milk processed (million litres)	Milkfat processed (million kgs)	Protein processed (million kgs)	Milksolids processed (million kgs)
2019/20	21,145	1,059	836	1,896
2020/21	21,705	1,089	858	1,947
2021/22	20,776	1,047	821	1,868
2022/23	20,702	1,049	824	1,873
2023/24	20,541	1,056	826	1,882
2024/25	21,012	1,092	845	1,937

Note:

- Prior to 1998/99, milk production statistics (provided by the New Zealand Dairy Board) only represented milk processed into export products and excluded milk supplied to the domestic market.
- From 1998/99, milk production statistics include all milk processed by New Zealand dairy companies, including milk for the domestic market.

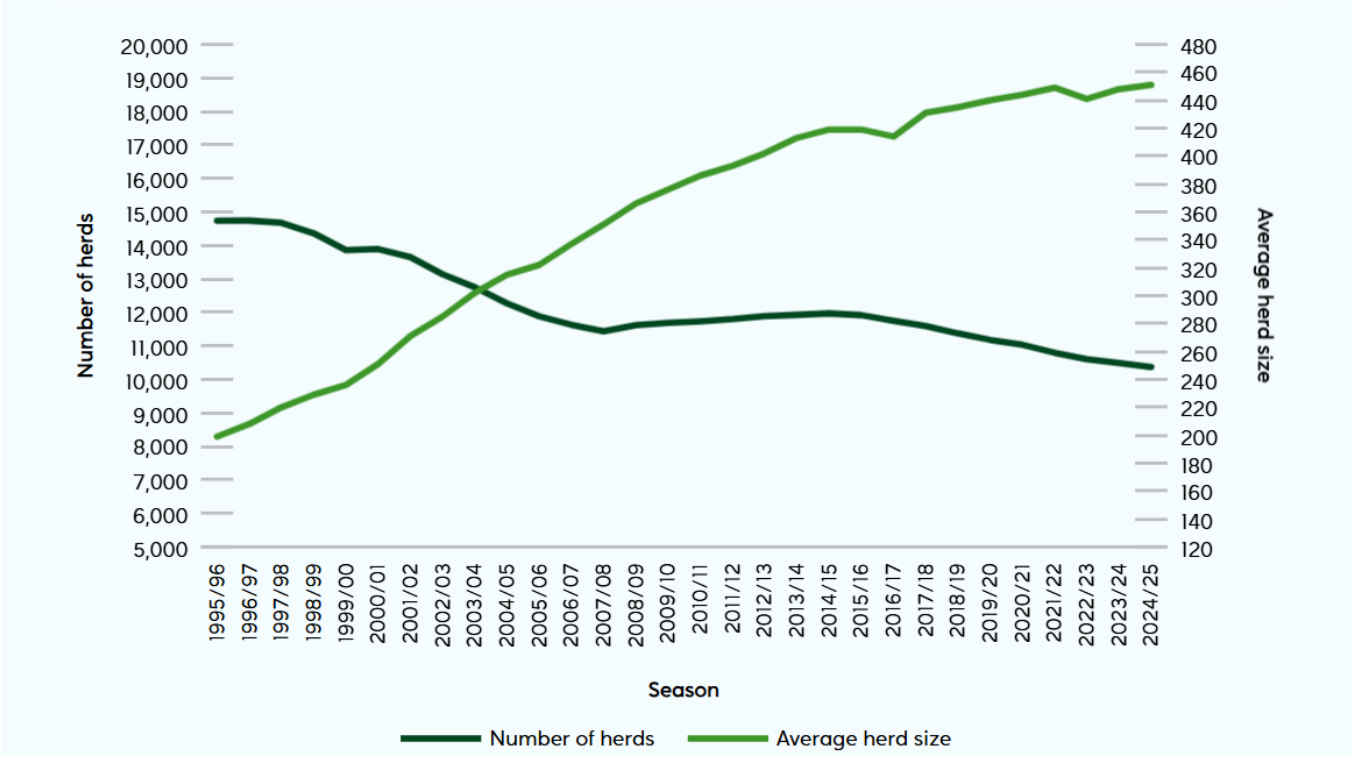
2.1.2. Population

- Number of herds decreased, while the average herd size increased.

Between 1997/98 and 2007/08 the total number of herds declined by about 300 per season (Graph 2.1). Between 2008/09 and 2014/15 the total number of herds increased by around 76 herds per year. Since 2015/16 the total number of herds have steadily declined by approximately 190 herds per year, reaching 10,370 in 2024/25.

The average herd size has shown a steady upward trend over the years reaching 451 in 2024/25.

Graph 2.1: Trend in the number of herds and average herd size



Note:

- Before 2022/23, herd size data was primarily sourced from LIC records, supplemented by data from dairy processors. From 2022/23 onward, it is mainly based on data from dairy processors, with supplementary data from LIC.

In 2023/24, changes were made to the methodology for collecting and estimating farm size and herd size data to enhance accuracy. This update has resulted in larger-than-usual variations in total effective hectares, average farm size and therefore stocking rate. These fluctuations did not persist in the 2024/25 publication.

Total cows have mostly trended downwards after peaking at 5.02 million in 2014/15. In 2024/25 they dropped to 4.68 million cows (Table 2.2). The average farm size (effective hectares) continued to rise, from 151 in 2017/18 to 164 in 2024/25. Total effective hectares (milking platform with support block excluded) peaked in 2017/18, before decreasing from 1.76 million hectares to 1.70 in 2024/25.

Table 2.2: Summary of herd statistics since 1975/76

Season	Herds	Total cows	Total effective hectares	Average herd size	Average effective hectares	Average cows per hectare
1975/76	18,442	2,091,950	-	113	-	-
1980/81	16,089	2,027,096	-	126	-	-
1985/86	15,753	2,321,012	1,008,192	147	64	2.30
–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1990/91	14,685	2,402,145	1,023,545	164	70	2.35
1991/92	14,452	2,438,641	-	169	-	-
1992/93	14,458	2,603,049	1,069,892	180	74	2.43
1993/94	14,597	2,736,452	1,122,509	188	77	2.44
1994/95	14,649	2,830,977	1,175,940	193	80	2.41
1995/96	14,736	2,935,759	1,208,352	199	82	2.43
1996/97	14,741	3,064,523	1,267,726	208	86	2.42
1997/98	14,673	3,222,591	1,276,551	220	87	2.52
1998/99	14,362	3,289,319	1,306,942	229	91	2.52
1999/00	13,861	3,269,362	1,292,566	236	93	2.53
2000/01	13,892	3,485,883	1,329,173	251	96	2.62
2001/02	13,649	3,692,703	1,404,930	271	103	2.63
2002/03	13,140	3,740,637	1,463,281	285	111	2.56
2003/04	12,751	3,851,302	1,421,147	302	111	2.71
2004/05	12,271	3,867,659	1,411,594	315	115	2.74
2005/06	11,883	3,832,145	1,398,966	322	118	2.74
2006/07	11,630	3,916,812	1,412,925	337	121	2.77
2007/08	11,436	4,012,867	1,436,549	351	126	2.79
2008/09	11,618	4,252,881	1,519,117	366	131	2.80
2009/10	11,691	4,396,675	1,563,495	376	134	2.81
2010/11	11,735	4,528,736	1,638,706	386	140	2.76
2011/12	11,798	4,634,226	1,638,546	393	139	2.83
2012/13	11,891	4,784,250	1,677,395	402	141	2.85
2013/14	11,927	4,922,806	1,716,464	413	144	2.87
2014/15	11,970	5,018,333	1,746,156	419	146	2.87
2015/16	11,918	4,997,811	1,751,704	419	147	2.85
2016/17	11,748	4,861,324	1,728,702	414	147	2.81
2017/18	11,590	4,992,914	1,755,148	431	151	2.84
2018/19	11,372	4,946,305	1,743,673	435	153	2.84
2019/20	11,179	4,921,548	1,730,374	440	155	2.84
2020/21	11,034	4,903,733	1,713,515	444	155	2.86
2021/22	10,796	4,842,122	1,701,380	449	158	2.85
2022/23	10,601	4,674,750	1,659,430	441	157	2.82
2023/24	10,485	4,701,596	1,703,404	448	162	2.76
2024/25	10,370	4,677,580	1,704,182	451	164	2.74

Note:

- Data not available is indicated with a long dash (–).
- Total effective hectares between 1981/82 and 1999/00 are estimates.
- Average effective hectares and average cows per hectare for 1981/82 to 1990/91 are based on factory supply herds only.
- The number of cows used to calculate the average herd size since 1992/93 includes all cows lactating in that season, whereas in earlier years the number of cows used to produce the average herd size was based only on those cows lactating on 31 December. This change in method has had a small effect on reported cow numbers.
- The 2022/23 season national statistics were revised by updating the averaging methodology in the 2023/24 publication to ensure tables reconcile.
- In 2023/24, changes were made to the methodology for collecting and estimating farm size and herd size data to enhance accuracy, this update has resulted in larger-than-usual variations in total effective hectares, average farm size and stocking rate.

2.2. Herd production statistics

- Average milksolids production per herd surpassed 180,000 for the first time.
- Milksolids production per cow and per effective hectare increased beyond the relative stability of recent seasons.

Average milksolids production per herd has increased in most years since 1992/93, except for 1998/99, 2007/08, 2012/13, and 2021/22, with the first three being drought-affected seasons (Table 2.3). In 2024/25, milksolids production per herd reached another record high of 186,772 kg, approximately 5% above the five-year average. The average milksolids production per hectare in 2024/25 was 1,137 kg, slightly higher than the five-year average and equal to the record high of 2020/21. Meanwhile, the average milksolids production per cow in 2024/25 (414 kg/cow) was the highest on record by 13 kg/cow.

Table 2.3: Summary of herd production since 1975/76

Season	Average litres per herd	Average kg milkfat per herd	Average kg protein per herd	Average kg milksolids per herd	Average kg milkfat per effective hectare	Average kg protein per effective hectare	Average kg milksolids per effective hectare	Average litres per cow	Average kg milkfat per cow	Average kg protein per cow	Average kg milksolids per cow
1975/76	-	15,700	-	-	-	-	-	-	137	-	-
1980/81	-	18,864	-	-	-	-	-	-	147	-	-
1985/86	-	23,489	-	-	379	-	-	-	157	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1990/91	-	24,495	-	-	351	-	-	-	148	-	-
1991/92	-	26,567	-	-	-	-	-	-	157	-	-
1992/93	554,040	26,982	20,138	47,120	374	279	653	-	148	111	259
1993/94	618,139	30,220	22,458	52,678	407	301	708	-	160	119	278
1994/95	614,203	29,886	22,117	52,002	386	285	671	-	156	115	271
1995/96	663,248	32,050	23,827	55,877	405	300	705	-	163	120	283
1996/97	728,874	35,436	26,387	61,823	425	316	741	-	173	128	301
1997/98	752,399	36,383	26,984	63,367	430	318	748	-	168	124	292
1998/99	735,544	35,047	26,254	61,301	392	292	684	-	147	109	256
1999/00	839,066	40,365	30,396	70,761	439	329	768	-	165	123	288
2000/01	930,047	45,063	33,850	78,914	472	353	825	-	177	133	310
2001/02	996,904	48,137	36,300	84,436	471	353	824	-	175	132	307
2002/03	1,058,307	51,447	39,174	90,621	471	357	828	-	179	136	315
2003/04	1,144,938	56,150	42,171	98,321	509	380	889	3,737	184	138	322
2004/05	1,149,262	56,520	42,305	98,825	494	368	862	3,574	176	132	308
2005/06	1,237,228	60,955	45,705	106,660	520	387	907	3,763	186	139	325
2006/07	1,301,308	64,495	48,687	113,182	534	400	934	3,791	189	142	330
2007/08	1,289,337	63,158	47,876	111,033	498	375	873	3,567	175	132	307
2008/09	1,381,573	68,116	51,850	119,966	524	396	921	3,710	184	139	323
2009/10	1,409,875	69,859	53,184	123,043	519	392	912	3,642	181	137	318
2010/11	1,477,531	73,184	55,762	128,946	524	399	923	3,829	190	144	334
2011/12	1,621,344	80,875	61,936	142,811	582	446	1,028	4,128	206	158	364
2012/13	1,587,980	78,948	60,462	139,410	560	429	988	3,947	196	150	346
2013/14	1,731,985	86,682	66,330	153,012	602	461	1,063	4,196	210	161	371
2014/15	1,775,501	89,152	68,734	157,886	611	471	1,082	4,235	213	164	377
2015/16	1,754,836	88,132	68,091	156,223	600	463	1,063	4,185	210	162	372
2016/17	1,762,152	88,667	68,892	157,560	603	468	1,071	4,259	214	167	381
2017/18	1,788,051	89,320	69,413	158,733	590	458	1,048	4,151	207	161	368
2018/19	1,865,731	92,868	72,806	165,674	606	475	1,081	4,290	214	167	381

Season	Average litres per herd	Average kg milkfat per herd	Average kg protein per herd	Average kg milksolids per herd	Average kg milkfat per effective hectare	Average kg protein per effective hectare	Average kg milksolids per effective hectare	Average litres per cow	Average kg milkfat per cow	Average kg protein per cow	Average kg milksolids per cow
2019/20	1,891,481	94,770	74,824	169,595	612	483	1,096	4,296	215	170	385
2020/21	1,967,106	98,681	77,822	176,503	635	501	1,137	4,426	222	175	397
2021/22	1,924,392	96,993	76,001	172,994	615	482	1,098	4,291	216	169	386
2022/23	1,952,790	98,966	77,718	176,683	632	496	1,129	4,428	224	176	401
2023/24	1,959,051	100,723	78,803	179,525	620	485	1,105	4,369	225	176	400
2024/25	2,026,212	105,327	81,445	186,772	641	496	1,137	4,492	234	181	414

Note:

- Data not available is indicated with a long dash (–).
- Values prior to 1991/92 exclude town milk herds.
- 1991/92 values include some town milk herds.

2.2.1. Production per cow and per hectare

Seasonal milksolids production is heavily influenced by weather conditions; for example, widespread droughts in 2007/08 and 2012/13 led to declines in milk production, while favourable pasture growth and increased supplementary feed in 2013/14 enabled high production levels (Graph 2.2). In 2024/25, milksolids production per cow reached 414 kg, 3.6% above the 5-year average of 400 kg (an average distorted by this season's record production), while milksolids production per hectare was 1,136 kg, 1.4% above the 5-year average of 1,121 kg.

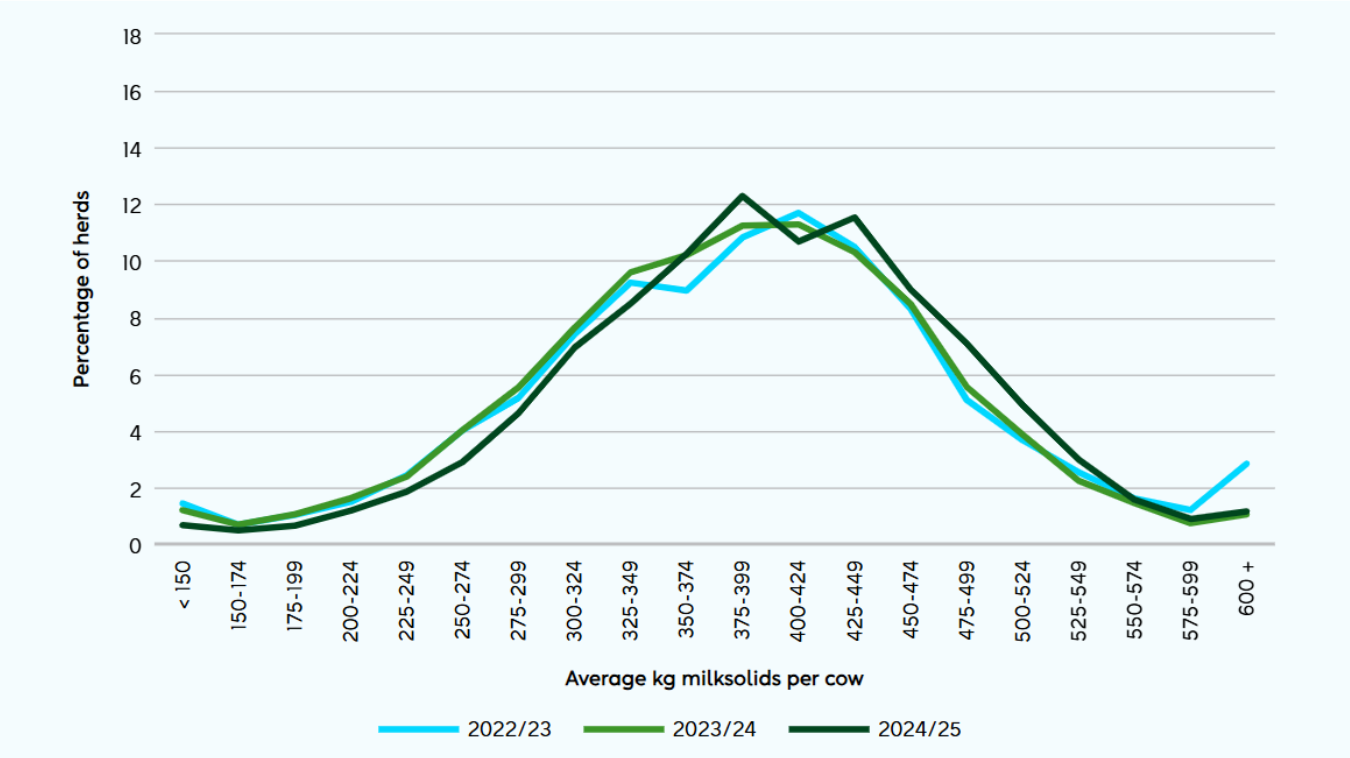
Graph 2.2: Milksolids production per cow and per effective hectare

Average milksolids production per cow varies considerably between farms, reflecting differences in climatic, biological, and management factors. Key determinants include temperature, rainfall, soil fertility (which influences pasture growth), as well as stocking rate, herd genetic merit, supplementary feed levels, and overall farm management practices.

Graph 2.3 shows the distribution of milksolids production per cow in 2024/25, alongside data from the previous two seasons.

Milksolids production per cow across 2022, 2023, and 2024 shows a consistent concentration in the 325–449 kg range, with 51% to 53% of herds in this range, with the highest percentage of herds falling in the 375–399 kg (10% of herds). Approximately 2-3% of herds had an average milksolids production below 200 kg per cow, while 3-6% of herds produced 550 kg per cow or more.

Graph 2.3: Distribution of herds by milksolids production per cow



2.2.2. Herd size distribution

- 54% of herds had fewer than 400 cows.
- 16% of herds had 700 or more cows.
- 6% of herds had 1,000 or more cows.

In the 2024/25 season, herd size distributions were similar to the previous season with 14% of herds having fewer than 200 cows, 54% had fewer than 400 cows, 33% had 500 or more cows, 16% had 700 or more cows, and 6% had 1,000 or more cows (Table 2.4). The average milksolids per cow were 358 kg for herds with fewer than 400 cows, 420 kg for herds with 400 to 700 cows, and 437 kg for herds with more than 700 cows. The highest average milksolids per cow are found in herds of 850 to 899 cows, and herds of 1,500 or more.

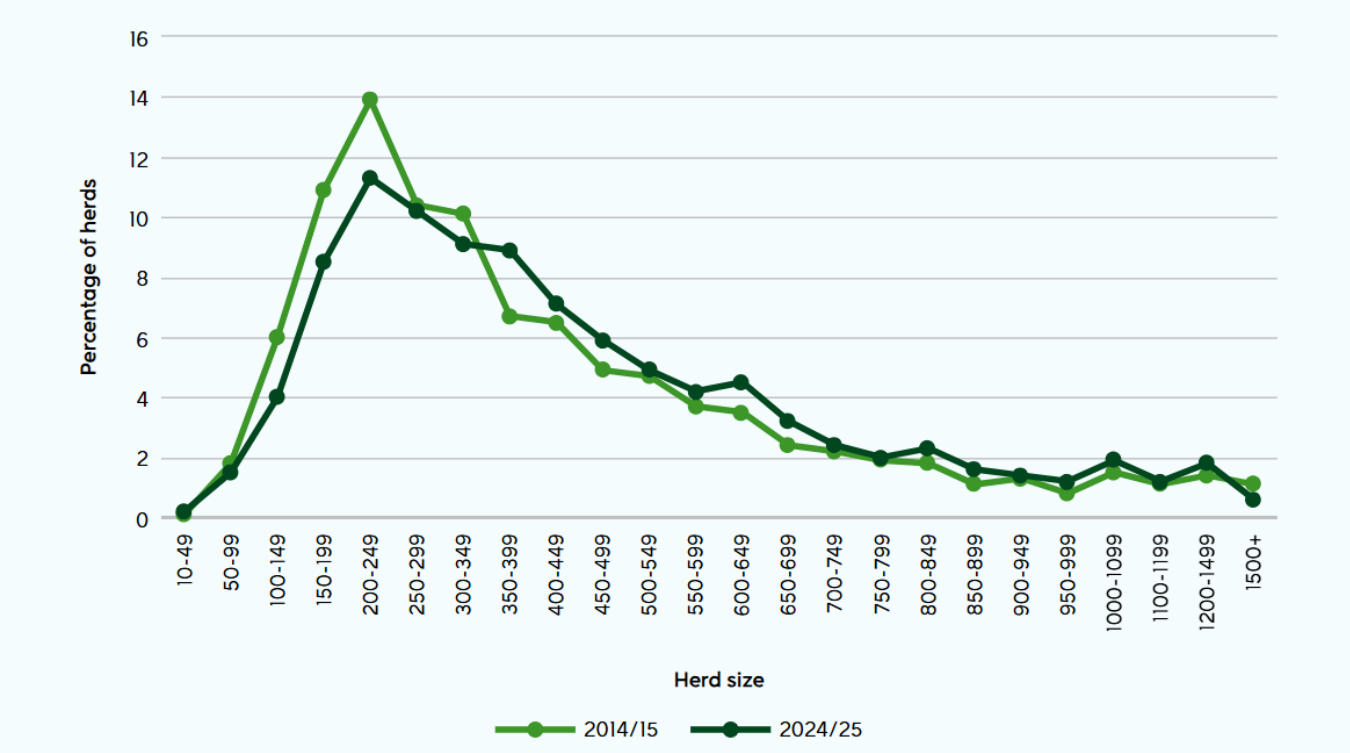
Table 2.4: Average production per cow by herd size in 2024/25

Herd size	Number of herds	Percentage of herds	Number of cows	Percentage of cows	Average kg milkfat per cow	Average kg protein per cow	Average kg milksolids per cow
10-49	19	0.2	593	0	203	159	362
50-99	154	1.5	12,246	0.3	147	114	261
100-149	412	4	52,247	1.1	188	144	331
150-199	886	8.5	155,172	3.3	208	159	367
200-249	1,170	11.3	260,719	5.6	216	165	381
250-299	1,062	10.2	288,902	6.2	217	166	384
300-349	940	9.1	302,258	6.5	219	167	386

Herd size	Number of herds	Percentage of herds	Number of cows	Percentage of cows	Average kg milkfat per cow	Average kg protein per cow	Average kg milksolids per cow
350-399	928	8.9	342,828	7.3	225	172	396
400-449	734	7.1	308,425	6.6	230	177	407
450-499	612	5.9	288,276	6.2	229	176	405
500-549	513	4.9	267,371	5.7	236	183	419
550-599	438	4.2	251,143	5.4	241	186	427
600-649	463	4.5	287,629	6.1	243	187	430
650-699	330	3.2	221,549	4.7	242	188	430
700-749	248	2.4	178,435	3.8	248	194	442
750-799	212	2	163,094	3.5	247	193	440
800-849	242	2.3	198,288	4.2	247	192	439
850-899	169	1.6	147,039	3.1	249	194	443
900-949	145	1.4	133,248	2.8	243	189	432
950-999	121	1.2	117,843	2.5	243	189	431
1000-1099	202	1.9	210,036	4.5	246	190	436
1100-1199	124	1.2	141,587	3	238	188	426
1200-1499	183	1.8	239,123	5.1	244	192	436
1500+	63	0.6	109,529	2.3	247	196	443
Total/Avg	432	100	194,899	100	229	177	406

Graph 2.4 illustrates the distribution of herd sizes in 2024/25, compared to data from ten seasons ago. Over the past decade, the proportion of herds with fewer than 200 cows decreased from 20% to 14%, and the percentage of herds with fewer than 350 cows dropped from 55% to 45%. Meanwhile, the proportion of herds with 500 cows or more increased from 28% to 33%. The most common herd size remains in the range of 200 to 249 cows, which accounted for 11.3% of herds in 2024/25 (compared to 13.9% in 2014/15).

Graph 2.4: Herd size distribution for 2024/25 compared with that of 10 seasons ago



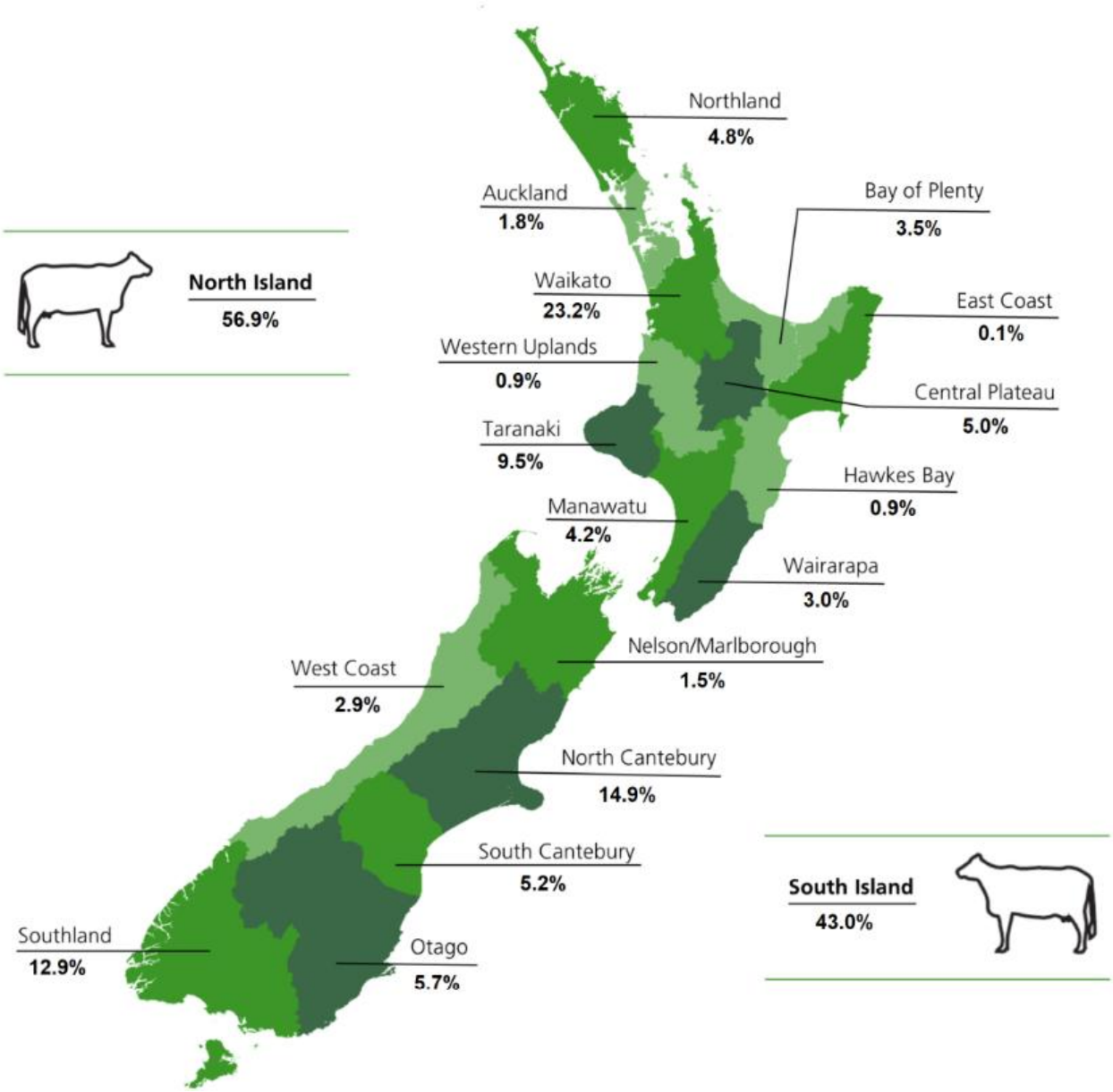
3. Regional dairy statistics

3.1. Regions

- 70% of dairy herds are in the North Island.
- 43% of dairy cows are in the South Island.

Cow distribution varies significantly across regions (Graph 3.1). Although the North Island contains approximately 70% of all dairy herds (Table 3.1), it holds only about 57% of the national cow population. In contrast, the South Island, with only 30% of herds (Table 3.1), accounts for around 43% of the cow population, as herd sizes tend to be larger than those in the North Island. The Waikato region has the largest share of the national cow population (about 23%), followed by North Canterbury (15%), Southland (13%), and Taranaki (9.5%).

Graph 3.1: Regional distribution of dairy cows in 2024/25



- North Canterbury has the largest average herd size, at 796 cows.

Regional differences in farm area, herd size, and stocking rates reflect regional variations in land use, farm structure and climate (Table 3.1). Consistent with previous years, in 2024/25, North Island herds were on average smaller (138 ha and 368 cows) than South Island herds (224 ha and 644 cows). Herds in the North Island also had lower stocking rates (2.66 cows/ha on average) than herds in the South Island (2.87 cows/ha).

East Coast in the North Island and South Canterbury in the South Island had the largest average effective land areas per herd, at 248 and 254 hectares respectively, while Taranaki had the smallest average effective land area with 116 hectares. When it comes to herd sizes, North Canterbury, South Canterbury, and Hawkes Bay lead with averages of 796, 789, and 660 cows per herd, respectively. In contrast, the smallest herds are found in Auckland and Taranaki, with averages of 294 and 311 cows per herd. Stocking rates are also highest in North Canterbury, South Canterbury, and Waikato with averages of 3.39, 3.10, and 2.87 cows per hectare, respectively. At the other end, Northland and the West Coast have the lowest stocking rates, at 2.19 and 2.00 cows per hectare.

Table 3.1: Herd analysis by region in 2024/25

Region	Total herds	Percentage of herds	Total cows	Percentage of cows	Total effective hectares	Percentage of effective hectares	Average herd size	Average effective hectares	Average cows per hectare
Northland	667	6.4	225,881	4.8	103,202	6.1	339	155	2.19
Auckland	283	2.7	83,147	1.8	35,780	2.1	294	126	2.32
Waikato	3,029	29.2	1,084,686	23.2	377,874	22.2	358	125	2.87
Bay of Plenty	447	4.3	164,528	3.5	59,860	3.5	368	134	2.75
Central Plateau	422	4.1	237,088	5.1	91,393	5.4	562	217	2.59
Western Uplands	79	0.8	42,145	0.9	16,233	1.0	533	205	2.60
East Coast	6	0.1	3,848	0.1	1,490	0.1	641	248	2.58
Hawkes Bay	65	0.6	42,870	0.9	15,737	0.9	660	242	2.72
Taranaki	1,424	13.7	442,931	9.5	165,286	9.7	311	116	2.68
Manawatu	467	4.5	198,010	4.2	81,423	4.8	424	174	2.43
Wairarapa	356	3.4	140,683	3.0	56,089	3.3	395	158	2.51
North Island	7,245	69.9	2,665,817	57.0	1,004,367	58.9	368	139	2.65
Nelson / Marlborough	180	1.7	68,796	1.5	26,934	1.6	382	150	2.55
West Coast	345	3.3	135,303	2.9	67,567	4.0	392	196	2.00
North Canterbury	877	8.5	698,455	14.9	206,163	12.1	796	235	3.39
South Canterbury	307	3.0	242,128	5.2	78,107	4.6	789	254	3.10
Otago	433	4.2	265,647	5.7	96,811	5.7	614	224	2.74
Southland	983	9.5	601,434	12.9	224,232	13.2	612	228	2.68
South Island	3,125	30.1	2,011,763	43.0	699,814	41.1	644	224	2.87
New Zealand	10,370	100.0	4,677,580	100.0	1,704,182	100.0	451	164	2.74

- North Canterbury recorded the highest milksolids production per herd in New Zealand.

North Canterbury had the highest production per herd in the South Island and New Zealand (370,785 kg milksolids/herd), which was approximately 4% higher than in the previous season (Table 3.2). This high level of production was achieved through large herd sizes (796 cows on average) and high milksolids production per cow (466 kg). In the North Island, Hawkes Bay recorded the highest milksolids production per herd (287,095 kg milksolids), reflecting its large herd sizes (660 cows/herd on average).

In 2024/25, the average milksolids production per cow and per hectare were higher in the South Island than in the North Island. In the South Island, North Canterbury recorded the highest average milksolids per hectare (1,577 kg MS/ha) for the 18th season in a row. In the North Island, Waikato had the highest average milksolids production per hectare (1,135 kg MS/ha).

In the South Island, North Canterbury had the highest milksolids per cow (466 kg MS/cow on average), and in the North Island, Manawatu had the highest average milksolids per cow (414 kg MS/cow).

Table 3.2: Herd production analysis by region in 2024/25

Region	Total kg milk solids	Percent milksolids	Average litres per herd	Average kg milkfat per herd	Average kg protein per herd	Average kg milksolids per herd	Average kg milkfat per effective hectare	Average kg protein per effective hectare	Average kg milksolids per effective hectare	Average kg milkfat per cow	Average kg protein per cow	Average kg milksolids per cow
Northland	77,038,357	4	1,262,558	65,342	50,158	115,500	422	324	746	193	148	341
Auckland	31,034,312	1.6	1,221,369	61,804	47,858	109,662	489	379	867	210	163	373
Waikato	429,056,562	22.2	1,548,470	80,306	61,343	141,650	644	492	1,135	224	171	396
Bay of Plenty	61,430,562	3.2	1,503,617	77,715	59,713	137,429	580	446	1,026	211	162	373
Central Plateau	93,172,089	4.8	2,432,798	124,721	96,066	220,787	576	444	1,019	222	171	393
Western Uplands	13,117,374	0.7	1,769,469	94,522	71,521	166,043	460	348	808	177	134	311
East Coast	1,316,463	0.1	2,373,024	123,958	95,452	219,411	499	384	884	193	149	342
Hawkes Bay	16,844,760	0.9	2,858,524	144,995	114,155	259,150	599	472	1,070	220	173	393
Taranaki	178,966,179	9.2	1,352,794	71,271	54,408	125,678	614	469	1,083	229	175	404
Manawatu	81,923,220	4.2	1,943,340	98,788	76,637	175,424	567	440	1,006	233	181	414
Wairarapa	55,755,125	2.9	1,690,568	88,373	68,243	156,616	561	433	994	224	173	396
North Island	1,039,655,004	53.7	1,566,934	81,216	62,283	143,500	586	449	1,035	221	169	390
Nelson / Marlborough	26,621,788	1.4	1,584,329	83,995	63,904	147,899	561	427	988	220	167	387
West Coast	48,893,859	2.5	1,492,618	80,763	60,958	141,721	412	311	724	206	155	361
North Canterbury	325,178,033	16.8	4,007,889	207,300	163,485	370,785	882	695	1,577	260	205	466
South Canterbury	108,996,485	5.6	3,823,727	198,636	156,402	355,037	781	615	1,395	252	198	450
Otago	114,455,032	5.9	2,850,183	148,050	116,280	264,330	662	520	1,182	241	190	431
Southland	273,026,807	14.1	2,987,097	156,625	121,124	277,749	687	531	1,218	256	198	454
South Island	897,172,004	46.3	3,091,002	161,227	125,868	287,095	720	562	1,282	250	196	446
New Zealand	1,936,827,008	100	2,026,212	105,327	81,445	186,772	641	496	1,137	234	181	414

3.2. Districts

South Taranaki remains the district with the highest number of herds, totalling 870 herds (8.4% of all herds), followed by Matamata-Piako with 853 herds (8.2%) and Southland with 725 herds (7%). Southland also has the highest number of cows, with 446,754 cows (9.6% of the national total), followed by Ashburton with 348,722 cows (7.5%) and South Taranaki with 289,709 cows (6.2%). The Mackenzie and Waimate districts in South Canterbury have the largest average herd sizes, with 1,077 and 845 cows per herd, respectively (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 shows the distribution of business types across districts and regions. Fifty-eight percent of herds are run by owner-operators, 13% by contract milkers, 26% by sharemilkers of various types, and the remaining 3% are unclassified (Table 3.5).

Table 3.3: Herd analysis by district in 2024/25

Region	District	Total herds	Number of owner operators	Number of contract milkers	Number of share milkers	Total cows	Total effective hectares	Average herd size	Average effective hectares	Average cows per hectare
Northland	Far North	183	126	19	36	62,426	28,347	341	155	2.2
	Whangarei	234	134	30	68	80,056	35,216	342	150	2.27
	Kaipara	250	163	31	54	83,399	39,639	334	159	2.1
Auckland	Rodney / Auckland	109	60	16	33	33,074	14,790	303	136	2.24
	Manukau / Papakura	7	4	0	3	1,722	922	246	132	1.87
	Franklin	167	94	12	61	48,351	20,068	290	120	2.41
Waikato	Waikato	574	307	61	173	205,208	74,604	358	130	2.75
	Hamilton City	20	17	0	1	5,681	2,276	284	114	2.5
	Waipa	497	279	71	119	186,389	63,086	375	127	2.95
	Otorohanga	324	165	41	99	124,100	43,434	383	134	2.86
	Thames-Coromandel	72	37	19	13	23,311	8,881	324	123	2.62
	Hauraki	344	179	66	80	110,594	40,374	321	117	2.74
	Matamata-Piako	853	397	134	274	282,736	93,621	331	110	3.02
	South Waikato	345	150	81	94	146,667	51,599	425	150	2.84
Bay of Plenty	Western Bay of Plenty	150	83	34	33	56,081	19,777	374	132	2.84
	Tauranga	6	2	1	3	3,623	1,326	604	221	2.73
	Kawerau / Whakatane	232	145	28	59	85,777	31,231	370	135	2.75
	Opotiki	59	33	7	19	19,047	7,526	323	128	2.53
Central Plateau	Taupo	145	97	19	28	110,301	43,866	761	303	2.51
	Rotorua	277	158	47	72	126,787	47,528	458	172	2.67
Western Uplands	Waitomo	54	31	5	18	29,304	11,004	543	204	2.66
	Ruapehu	25	16	1	8	12,841	5,229	514	209	2.46
East Coast	Gisborne / Wairoa	6	3	2	1	3,848	1,490	641	248	2.58
Hawkes Bay	Napier / Hastings	26	20	1	5	14,257	5,691	548	219	2.51
	Central Hawke's Bay	39	27	2	10	28,613	10,045	734	258	2.85
Taranaki	New Plymouth	350	210	45	95	98,316	39,346	281	112	2.5
	Stratford	204	136	15	53	54,906	21,036	269	103	2.61
	South Taranaki	870	501	123	246	289,709	104,905	333	121	2.76
Manawatu	Wanganui	17	11	2	4	7,049	3,512	415	207	2.01
	Rangitikei	76	51	15	10	37,673	15,188	496	200	2.48
	Manawatu	215	160	17	38	86,279	35,399	401	165	2.44
	Palmerston North City	43	37	1	5	21,289	8,088	495	188	2.63
	Horowhenua	101	71	11	19	41,177	17,096	408	169	2.41
	Kapiti Coast / Upper Hutt	13	7	1	5	4,188	1,864	322	143	2.25
Wairarapa	Tararua	236	150	32	54	82,056	34,454	348	146	2.38
	Masterton	14	5	4	5	7,726	2,889	552	206	2.67
	Carterton	44	32	10	2	18,640	7,114	424	162	2.62
	South Wairarapa	64	32	17	15	32,616	11,908	510	186	2.74
North Island	**North Island**	7,245	4,130	1,021	1,915	2,665,817	1,004,367	368	139	2.65

Region	District	Total herds	Number of owner operators	Number of contract milkers	Number of share milkers	Total cows	Total effective hectares	Average herd size	Average effective hectares	Average cows per hectare
Nelson / Marlborough	Marlborough	40	26	5	9	14,351	5,345	359	134	2.68
	Kaikoura	19	11	0	8	9,364	3,120	493	164	3
	Tasman/Nelson City	121	86	14	21	45,081	18,469	373	153	2.44
West Coast	Buller	112	88	0	24	43,691	20,587	390	184	2.12
	Grey	95	76	0	19	42,079	20,419	443	215	2.06
	Westland	138	107	0	31	49,533	26,561	359	192	1.86
North Canterbury	Hurunui	97	56	19	22	79,977	25,446	825	262	3.14
	Waimakariri	99	55	14	30	68,563	21,389	693	216	3.21
	Christchurch City	34	22	6	6	26,608	8,143	783	239	3.27
	Banks Peninsula	6	3	0	3	2,106	874	351	146	2.41
	Selwyn	227	159	30	38	172,479	50,922	760	224	3.39
	Ashburton	414	214	78	122	348,722	99,389	842	240	3.51
South Canterbury	Timaru	174	115	17	42	126,019	38,898	724	224	3.24
	Mackenzie	16	9	1	6	17,230	6,416	1,077	401	2.69
	Waimate	117	58	8	51	98,879	32,793	845	280	3.02
Otago	Waitaki	151	68	20	57	105,700	32,810	700	217	3.22
	Dunedin City	60	39	1	18	27,439	10,379	457	173	2.64
	Clutha	188	115	17	49	105,165	43,452	559	231	2.42
	Central Otago / Lakes	34	23	6	4	27,343	10,170	804	299	2.69
Southland	Gore	160	109	18	27	95,177	38,037	595	238	2.5
	Invercargill	98	57	13	24	59,503	22,211	607	227	2.68
	Southland	725	434	79	182	446,754	163,984	616	226	2.72
South Island	**South Island**	3,125	1,930	346	793	2,011,763	699,814	644	224	2.87
New Zealand	**New Zealand**	10,370	6,060	1,367	2,708	4,677,580	1,704,182	451	164	2.74

Production per cow and per hectare varied widely across districts, reflecting differences in farm management practices and local conditions. Nationally, Mackenzie district had the highest average production per herd with 446,416 kg of milksolids followed by Ashburton with 398,964 kg of milksolids (Table 3.4). Ashburton had the highest average milksolids per effective hectare, producing 1,662 kg, followed by Christchurch with 1,582 kg per hectare. Christchurch city recorded the highest average milksolids production per cow at 484 kg, with Ashburton close behind at 474 kg. In the North Island, Central Hawke's Bay achieved the highest milksolids production per herd, averaging 296,432 kg, followed by Taupo with 288,534 kg. Among North Island districts, Masteron, Matamata-Piako, and South Waikato had the highest average milksolids per hectare, producing 1,214, 1,214 kg and 1,203 kg, respectively. Masterton, Palmerston North, South Waikato districts led in milksolids per cow, each averaging more than 420 kg per cow.

Table 3.4: Herd production analysis by district in 2024/25

Region	District	Average litres per herd	Average kg milkfat per herd	Average kg protein per herd	Average kg milk solids per herd	Average kg milkfat per effective hectare	Average kg protein per effective hectare	Average kg milk solids per effective hectare	Average kg milkfat per cow	Average kg protein per cow	Average kg milk solids per cow
Northland	Far North	1,315,238	68,063	52,274	120,337	439	337	777	200	153	353
	Whangarei	1,339,857	69,513	53,313	122,825	462	354	816	203	156	359
	Kaipara	1,151,645	59,447	45,655	105,102	375	288	663	178	137	315
Auckland	Rodney / Auckland	1,129,050	58,731	44,599	103,330	433	329	762	194	147	341
	Manukau / Papakura	936,285	47,455	37,148	84,603	360	282	642	193	151	344
	Franklin	1,293,576	64,411	50,434	114,845	536	420	956	222	174	397
Waikato	Waikato	1,524,999	78,579	60,137	138,717	605	463	1,067	220	168	388
	Hamilton City	1,210,480	61,314	46,957	108,271	539	413	952	216	165	381
	Waipa	1,657,336	85,890	65,540	151,430	677	516	1,193	229	175	404
	Otorohanga	1,564,172	81,304	61,757	143,061	607	461	1,067	212	161	374
	Thames-Coromandel	1,233,959	65,025	49,431	114,456	527	401	928	201	153	354
	Hauraki	1,321,223	68,717	52,506	121,224	585	447	1,033	214	163	377
	Matamata-Piako	1,454,884	75,486	57,729	133,215	688	526	1,214	228	174	402
	South Waikato	1,959,152	101,963	77,983	179,947	682	521	1,203	240	183	423
Bay of Plenty	Western Bay of Plenty	1,507,578	78,724	60,367	139,091	597	458	1,055	211	161	372
	Tauranga	2,361,292	125,961	96,072	222,033	570	435	1,005	209	159	368
	Kawerau / Whakatane	1,569,862	80,652	62,031	142,683	599	461	1,060	218	168	386
	Opotiki	1,145,840	58,698	45,240	103,937	460	355	815	182	140	322
Central Plateau	Taupo	3,178,074	163,055	125,679	288,734	539	415	954	214	165	380
	Rotorua	2,042,672	104,655	80,564	185,219	610	470	1,079	229	176	405
Western Uplands	Waitomo	1,768,496	94,399	71,322	165,721	463	350	813	174	131	305
	Ruapehu	1,771,571	94,787	71,951	166,738	453	344	797	185	140	325
East Coast	Gisborne / Wairoa	2,373,024	123,958	95,452	219,411	499	384	884	193	149	342
Hawkes Bay	Napier / Hastings	2,215,752	114,500	88,727	203,227	523	405	928	209	162	371
	Central Hawke's Bay	3,287,038	165,324	131,108	296,432	642	509	1,151	225	179	404
Taranaki	New Plymouth	1,164,225	62,030	46,651	108,680	552	415	967	221	166	387
	Stratford	1,180,649	61,515	47,100	108,615	597	457	1,053	229	175	404
	South Taranaki	1,469,020	77,276	59,242	136,518	641	491	1,132	232	178	410
Manawatu	Wanganui	1,648,944	81,794	64,627	146,420	396	313	709	197	156	353
	Rangitikei	2,189,375	111,842	86,599	198,441	560	433	993	226	175	400
	Manawatu	1,847,056	94,443	72,966	167,409	574	443	1,017	235	182	417
	Palmerston North City	2,433,243	124,334	95,408	219,741	661	507	1,168	251	193	444
	Horowhenua	1,889,008	94,799	74,354	169,153	560	439	999	233	182	415
	Kapiti Coast/Upper Hutt	1,453,011	71,451	56,974	128,425	498	397	895	222	177	399
Wairarapa	Tararua	1,468,299	77,029	59,205	136,234	528	406	933	222	170	392
	Masterton	2,780,435	139,944	110,626	250,569	678	536	1,214	254	200	454
	Carterton	1,857,461	95,139	73,973	169,112	588	458	1,046	225	175	399
	South Wairarapa	2,130,602	112,887	87,295	200,182	607	469	1,076	222	171	393
North Island	**North Island**	1,566,934	81,216	62,283	143,500	586	449	1,035	221	169	390

Region	District	Average litres per herd	Average kg milkfat per herd	Average kg protein per herd	Average kg milk solids per herd	Average kg milkfat per effective hectare	Average kg protein per effective hectare	Average kg milk solids per effective hectare	Average kg milkfat per cow	Average kg protein per cow	Average kg milk solids per cow
Nelson / Marlborough	Marlborough	1,576,837	82,202	62,789	144,991	615	470	1,085	229	175	404
	Kaikoura	2,187,611	114,398	88,412	202,810	697	538	1,235	232	179	412
	Tasman/Nelson City	1,492,076	79,813	60,425	140,238	523	396	919	214	162	376
West Coast	Buller	1,458,570	78,486	59,087	137,573	427	321	748	201	151	353
	Grey	1,733,047	92,659	70,222	162,881	431	327	758	209	159	368
	Westland	1,354,738	74,422	56,100	130,521	387	291	678	207	156	364
North Canterbury	Hurunui	4,144,434	216,886	168,751	385,638	827	643	1,470	263	205	468
	Waimakariri	3,585,984	179,892	143,658	323,550	833	665	1,498	260	207	467
	Christchurch City	4,064,137	211,171	167,721	378,892	882	700	1,582	270	214	484
	Banks Peninsula	1,536,472	83,054	62,915	145,969	570	432	1,002	237	179	416
	Selwyn	3,649,122	189,094	149,278	338,372	843	665	1,508	249	196	445
	Ashburton	4,304,700	223,073	175,891	398,964	929	733	1,662	265	209	474
South Canterbury	Timaru	3,529,942	182,551	143,601	326,152	817	642	1,459	252	198	450
	Mackenzie	4,923,016	245,774	200,642	446,416	613	500	1,113	228	186	415
	Waimate	4,110,307	216,111	169,388	385,499	771	604	1,375	256	200	456
Otago	Waitaki	3,328,975	174,833	137,363	312,196	805	632	1,437	250	196	446
	Dunedin City	2,295,421	117,441	93,045	210,486	679	538	1,217	257	203	460
	Clutha	2,472,474	126,926	99,463	226,389	549	430	979	227	178	405
	Central Otago / Lakes	3,791,282	199,922	156,642	356,564	668	524	1,192	249	195	443
Southland	Gore	2,768,161	144,582	112,105	256,686	608	472	1,080	243	188	432
	Invercargill	2,923,235	152,141	117,646	269,787	671	519	1,190	251	194	444
	Southland	3,044,046	159,889	123,584	283,473	707	546	1,253	259	201	460
South Island	**South Island**	3,091,002	161,227	125,868	287,095	720	562	1,282	250	196	446
New Zealand	**New Zealand**	2,026,212	105,327	81,445	186,772	641	496	1,137	234	181	414

Note: Districts with fewer than four herds have been added to a neighbouring district to preserve anonymity.

3.3. Operating structures

The main operating structures on New Zealand dairy farms are owner operator, sharemilker and contract milker. Owner operators own and operate their own farms and sometimes employ a farm manager to operate the farm. Owner operators comprise the largest group of all operating structures, being 58% of all herds (Table 3.5).

Contract milkers (13% of herds) are contracted to milk a herd at a set price per kilogram of milksolids produced. The rate is set in part according to the amount of farm work done.

Sharemilking has traditionally been the first step to farm ownership and is the second largest operating structure, accounting for 26% of herds across all types of sharemilkers. Sharemilking involves operating a farm on behalf of the farm owner for an agreed share of the farm receipts (as opposed to a set wage). Two types of sharemilking agreement are commonly used: Variable order sharemilking and herd-owning sharemilking agreements.

Herd-owning sharemilkers (also called 50/50 sharemilkers) own the herd and machinery (other than the milking plant) needed to farm the property. The sharemilker is usually responsible for milk-harvesting expenses, labour, stock-related expenses, and general farm work. The owner is usually responsible for expenses related to maintaining the property. The percentage quoted in a 50/50 sharemilking agreement usually refers to the proportion of milk income the sharemilker receives. While this percentage is most commonly 50%, it can range from 45% to 55%. Under the 50/50 agreement the sharemilker receives the agreed percentage of milk income plus all the income from stock sales, and the farm owner receives the remaining percentage of milk income.

Unlike the 50/50 agreement, where the owner may have little to do with farm management, a variable-order sharemilking agreement often sees the owner retain some involvement in management of the farm. The variable-order sharemilking agreement involves the farm owner retaining ownership of the herd and bearing more of the farm costs, such as animal health and breeding. The amount of farm work required by the sharemilker is determined by the individual agreement, with responsibility ranging from herd management only to carrying out all farm work.

The "Other/Unknown" category includes herds with unknown operating structure or herds with characteristics that do not match the description of their operating structure.

- 58% of all herds are operated as owner-operators.
- 58% of all sharemilkers are 50/50 sharemilkers.

The number of herds, average herd size, effective area and number of cows per hectare for each of the main operating structures are shown in Table 3.5. In 2024/25, 58% (6,060) of New Zealand dairy herds operated under an owner-operators structure, 26% (2,708) operated under a sharemilking agreement and 13% operated under a contract milkers' agreement. Fifty-eight percent (1,580) of all sharemilkers have 50/50 agreements.

Table 3.5: Herd analysis by operating structure in 2024/25

Operating structure	Number of herds	Percentage of herds	Average herd size	Average effective hectares	Average cows per effective hectare
Owner-operators	6,060	58.4	442	166	2.66
Contract milkers	1,367	13.2	494	168	2.94
Sharemilkers:					
less than 20%	112	1.1	750	239	3.13
20-29%	455	4.4	526	188	2.80
30-49%	122	1.2	410	139	2.95
50/50	1,580	15.2	420	149	2.82
over 50%	439	4.2	428	154	2.78
All sharemilkers	2,708	26.1	452	160	2.83
Unknown	235	2.3	428	152	2.81
All farms	10,370	100	451	164	2.74

Herd production in each of the main operating structure groups is shown in Table 3.6. On average, sharemilkers on agreements of less than 20% have the highest milksolids production per herd, per hectare and per cow.

Table 3.6: Herd production analysis by operating structure in 2024/25

Operating structure	Average litres per herd	Average kg milkfat per herd	Average kg milksolids per herd	Average kg milkfat per effective hectare	Average kg milksolids per effective hectare	Average kg milkfat per cow	Average kg milksolids per cow
Owner-operators	1,971,048	102,085	181,230	614	1,091	231	410
Contract milkers	2,271,867	118,922	210,726	709	1,256	241	427
Sharemilkers:							
less than 20%	3,642,295	189,638	338,309	792	1,413	253	451
20-29%	2,379,862	124,355	221,166	662	1,177	236	420
30-49%	1,699,499	88,954	157,446	640	1,133	217	384
50/50	1,869,793	98,296	173,693	660	1,166	234	413
over 50%	1,906,760	99,849	176,750	648	1,147	233	413
All sharemilkers	2,027,125	106,283	188,241	666	1,179	235	416
Unknown	2,009,241	98,852	173,408	650	1,141	231	405
All farms	2,026,212	105,327	186,772	641	1,137	234	414

Table 3.7 shows the percentage of herds in each operating structure type, whereas Table 3.8 gives the actual number of herds. For the last eight seasons, the percentage of herds with contract milkers is shown separately. Prior to this they were included in the Owner-operator category. Over the past five seasons, the percentage of owner-operators has remained relatively stable, hovering around 56% but showing

a slight increase to 58.4% in 2024/25. Sharemilker operations have also been steady, until this season it decreased to 26.1%, the first time in ten years below 27%.

Table 3.7: Trend in the percentage of herds in each operating structure for the last 10 seasons

Operating structure	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Owner-operators	69.8	72.4	59.9	57.2	56.1	56.2	56	56.2	55.2	58.4
Contract Milkers			12.4	12.8	14.3	14.4	14.5	13.5	14.5	13.2
Sharemilkers:										
less than 20%	1.3	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.1
20-29%	6.9	5	5.1	5.2	5.5	4.8	4.5	4.6	4.9	4.4
30-49%	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.2
50/50	16.8	16.4	15.9	16.9	16.6	16.6	16.8	16.8	16.9	15.2
over 50%	3.5	3.5	3.7	4.6	4	4.7	4.8	5.5	4.4	4.2
All sharemilkers	30	27.3	27.3	29.3	28.9	28.5	28.6	29.3	28.6	26.1
Other/Unknown	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.9	1.1	1.7	2.3

Table 3.8: Trend in the number of herds in each operating structure for the last 10 seasons

Operating structure	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Owner-operators	8,315	8,503	6,940	6,507	6,268	6,206	6,046	5,959	5,790	6,060
Contract Milkers			1,440	1,460	1,597	1,594	1,568	1,429	1,518	1,367
Sharemilkers:										
less than 20%	153	134	122	138	148	117	115	117	124	112
20-29%	821	586	595	589	616	534	489	485	513	455
30-49%	174	157	161	159	159	148	149	140	126	122
50/50	2,001	1,925	1,848	1,919	1,857	1,831	1,817	1,778	1,771	1,580
over 50%	421	406	433	526	447	515	517	580	462	439
All sharemilkers	3,570	3,208	3,159	3,331	3,227	3,145	3,089	3,100	2,996	2,708
Other/Unknown	33	37	51	74	87	89	93	113	181	235
Total	11,918	11,748	11,590	11,372	11,179	11,034	10,796	10,601	10,485	10,370

Table 3.9 compares the number (and percentage) of owner-operators, contract milkers and sharemilkers by region in 2024/25. In the South Island there were more variable order sharemilkers than 50/50 sharemilkers, while the opposite was the case in the North Island. Waikato has the largest proportion of owner operators, with 25.3%, followed by Taranaki, North Canterbury and Southland with 14%, 8.4% and 9.9%, respectively. Seventy-eight percent of all 50/50 sharemilkers are in the North Island and 22% are in the South Island.

Table 3.9: Operating structure by region in 2024/25

Region	Owner operators	Owner operators %	Contract milkers	Contract milkers %	All share milkers	All share milkers %	50/50 share milkers	50/50 share milkers %	Variable order share milkers	Variable order share milkers %	Total herds (excl. unknown)	Total herds (excl. unknown) %
Northland	423	7	80	5.9	158	5.8	101	6.4	57	5.1	661	6.5
Auckland	158	2.6	28	2	97	3.6	64	4.1	33	2.9	283	2.8
Waikato	1,531	25.3	473	34.6	853	31.5	591	37.4	262	23.2	2,857	28.2
Bay of Plenty	263	4.3	70	5.1	114	4.2	72	4.6	42	3.7	447	4.4
Central Plateau	255	4.2	66	4.8	100	3.7	69	4.4	31	2.7	421	4.2
Western Uplands	47	0.8	6	0.4	26	1	12	0.8	14	1.2	79	0.8
East Coast	3	0	2	0.1	1	0	0	0	1	0.1	6	0.1
Hawkes Bay	47	0.8	3	0.2	15	0.6	10	0.6	5	0.4	65	0.6
Taranaki	847	14	183	13.4	394	14.5	219	13.9	175	15.5	1,424	14.1
Manawatu	339	5.6	47	3.4	81	3	42	2.7	39	3.5	467	4.6
Wairarapa	217	3.6	63	4.6	76	2.8	45	2.8	31	2.7	356	3.5
North Island	4,130	68	1,021	75	1,915	71	1,225	78	690	61	7,066	70
Nelson / Marlborough	123	2	19	1.4	38	1.4	24	1.5	14	1.2	180	1.8
West Coast	271	4.5	0	0	74	2.7	30	1.9	44	3.9	345	3.4
North Canterbury	509	8.4	147	10.8	221	8.2	104	6.6	117	10.4	877	8.7
South Canterbury	182	3	26	1.9	99	3.7	29	1.8	70	6.2	307	3
Otago	245	4	44	3.2	128	4.7	49	3.1	79	7	417	4.1
Southland	600	9.9	110	8	233	8.6	119	7.5	114	10.1	943	9.3
South Island	1,930	32	346	25	793	29	355	22	438	39	3,069	30
New Zealand	6,060	100	1,367	100	2,708	100	1,580	100	1,128	100	10,135	100

Table 3.10 shows the number and percentage of owner-operators, contract milkers, and sharemilkers by herd size. For most operating structures, herds in the 250-299 size range (which make up 10.5% of herds nationally) represent the largest percentage within their respective categories – an increase relative to last season where the 200-249 size range was the most prevalent across categories. Owner-operators are relatively evenly distributed across herd sizes, peaking at 12.2% in the 200-249 herd size range, and 45% of their herds consisting of 400 or more cows. In contrast, contract milkers have a higher concentration in the higher ranges and tend to manage larger herds compared to owner-operators, especially in the 400+ herd size categories (54%).

Table 3.10: Operating structure by herd size in 2024/25

Herd size	Owner operators	Owner operators %	Contract milkers	Contract milkers %	All share milkers	All share milkers %	50/50 share milkers	50/50 share milkers %	Variable order share milkers	Variable order share milkers %	Total herds (excl. unknown)	Total herds (excl. unknown) %
10-49	17	0.3	0	0	2	0.1	1	0.1	1	0.1	19	0.2
50-99	141	2.3	3	0.2	10	0.4	1	0.1	9	0.8	154	1.5
100-149	315	5.2	10	0.7	87	3.2	45	2.8	42	3.7	412	4.1
150-199	591	9.8	72	5.3	223	8.2	144	9.1	79	7	886	8.7
200-249	740	12.2	139	10.2	291	10.7	195	12.3	96	8.5	1,170	11.5
250-299	585	9.7	150	11	327	12.1	211	13.4	116	10.3	1,062	10.5
300-349	529	8.7	145	10.6	266	9.8	169	10.7	97	8.6	940	9.3
350-399	436	7.2	110	8	205	7.6	134	8.5	71	6.3	751	7.4
400-449	414	6.8	106	7.8	214	7.9	135	8.5	79	7	734	7.2
450-499	345	5.7	92	6.7	175	6.5	95	6	80	7.1	612	6
500-549	265	4.4	96	7	152	5.6	83	5.3	69	6.1	513	5.1
550-599	254	4.2	69	5	115	4.2	61	3.9	54	4.8	438	4.3
600-649	230	3.8	48	3.5	128	4.7	76	4.8	52	4.6	406	4
650-699	181	3	54	4	95	3.5	49	3.1	46	4.1	330	3.3
700-749	138	2.3	47	3.4	63	2.3	28	1.8	35	3.1	248	2.4
750-799	123	2	35	2.6	54	2	28	1.8	26	2.3	212	2.1
800-849	141	2.3	34	2.5	66	2.4	30	1.9	36	3.2	241	2.4
850-899	101	1.7	29	2.1	39	1.4	15	0.9	24	2.1	169	1.7
900-949	79	1.3	25	1.8	41	1.5	16	1	25	2.2	145	1.4
950-999	72	1.2	20	1.5	29	1.1	16	1	13	1.2	121	1.2
1000-1099	124	2	30	2.2	48	1.8	22	1.4	26	2.3	202	2
1100-1199	82	1.4	15	1.1	27	1	14	0.9	13	1.2	124	1.2
1200-1499	118	1.9	32	2.3	33	1.2	7	0.4	26	2.3	183	1.8
1500+	39	0.6	6	0.4	18	0.7	5	0.3	13	1.2	63	0.6
Total/Avg	6,060	100	1,367	100	2,708	100	1,580	100	1,128	100	10,135	100

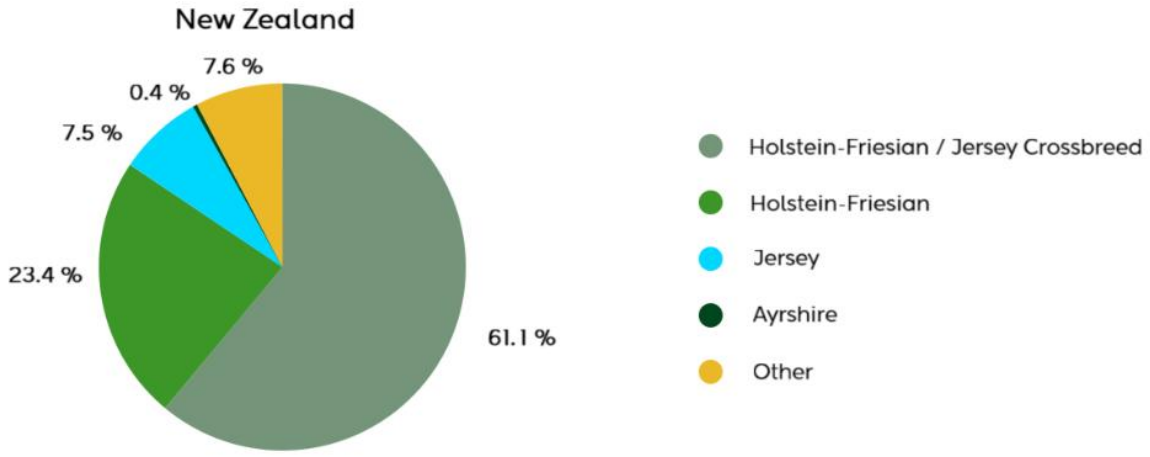
3.4. Breed breakdown

Three breeds of dairy cattle dominate the dairy cow inseminations carried out in New Zealand: Holstein-Friesian, Jersey, and Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed. Historically, these insemination counts have been pulled from the LIC National Database. From the 2021/22 season onwards, counts are based on records in the Dairy Industry Good Animal Database (DIGAD, https://www.dairynz.co.nz/animal/animal-evaluation/animal-database/). Breed categorisation has also changed to now match the Animal Evaluation (AE) breed classification used by New Zealand Animal Evaluation Limited (NZAEL).

The Jersey breed dominated the national dairy herd until the late 1960s. By 1970, Holstein-Friesian was the dominant dairy breed in New Zealand, because of changes in farm management practices. Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed now makes up the largest proportion of the national dairy herd.

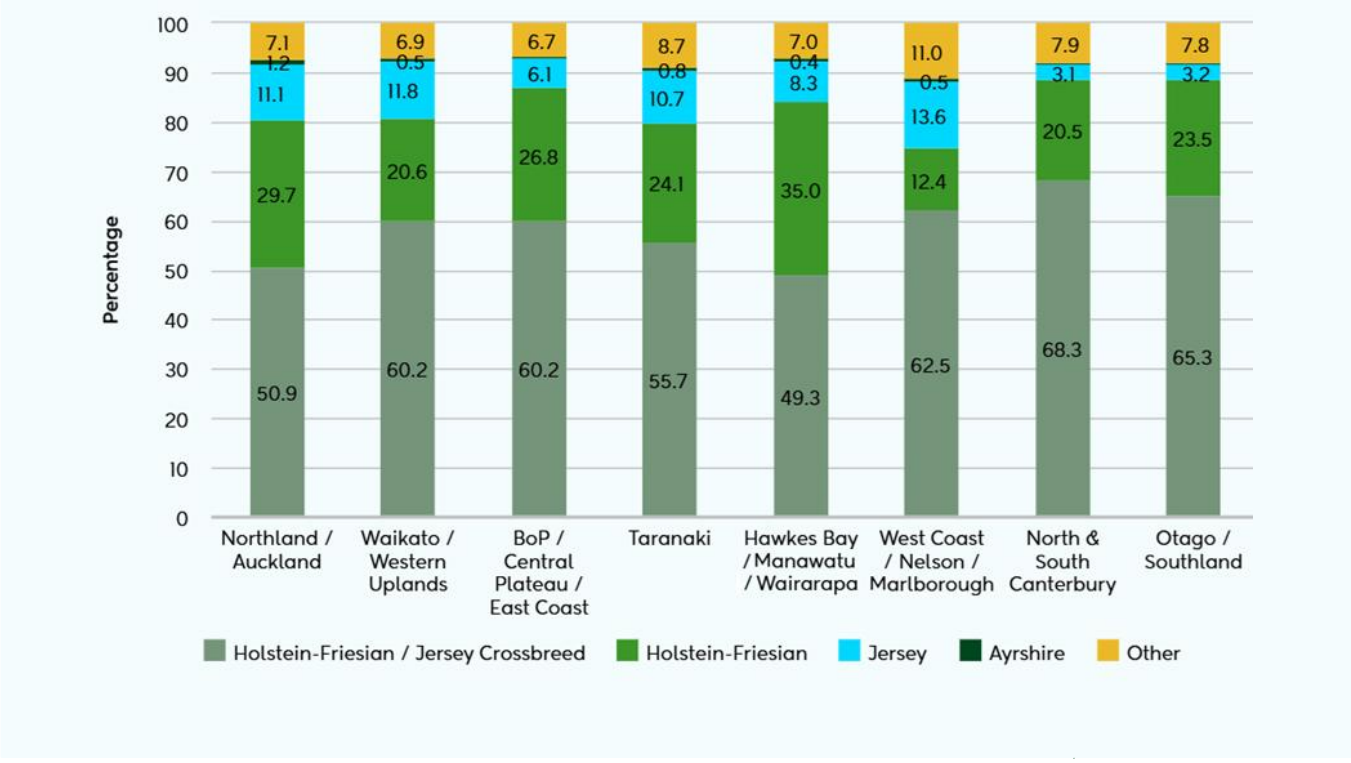
Graphs 3.2 and 3.3 display the percentages of the main dairy breed categories for New Zealand and each region. Percentages are given for Holstein-Friesian, Jersey, Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed and Ayrshire cows, with the remaining breeds and crossbreeds grouped into the "Other" category. Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed is the most common breed category in New Zealand, accounting for 61.1% of the national herd and ranging between 49.3% and 68.3% across all regions.

Graph 3.2: Breed category percentages of cows for New Zealand in 2024/25



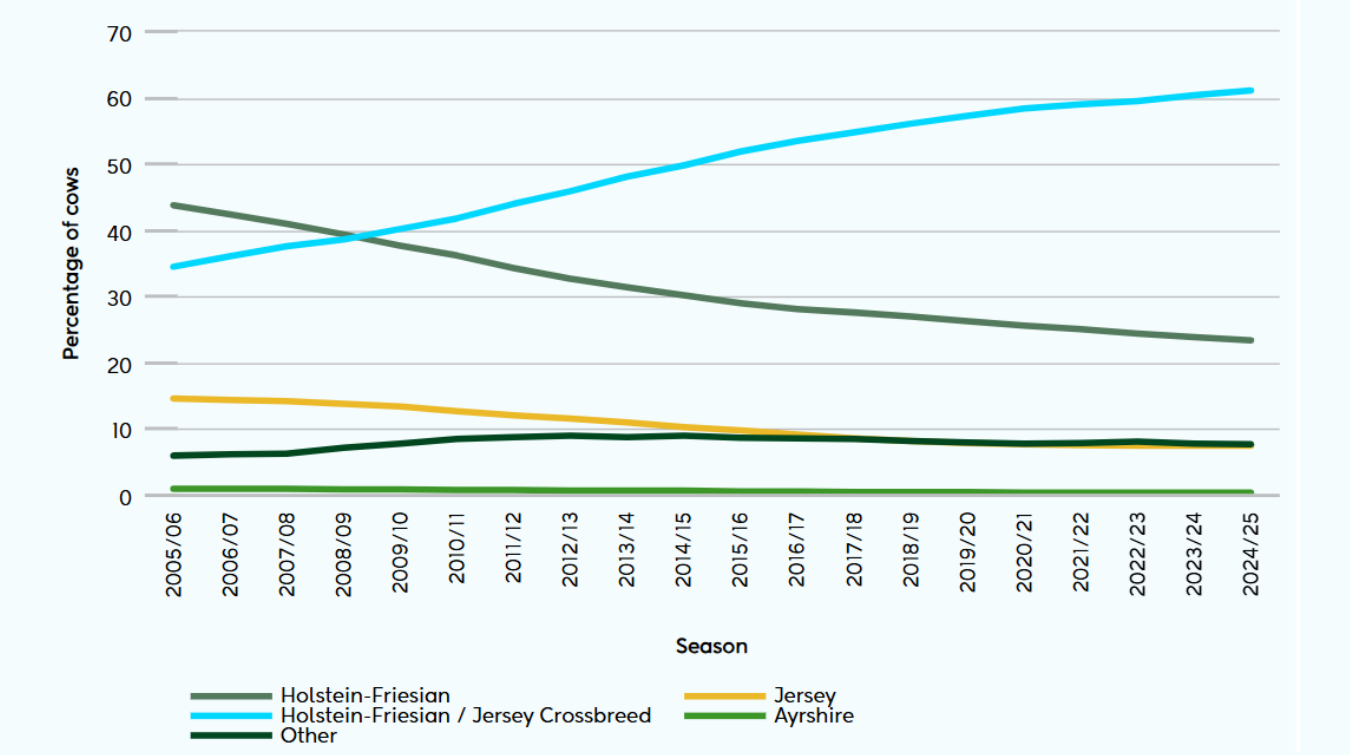
Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed cows make up more than 60% of the herd in the South Island, reaching their highest concentration in North & South Canterbury (68.3%). Holstein-Friesians are more prevalent in northern regions, such as Hawke's Bay/Manawatu/Wairarapa (35.0%) and Northland/Auckland (29.7%). Although Jerseys are less common overall, they have a stronger presence in West Coast/Nelson/Marlborough (13.6%), Waikato/Western Uplands (11.8%), and Northland/Auckland (11.1%).

Graph 3.3: Breed category percentages of cows by region in 2024/25



Over the years, the percentage of Holstein-Friesian and Jersey cows has consistently decreased (Graph 3.4). In contrast, the proportion of Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed cows has steadily increased, rising from 34.5% in 2005/06 to 61.1% in 2024/25, indicating a growing preference for crossbreeding over purebred Holstein-Friesian or Jersey cows.

Graph 3.4: Change in breed category percentages across time



4. Herd improvement

4.1. Use of herd testing

Herd testing involves the collection of individual milk samples from animals in the herd. A full herd test provides information on milk volume, milkfat and protein yields, and somatic cell counts (SCC).

Herd testing provides an overall picture of the production of each cow in a herd and enables the monitoring of SCC which gives an indication of udder health. More specifically, herd test information can help identify low-producing cows (for removal from the herd or drying off), high-producing cows (for breeding), and cows with high SCC (for treatment or removal from the herd).

There are two main herd testing service providers LIC and CRV. Farmers choose the frequency of herd testing depending on their objectives related to selective breeding, animal health and so on. Data used in the following analysis includes figures from both herd test providers.

- 82% of all cows in New Zealand were herd-tested in 2024/25.

In the 2024/25 season, the percentage of herds herd-tested increased to 77.2%, the highest level in over two decades and comparable to rates seen in the early 2000s (Table 4.1).

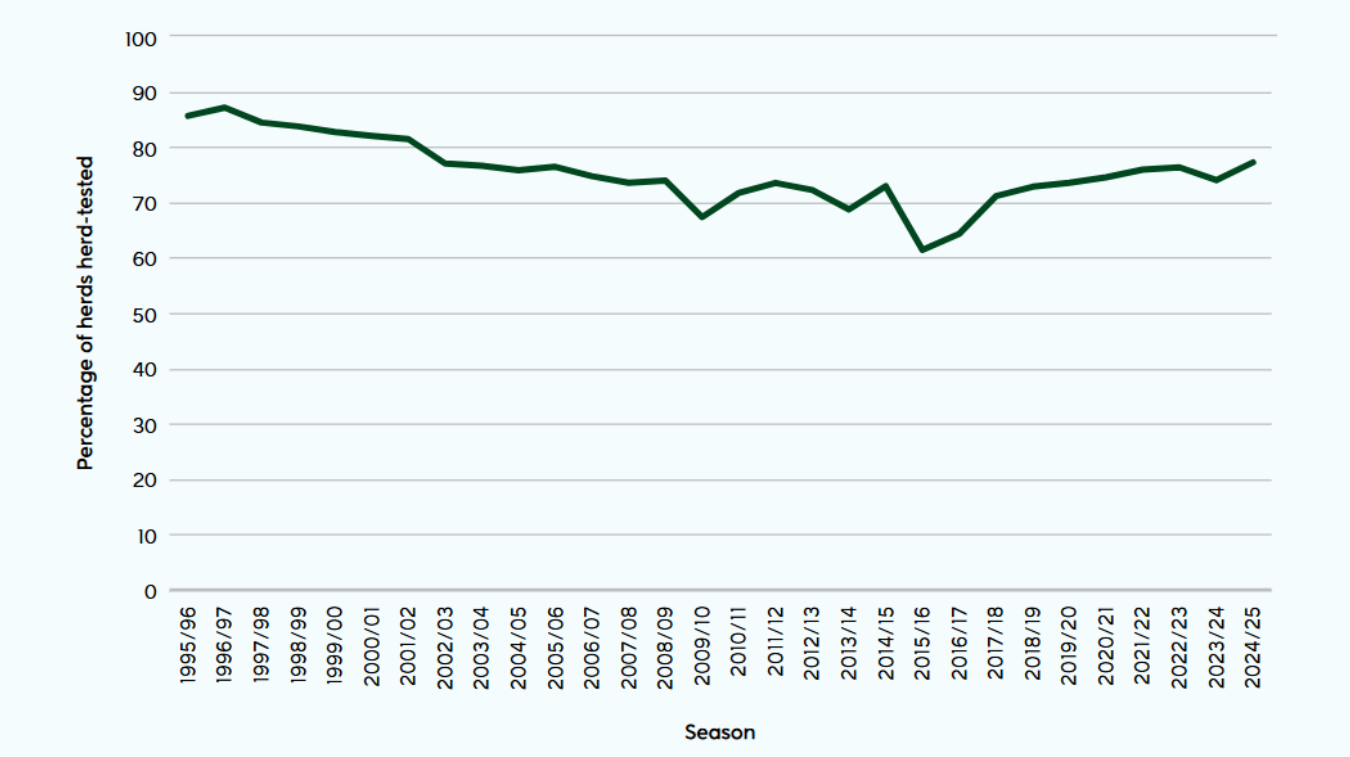
Table 4.1: Trend in the use of herd testing services

Season	Number of herds herd-tested	Total herds	% of total herds herd-tested	Number of cows herd-tested (000)	Total cows (000)	% of total cows herd-tested
2004/05	9,306	12,271	75.8	2,811	3,868	72.7
2005/06	9,082	11,883	76.4	2,846	3,832	74.3
2006/07	8,692	11,630	74.7	2,791	3,917	71.2
2007/08	8,405	11,436	73.5	2,871	4,013	71.5
2008/09	8,589	11,618	73.9	3,040	4,253	71.5
2009/10	7,870	11,691	67.3	2,812	4,397	64.0
2010/11	8,409	11,735	71.7	3,186	4,529	70.4
2011/12	8,673	11,798	73.5	3,362	4,634	72.6
2012/13	8,585	11,891	72.2	3,426	4,784	71.6
2013/14	8,188	11,927	68.7	3,294	4,923	66.9
2014/15	8,724	11,970	72.9	3,654	5,018	72.8
2015/16	7,316	11,908	61.4	3,030	4,998	60.6
2016/17	7,557	11,748	64.3	3,206	4,861	65.9
2017/18	8,242	11,590	71.1	3,615	4,993	72.4
2018/19	8,280	11,372	72.8	3,672	4,946	74.2
2019/20	8,212	11,179	73.5	3,689	4,922	75.0
2020/21	8,218	11,034	74.5	3,735	4,904	76.2
2021/22	8,191	10,796	75.9	3,790	4,842	78.3
2022/23	8,085	10,601	76.3	3,791	4,675	81.1
2023/24	7,761	10,485	74.0	3,623	4,702	77.1
2024/25	8,006	10,370	77.2	3,842	4,678	82.1

Note: From 2021/22 onwards, herds with less than 50 herd tested animals are no longer counted.

Apart from the 2023/24 season, herd testing rates have steadily increased from 61% in 2015/16 and have remained above 70% since the 2017/18 season (Graph 4.1).

Graph 4.1: Trend in the percentage of herds testing



The regional uptake of herd testing services in 2024/25 is summarized in Table 4.2. The number of cows tested represents all cows that were tested at least once during the season. Herd testing rates varied across regions, the East Coast and Auckland regions had the lowest percentages of herds tested (50% and 66%, respectively). The highest proportions of herds tested were in the Taranaki, North Canterbury, South Canterbury, and Otago regions, each at approximately 83%. These regions also recorded the highest proportions of cows tested, ranging from 85% to 90%.

Table 4.2: Use of herd testing by region in 2024/25

Region	Herds tested	Total herds	Percentage of total herds	Cows tested	Total cows	Percentage of total cows	Average herd size tested	Average herd size
Northland	469	667	70.3	174704	225881	77.3	373	339
Auckland	187	283	66.1	63424	83147	76.3	339	294
Waikato	2256	3029	74.5	855092	1084686	78.8	379	358
Bay of Plenty	320	447	71.6	121687	164528	74.0	380	368
Central Plateau	332	422	78.7	195367	237088	82.4	588	562
Western Uplands	62	79	78.5	32538	42145	77.2	525	533
East Coast	3	6	50.0	1689	3848	43.9	563	641
Hawkes Bay	48	65	73.8	35223	42870	82.2	734	660
Taranaki	1193	1424	83.8	380630	442931	85.9	319	311
Manawatu	329	467	70.4	156113	198010	78.8	475	424
Wairarapa	291	356	81.7	117168	140683	83.3	403	395
Nelson / Marlborough	144	180	80.0	55976	68796	81.4	389	382
West Coast	250	345	72.5	101334	135303	74.9	405	392
North Canterbury	733	877	83.6	625948	698455	89.6	854	796
South Canterbury	257	307	83.7	211146	242128	87.2	822	789
Otago	361	433	83.4	226461	265647	85.2	627	614
Southland	771	983	78.4	487597	601434	81.1	632	612
New Zealand	8006	10370	77.2	3842097	4677580	82.1	480	451

4.2. Herd test averages

This data was sourced from the Dairy Industry Good Animal Database (DIGAD).

The lactation yield figures in this section are for herd-tested cows. Seasonal and breed averages (sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.3) are calculated on lactation yields for herds tested four or more times during the season, and only cows that lactated for 100 days or more were included in the herd test averages. Monthly averages (section 4.2.2) are calculated on lactation yields for herds tested at least once during the season.

These figures are different from the average milksolids figures given in Chapters 2 and 3 (national and regional dairy statistics, respectively), which were based on all herds supplying a dairy company (regardless of whether herd testing was used) and represented the average production per cow as supplied to the dairy company. The amount of milk production captured by herd testing also depends on the timing of the herd tests relative to the calving date and dry off date (i.e. production days in milk is greater than herd testing days in milk).

The "Days-in-milk (herd testing)" data is the number of days from the start of lactation to the calculated end of lactation. The start of lactation is four days from calving (with a maximum of 60 days between the estimated start of lactation and the first herd test). The end of lactation is the last herd test date plus 15 days. Therefore, the number of days-in-milk, calculated using this method, is influenced by the timing of the herd test and does not necessarily reflect the average lactation length of dairy cows.

The "Days-in-milk (production)" data is the number of days from the estimated start of lactation to the estimated end of lactation minus 16 days (reported since 1997/98). The results are derived from seasonal supplier tanker pick-up information (spring-calving herds). The "Days-in-milk (production)" methodology provides a more accurate measure of the average lactation length of dairy cows than the herd testing methodology.

4.2.1. Seasonal averages

- Southland had the highest milkfat and milksolids production per cow (kg/cow).
- North Canterbury had the highest days in milk (production) and protein production per cow (kg/cow).
- West Coast had the highest milkfat, protein and milksolids percentages.

The average per-cow statistics for each region are summarised in Table 4.3. Based on herds tested, Southland recorded the highest values per cow for milkfat (265 kg) and milksolids (478 kg) production. North Canterbury recorded the highest values for milk volume (5,357 litres), and protein production per cow (215 kg). West Coast recorded the highest percentages of milkfat (5.30%), protein (4.12%) and milksolids (9.42%). Herds in North Canterbury recorded the lowest average somatic cells (135,000 cells/ml), followed by herds in Western Uplands and Otago (142,000 and 148,000 cells/ml, respectively).

Table 4.3: Season herd test averages per cow by region in 2024/25

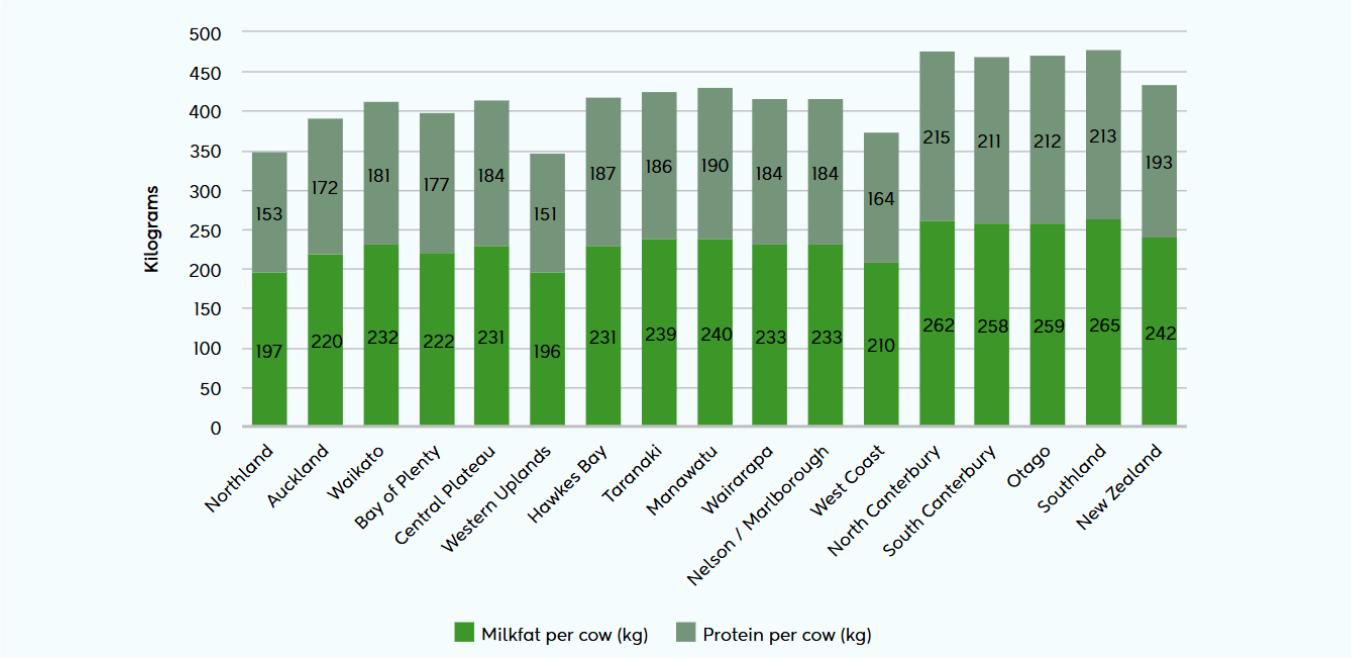
Region	Milk (litres)	Milkfat (kg)	Milkfat (%)	Protein (kg)	Protein (%)	Milksolids (kg)	Milksolids (%)	Days in milk (herd testing)	Days in milk (production)	Somatic cell count (000 cells/ millilitre)
Northland	3,887	197	5.16	153	3.98	350	9.14	236	270	170
Auckland	4,440	220	5.05	172	3.91	392	8.96	237	272	156
Waikato	4,636	232	5.08	181	3.95	413	9.03	242	274	153
Bay of Plenty	4,495	222	5.00	177	3.95	399	8.95	239	274	165
Central Plateau	4,701	231	4.98	184	3.94	415	8.92	232	274	165
Western Uplands	3,780	196	5.27	151	4.04	347	9.31	235	269	142
East Coast	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hawkes Bay	4,775	231	4.90	187	3.94	418	8.84	242	268	204
Taranaki	4,684	239	5.17	186	4.00	425	9.17	239	271	156
Manawatu	4,893	240	4.98	190	3.91	430	8.89	241	284	182
Wairarapa	4,643	233	5.11	184	4.00	417	9.11	244	276	174
Nelson / Marlborough	4,616	233	5.10	184	4.02	417	9.12	243	272	157
West Coast	4,025	210	5.30	164	4.12	374	9.42	235	274	191
North Canterbury	5,357	262	4.95	215	4.03	477	8.98	240	285	135
South Canterbury	5,204	258	5.02	211	4.08	469	9.10	244	279	153
Otago	5,210	259	5.03	212	4.09	471	9.13	248	274	148
Southland	5,331	265	5.04	213	4.03	478	9.06	244	281	165
New Zealand	4,854	242	5.06	193	4.00	435	9.06	241	275	157

Note:

- No data for the East Coast region was reported as this region had fewer than five herds contributing data.

The 2024/25 lactation regional averages for milkfat and protein in herd-tested cows show variability across regions (Graph 4.2). Milkfat production across regions varied between 196 and 265 kg/cow, while protein production varied between 151 and 215 kg/cow. Southland, North Canterbury and Otago recorded the highest milkfat production per cow (265, 262 and 259 kg, respectively) and the highest protein production per cow (215, 213, 212 kg, respectively). Western Uplands recorded the lowest milkfat and protein per cow (196 and 151 kg, respectively), followed by Northland (197 and 153 kg respectively). No data for the East Coast region was reported as this region had fewer than five herds contributing data.

Graph 4.2: Average milkfat and protein production per cow by region in 2024/25



- National herd test averages for milkfat, protein, and milksolids yields and percentages reached their highest levels on record.
- National somatic cell count average is the lowest recorded.

Overall, milk production (litres) per cow increased from 4,761 in 2023/24 to 4,854 litres in 2024/25, the second highest of the last 10 years (Table 4.4). In 2024/25, the percentages of milkfat, protein and milksolids in herd-tested cows were the highest on record.

The average herd somatic cell count decreased from 161,000 in 2023/24 to 157,000 cells/millilitre in 2024/25. This is 5% lower than the 5-year average and the lowest on record. The average days in milk (production) was 275 in 2024/25, one day lower than the 5-year average (276).

Table 4.4: Trend in the national herd test averages

Season	Milk (litres)	Milkfat (kg)	Milkfat (%)	Protein (kg)	Protein (%)	Milksolids (kg)	Milksolids (%)	Days in milk (herd testing)	Days in milk (production)	Somatic cell count (000 cells/millilitre)
2004/05	4,033	190	4.82	148	3.70	338	8.52	235	265	224
2005/06	4,143	195	4.79	152	3.71	347	8.51	236	266	202
2006/07	4,167	198	4.85	155	3.76	353	8.61	237	267	221
2007/08	4,081	191	4.77	151	3.73	342	8.51	231	252	236
2008/09	4,136	194	4.80	154	3.75	348	8.55	232	266	237
2009/10	4,187	198	4.82	157	3.79	355	8.61	232	260	223
2010/11	4,221	200	4.83	158	3.78	358	8.62	235	274	224
2011/12	4,513	215	4.87	171	3.83	387	8.70	240	275	199
2012/13	4,501	213	4.82	171	3.82	383	8.64	232	258	198
2013/14	4,662	221	4.83	177	3.83	398	8.66	237	266	179
2014/15	4,581	219	4.87	176	3.88	396	8.75	235	273	174
2015/16	4,587	217	4.82	176	3.87	393	8.69	237	276	180
2016/17	4,608	220	4.87	178	3.90	399	8.77	241	276	176
2017/18	4,595	219	4.86	177	3.87	396	8.72	240	274	179
2018/19	4,754	226	4.82	184	3.89	409	8.71	239	271	167
2019/20	4,784	228	4.84	186	3.92	414	8.76	238	268	168
2020/21	4,871	232	4.84	190	3.92	422	8.76	243	276	167
2021/22	4,751	228	4.86	185	3.91	412	8.77	243	274	172
2022/23	4,703	227	4.90	184	3.94	411	8.84	240	276	169
2023/24	4,761	234	4.99	189	3.99	423	8.99	241	277	161
2024/25	4,854	242	5.06	193	4.00	435	9.06	241	275	157

4.2.2. Monthly averages

- Daily milk, milkfat and protein production per cow were highest in September and October.
- Somatic cell count was lowest in October and November.

The seasonal average figures presented in Table 4.5 are calculated by averaging monthly herd test data at the national level. The number of samples processed for herd testing influences these results. For example, the statistics during the winter months of May, June, and July are based on far fewer cows than those for other months, as only a small number of herds (generally winter milk herds) are tested during this period. Differences in climate between regions (which can, in turn, affect the mating period), available feed, and cow condition are reflected in differing months of peak production. All cows that were herd tested in each month were included, provided they were tested at least once during the season.

Average production per cow peaked between September and October, with most regions in the North Island peaking in September and in the South Island peaking in October.

Table 4.5: Monthly herd test averages by region in 2024/25

Average litres of milk per cow per day

Region	2024 Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	2025 Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Season average
Northland	17.11	17.17	19.08	19.43	18.77	17.08	15.37	13.34	11.68	10.37	10.21	15.21	15.40
Auckland	18.18	18.53	19.31	20.86	20.38	18.82	16.78	14.59	12.65	11.29	11.32	16.36	16.59
Waikato	19.13	19.45	21.52	22.52	21.78	19.64	17.87	15.53	13.44	11.57	11.26	15.04	17.40
Bay of Plenty	17.11	17.28	21.98	22.39	21.76	19.90	18.12	15.37	13.96	11.29	10.65	12.55	16.86
Central Plateau	17.67	19.33	21.49	23.56	24.10	21.50	20.11	17.28	15.18	13.25	12.17	13.72	18.28
Western Uplands	10.21	10.28	21.62	20.46	20.52	18.55	16.88	14.36	12.74	10.66	9.52	9.19	14.58
East Coast	15.94	14.08	15.78	18.61	21.05	17.83	17.40	13.20	14.17	10.27	10.09	20.38	15.73
Hawkes Bay	18.25	18.26	21.29	22.10	23.17	19.99	18.97	15.88	14.81	12.39	12.29	13.98	17.62
Taranaki	18.93	19.83	21.39	22.71	22.28	20.11	18.31	16.46	14.75	12.56	11.53	14.29	17.76
Manawatu	17.81	18.43	21.19	23.66	23.60	21.73	20.31	17.43	16.00	14.01	12.72	14.64	18.46
Wairarapa	15.59	16.99	19.65	22.08	22.11	20.52	18.57	16.33	14.82	12.74	11.38	12.17	16.91
Nelson / Marlborough	16.88	15.24	18.54	22.58	22.58	20.87	18.47	16.99	14.87	12.89	11.27	10.83	16.83
West Coast	18.17	13.05	18.75	21.78	21.90	19.99	18.09	15.63	14.54	12.53	10.93	9.81	16.27
North Canterbury	18.79	19.95	20.46	25.05	25.74	23.90	22.50	20.28	18.79	16.52	14.56	13.48	20.00
South Canterbury	19.56	21.16	22.35	24.68	25.68	23.60	21.86	19.91	18.18	15.98	14.05	12.95	20.00
Otago	16.40	18.03	20.90	24.78	24.74	23.31	20.99	18.95	17.44	15.39	12.92	12.45	18.86
Southland	15.20	17.65	20.48	25.06	25.40	23.69	21.85	19.60	18.29	16.15	14.01	13.13	19.21
New Zealand	17.99	18.68	20.90	22.89	23.37	20.94	19.53	17.06	15.56	13.47	12.50	13.60	18.04

Average kg of milkfat per cow per day

Region	2024 Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	2025 Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Season average
Northland	0.78	0.80	0.88	0.89	0.86	0.81	0.72	0.66	0.60	0.57	0.56	0.74	0.74
Auckland	0.81	0.83	0.86	0.94	0.91	0.86	0.78	0.70	0.64	0.61	0.62	0.81	0.78
Waikato	0.89	0.90	1.00	1.04	1.00	0.92	0.84	0.77	0.70	0.65	0.65	0.79	0.85
Bay of Plenty	0.80	0.82	1.01	1.01	0.98	0.91	0.83	0.74	0.70	0.62	0.60	0.68	0.81
Central Plateau	0.85	0.88	0.99	1.07	1.08	0.98	0.92	0.83	0.77	0.72	0.68	0.74	0.87
Western Uplands	0.61	0.65	1.04	0.96	0.95	0.87	0.80	0.72	0.66	0.60	0.57	0.55	0.75
East Coast	0.75	0.63	0.68	0.81	0.90	0.80	0.75	0.64	0.66	0.55	0.55	0.92	0.72
Hawkes Bay	0.88	0.86	0.95	0.99	1.02	0.91	0.87	0.75	0.73	0.65	0.66	0.71	0.83
Taranaki	0.93	0.95	1.01	1.07	1.05	0.98	0.91	0.85	0.79	0.72	0.69	0.79	0.89
Manawatu	0.84	0.86	0.96	1.05	1.04	0.97	0.92	0.82	0.79	0.73	0.69	0.77	0.87
Wairarapa	0.76	0.81	0.93	1.01	1.02	0.96	0.89	0.81	0.76	0.70	0.65	0.67	0.83
Nelson / Marlborough	0.80	0.73	0.90	1.04	1.04	0.97	0.88	0.83	0.77	0.71	0.66	0.63	0.83
West Coast	1.03	0.78	0.89	1.02	1.01	0.96	0.88	0.79	0.77	0.71	0.66	0.62	0.84
North Canterbury	0.89	0.93	0.94	1.11	1.13	1.06	1.02	0.95	0.92	0.86	0.80	0.75	0.95
South Canterbury	0.91	0.91	1.02	1.10	1.12	1.06	0.99	0.93	0.90	0.83	0.78	0.73	0.94
Otago	0.84	0.90	0.98	1.11	1.09	1.04	0.96	0.90	0.86	0.80	0.73	0.72	0.91
Southland	0.81	0.91	0.99	1.13	1.13	1.06	1.00	0.93	0.91	0.85	0.79	0.75	0.94
New Zealand	0.84	0.87	0.97	1.04	1.05	0.97	0.91	0.83	0.79	0.73	0.71	0.75	0.87

Average kg of protein per cow per day

Region	2024 Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	2025 Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Season average
Northland	0.63	0.65	0.71	0.72	0.70	0.64	0.57	0.51	0.45	0.43	0.44	0.59	0.59
Auckland	0.66	0.67	0.70	0.77	0.75	0.70	0.63	0.54	0.48	0.46	0.48	0.64	0.62
Waikato	0.73	0.75	0.81	0.84	0.81	0.74	0.67	0.59	0.52	0.48	0.49	0.62	0.67
Bay of Plenty	0.68	0.67	0.81	0.83	0.80	0.74	0.67	0.57	0.53	0.47	0.46	0.54	0.65
Central Plateau	0.69	0.74	0.81	0.88	0.89	0.80	0.74	0.65	0.58	0.55	0.53	0.59	0.71
Western Uplands	0.47	0.50	0.84	0.77	0.77	0.70	0.63	0.55	0.50	0.45	0.43	0.43	0.59
East Coast	0.57	0.52	0.56	0.68	0.77	0.66	0.62	0.49	0.51	0.42	0.43	0.73	0.58
Hawkes Bay	0.71	0.71	0.82	0.84	0.86	0.75	0.71	0.60	0.57	0.51	0.53	0.57	0.68
Taranaki	0.73	0.77	0.81	0.86	0.85	0.78	0.71	0.65	0.59	0.54	0.52	0.62	0.70
Manawatu	0.67	0.70	0.78	0.87	0.87	0.80	0.75	0.65	0.61	0.57	0.54	0.61	0.70
Wairarapa	0.6	0.65	0.75	0.83	0.83	0.77	0.70	0.63	0.58	0.53	0.50	0.53	0.66
Nelson / Marlborough	0.61	0.57	0.70	0.85	0.85	0.78	0.69	0.65	0.59	0.54	0.51	0.49	0.65
West Coast	0.81	0.62	0.78	0.84	0.83	0.77	0.69	0.61	0.59	0.54	0.51	0.48	0.67
North Canterbury	0.72	0.74	0.75	0.93	0.97	0.90	0.86	0.79	0.75	0.70	0.65	0.61	0.78
South Canterbury	0.74	0.79	0.83	0.92	0.97	0.89	0.84	0.78	0.73	0.68	0.63	0.59	0.78
Otago	0.65	0.70	0.79	0.93	0.93	0.88	0.80	0.73	0.70	0.65	0.59	0.58	0.75
Southland	0.64	0.70	0.79	0.94	0.96	0.90	0.84	0.77	0.74	0.69	0.64	0.61	0.77
New Zealand	0.68	0.71	0.78	0.86	0.88	0.79	0.74	0.66	0.62	0.57	0.56	0.60	0.70

Average somatic cell count (000 cells per millilitre)

Region	2024 Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	2025 Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Season average
Northland	221	240	207	185	195	188	217	245	273	288	312	267	236
Auckland	226	205	192	188	186	178	200	222	257	267	284	227	219
Waikato	219	220	186	159	158	146	163	183	210	228	240	236	196
Bay of Plenty	283	252	216	186	180	170	185	210	229	249	268	281	226
Central Plateau	285	217	200	164	166	165	175	193	210	227	235	252	207
Western Uplands	336	145	191	164	170	161	176	191	216	243	256	261	209
East Coast	313	312	329	244	222	212	231	271	278	314	336	341	284
Hawkes Bay	280	278	227	231	204	210	214	243	248	281	279	300	250
Taranaki	282	235	215	167	165	161	167	182	204	222	240	238	206
Manawatu	279	254	246	203	205	198	206	232	243	254	270	264	238
Wairarapa	274	271	274	208	200	192	200	218	237	253	269	267	239
Nelson / Marlborough	260	245	282	165	162	161	165	187	202	220	234	267	212
West Coast	281	363	286	161	152	163	160	195	191	215	235	267	223
North Canterbury	245	235	248	172	162	163	155	168	164	169	184	210	189
South Canterbury	250	258	309	180	168	167	158	176	170	177	186	209	201
Otago	274	286	273	181	163	164	161	172	174	179	196	213	203
Southland	313	269	328	182	169	171	161	179	173	185	188	198	210
New Zealand	239	238	203	173	169	164	170	190	201	216	224	229	201

Note: "New Zealand" values are volume-weighted national averages.

4.2.3. Breed category averages

- Holstein-Friesian cows had the highest production values for litres, protein, and milksolids (kg).
- Jersey cows achieved the highest percentages for milkfat, protein, and milksolids.
- Holstein-Friesian and Holstein-Friesian/Jersey crossbred cows produced the highest milkfat (kg).

Herd test statistics by breed category (Table 4.6) include herds that did four or more herd tests during the season. This data was extracted from DIGAD.

On average, milk production litres (5,374), protein (203 kg) and milksolids (449 kg) were higher in Holstein-Friesian cows compared to other breeds. Holstein-Friesian and Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed cows had the highest milkfat production, both at 246 kg/cow, while Jerseys cows had the highest percentages of milkfat (5.74%), protein (4.26%) and milksolids (10.00%).

In 2024/25, the age group that produced the highest milksolids (kg) across all breeds were the five-year-olds.

Table 4.6: Herd test averages by breed category and cow age in 2024/25

Holstein-Friesian

Age	Cows tested	Days in milk	Milk (litres)	Milkfat (kg)	Protein (kg)	Milksolids (kg)	Milkfat (%)	Protein (%)	Milksolids (%)
2	52,703	251	4,246	202.1	163.1	365.2	4.81	3.86	8.67
3	49,354	246	5,199	241.2	199.2	440.4	4.69	3.85	8.54
4	41,644	243	5,722	262.1	217.8	479.9	4.63	3.82	8.45
5	35,793	242	5,954	271.9	224.9	496.9	4.61	3.79	8.40
6	30,895	240	5,977	267.1	224.4	491.5	4.51	3.77	8.28
7	24,267	237	5,923	263.4	221.1	484.4	4.48	3.74	8.23
8	16,353	232	5,664	251.0	210.8	461.8	4.46	3.73	8.20
9	11,016	228	5,457	242.6	202.1	444.8	4.47	3.72	8.19
10+	11,515	221	4,951	220.6	181.4	402.0	4.49	3.67	8.16
Total	273,540	242	5,374	245.5	203.3	448.8	4.62	3.80	8.43

Jersey

Age	Cows tested	Days in milk	Milk (litres)	Milkfat (kg)	Protein (kg)	Milksolids (kg)	Milkfat (%)	Protein (%)	Milksolids (%)
2	23,074	247	3,010	173.9	127.3	301.2	5.80	4.24	10.05
3	22,478	243	3,578	207.6	154.0	361.6	5.83	4.31	10.14
4	19,589	242	3,932	227.9	169.4	397.3	5.82	4.32	10.14
5	15,818	240	4,077	234.2	174.0	408.1	5.77	4.28	10.05
6	12,643	239	4,129	231.8	174.3	406.2	5.63	4.23	9.86
7	9,850	237	4,084	229.6	172.5	402.1	5.65	4.23	9.88
8	6,946	234	3,967	221.4	166.4	387.8	5.60	4.20	9.80
9	4,709	230	3,837	213.5	160.2	373.7	5.58	4.18	9.77
10+	5,337	223	3,550	195.6	146.4	342.0	5.53	4.13	9.66
Total	120,444	240	3,723	212.8	158.3	371.1	5.74	4.26	10.00

Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed

Age	Cows tested	Days in milk	Milk (litres)	Milkfat (kg)	Protein (kg)	Milksolids (kg)	Milkfat (%)	Protein (%)	Milksolids (%)
2	138,328	248	3,798	199.4	154.2	353.6	5.29	4.07	9.36
3	143,504	244	4,636	238.6	189.1	427.8	5.19	4.09	9.28
4	122,760	243	5,112	261.8	207.9	469.8	5.16	4.08	9.25
5	103,300	241	5,337	269.9	214.2	484.0	5.09	4.03	9.12
6	87,004	240	5,418	266.9	215.1	482.0	4.96	3.98	8.94
7	65,783	237	5,365	264.7	212.1	476.9	4.97	3.97	8.94
8	44,378	233	5,193	255.4	204.8	460.2	4.95	3.95	8.91
9	28,278	230	5,013	247.4	196.7	444.1	4.97	3.93	8.91
10+	32,168	224	4,609	229.0	179.6	408.6	4.99	3.90	8.90
Total	765,503	241	4,852	245.8	194.9	440.8	5.12	4.03	9.15

Ayrshire

Age	Cows tested	Days in milk	Milk (litres)	Milkfat (kg)	Protein (kg)	Milksolids (kg)	Milkfat (%)	Protein (%)	Milksolids (%)
2	1,818	255	3,906	176.3	141.2	317.4	4.53	3.62	8.14
3	1,381	247	4,701	207.6	169.1	376.7	4.43	3.60	8.03
4	1,259	252	5,199	229.5	189.2	418.7	4.44	3.64	8.08
5	1,112	253	5,479	241.0	198.3	439.4	4.42	3.62	8.04
6	870	250	5,441	236.1	195.2	431.3	4.35	3.59	7.94
7	694	249	5,334	233.0	190.8	423.8	4.39	3.58	7.98
8	504	241	5,210	226.7	187.3	414.0	4.36	3.59	7.95
9	377	245	5,227	225.9	186.2	412.1	4.33	3.56	7.90
10+	548	236	4,767	207.4	168.9	376.2	4.36	3.54	7.91
Total	8,563	250	4,890	215.4	176.2	391.5	4.43	3.60	8.03

In the past, liveweight averages for the three main breeds have been calculated from records in the LIC Herd Improvement Database. From the 2021/22 season, these calculations are now based on DIGAD records.

Liveweight by age and breed is presented in Table 4.7, which is also illustrated in Graph 4.3. Across all the age groups, Holstein-Friesian cows recorded the highest average liveweight, whereas Jersey cows had the lowest.

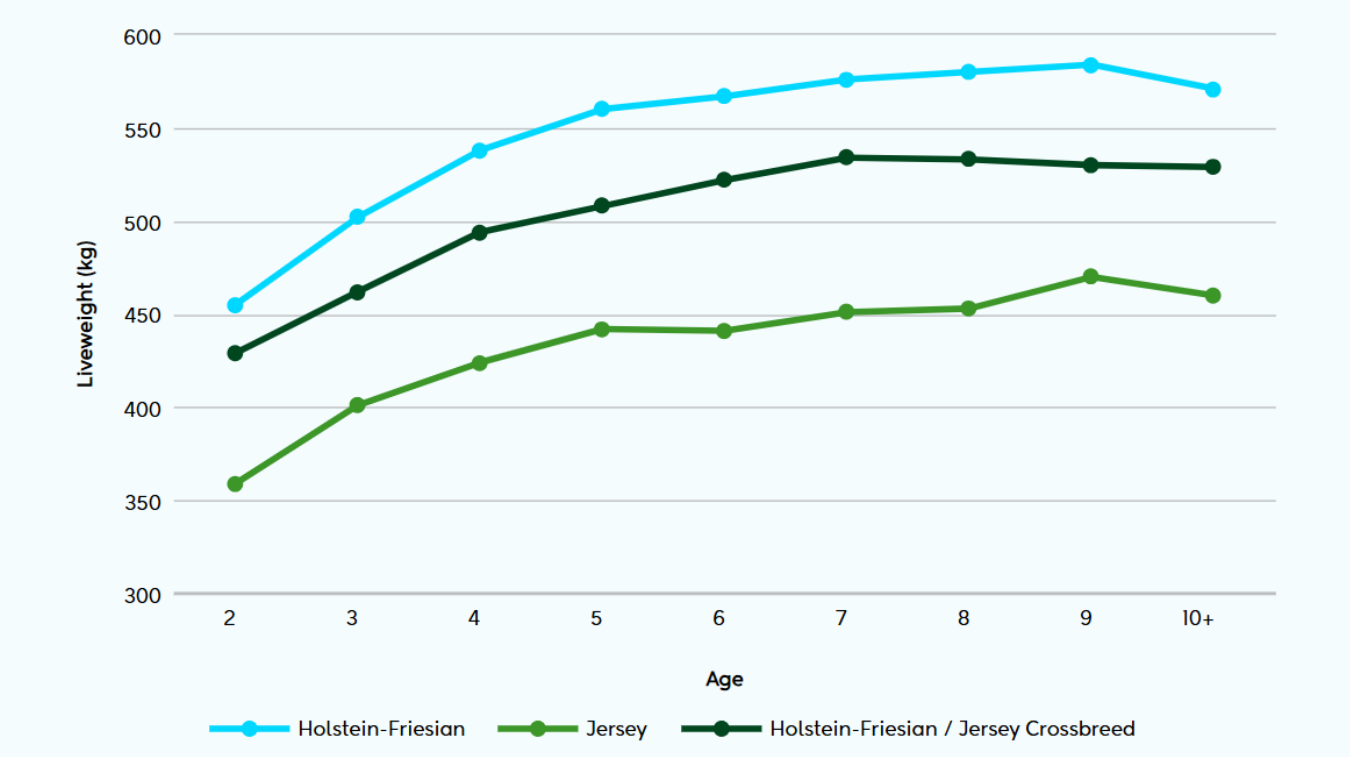
Table 4.7: Liveweight by age and by breed category of cow in 2024/25

	Holstein-Friesian		Jersey		Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed	
Age	Average liveweight (kg)	Number of cows	Average liveweight (kg)	Number of cows	Average liveweight (kg)	Number of cows
2	455	12,456	359	5,546	429	40,513
3	502	1,764	401	905	462	5,691
4	538	1,263	424	594	494	4,309
5	560	1,035	442	441	508	3,625
6	567	895	441	303	522	2,807
7	576	621	451	235	534	1,989
8	580	431	453	179	533	1,355
9	584	312	470	110	530	743
10+	571	309	460	106	529	824
Weighted Average	531		419		490	

Note:

- From 2021/22, liveweight calculations are based on records in the Dairy Industry Good Animal Database (DIGAD).
- Breed categorisation was updated in 2021/22 to match the NZ Animal Evaluation breed classification.

Graph 4.3: Liveweight by age and by breed category of cow in 2024/25



4.3. Artificial Breeding (AB) statistics

- 3.8 million cows were mated through AB.
- The proportion of cows mated to AB increased, returning to levels consistent with the five-year average.

Historically, all artificial inseminations (AI) were recorded in the LIC Herd Improvement Database which served as the main source of insemination data for many years. For the 1997/98 season and onwards, insemination data now comes from the DIGAD dataset, which has a complete set of records from all AB service providers. For more information about the DIGAD database visit https://www.dairynz.co.nz/animal-database/.

Table 4.8 provides a summary of cows mated through AB for the last nine seasons. North Canterbury and Otago had the highest percentage of cows mated through AB (92.0% and 87.2%, respectively). The number of yearlings mated through AB has been declining since 2018/19, when it reached 258,719. In 2024/25, however, this number rose from 203,275 to 218,572.

During the previous nine seasons, the percentage of cows mated through AB has been between 80.7% and 82.2%. The percentage of cows mated to AB rose slightly from 81.1% in 2023/24 to 81.5% in 2024/25 (Graph 4.4).

Table 4.8: Cows and yearlings to AB

Cows to AB

Region	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Northland	199,632	196,026	195,621	189,878	186,038	175,319	167,303	158,757	161,764
Auckland	74,420	70,380	69,861	71,851	70,120	65,816	63,909	60,863	61,669
Waikato	886,130	890,176	897,212	881,050	873,837	865,724	819,618	823,668	829,609
Bay of Plenty	146,688	145,504	146,087	142,938	139,795	133,432	125,843	120,890	123,584
Central Plateau	204,888	211,443	214,979	213,610	209,742	203,063	199,229	197,502	198,766
Western Uplands	30,772	31,396	33,127	32,906	31,736	30,690	29,532	30,786	29,133
East Coast	2,290	2,603	1,607	1,799	1,942	1,730	1,896	1,850	1,846
Hawkes Bay	36,904	41,707	41,646	39,906	37,593	36,851	36,020	31,160	34,939
Taranaki	396,796	398,339	400,927	397,993	392,771	391,354	374,485	376,223	368,741
Manawatu	166,311	166,464	168,730	164,735	164,549	162,565	154,356	155,621	156,710
Wairarapa	131,522	131,403	131,603	128,261	124,941	120,680	115,797	113,612	116,190
Nelson / Marlborough	68,652	67,212	66,560	63,194	61,325	56,842	57,050	57,467	54,112
West Coast	119,911	119,368	119,942	117,433	118,743	113,977	107,893	108,677	107,168
North Canterbury	605,246	624,347	641,371	640,339	645,071	642,531	629,175	641,540	642,348
South Canterbury	203,784	209,434	217,619	214,864	217,202	213,525	209,010	210,289	205,444
Otago	220,678	230,692	228,920	228,278	233,345	233,268	231,610	231,687	231,609
Southland	477,041	490,929	490,235	490,623	495,835	494,520	485,427	492,524	488,692
New Zealand	3,971,665	4,027,423	4,066,047	4,019,658	4,004,585	3,941,887	3,808,153	3,813,116	3,812,324

Percentage of Cows to AB

Region	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Northland	74.2	72.1	74.1	73.5	74.2	72.1	73.3	69.9	71.6
Auckland	71.3	66.7	70.3	75.0	74.0	70.3	75.1	69.0	74.2
Waikato	79.3	78.4	80.3	79.8	79.5	80.1	77.9	76.6	76.5
Bay of Plenty	76.6	74.3	76.9	77.1	76.2	74.7	74.0	72.1	75.1
Central Plateau	75.6	75.3	77.2	76.2	74.4	72.1	75.9	79.3	85.0
Western Uplands	69.7	65.2	68.8	70.1	65.3	64.6	65.3	70.7	70.4
East Coast	38.3	44.2	27.3	29.9	40.4	35.0	37.1	48.8	48.0
Hawkes Bay	80.8	86.1	87.2	87.7	85.1	83.5	85.3	72.1	81.5
Taranaki	83.9	83.5	85.9	85.1	84.3	85.0	84.1	83.9	83.3
Manawatu	78.1	75.5	78.0	76.9	76.3	77.3	77.2	78.9	79.7
Wairarapa	81.9	81.0	84.0	84.1	83.0	81.4	81.2	81.4	82.6
Nelson / Marlborough	80.6	80.8	80.9	79.0	82.3	77.2	80.5	83.3	78.7
West Coast	77.0	77.5	78.4	78.3	78.8	77.5	77.6	79.4	79.2
North Canterbury	90.0	89.0	90.6	89.0	89.2	89.2	89.5	91.6	92.0
South Canterbury	87.6	83.5	86.7	85.2	88.0	87.1	84.9	84.6	84.8
Otago	86.0	86.1	84.9	84.1	85.4	86.2	94.2	86.3	87.2
Southland	84.7	84.2	82.8	82.9	83.2	83.6	86.7	82.8	81.3
New Zealand	81.7	80.7	82.2	81.7	81.7	81.4	82.0	81.1	81.5

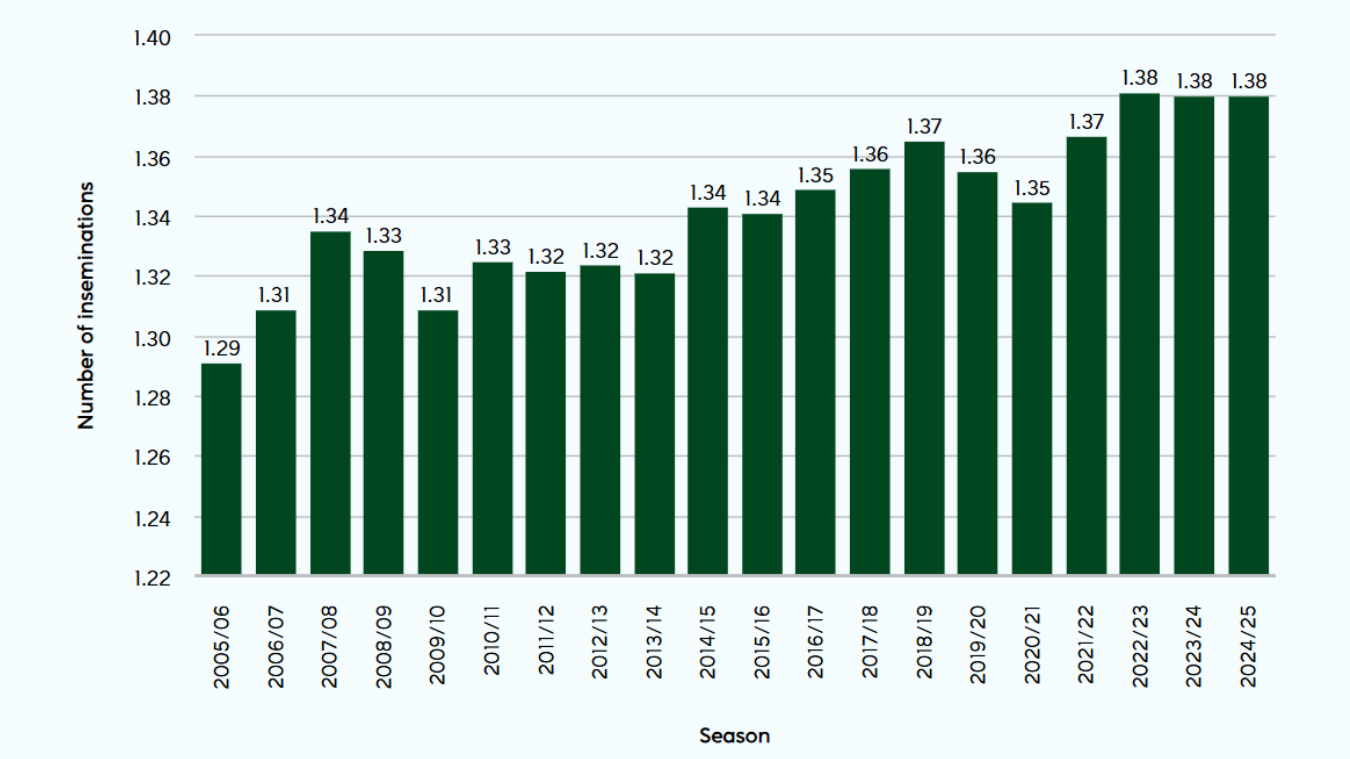
Yearlings to AB

Region	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Northland	10,484	11,258	12,070	10,708	9,648	9,722	10,373	9,153	9,801
Auckland	3,053	3,226	3,219	2,892	3,987	4,251	3,347	3,293	3,062
Waikato	23,629	22,840	22,551	20,717	20,347	20,923	19,960	16,736	19,137
Bay of Plenty	8,845	9,178	9,104	9,562	8,952	9,330	7,413	5,966	6,204
Central Plateau	4,814	5,374	7,244	7,398	6,060	7,759	6,434	7,113	10,452
Western Uplands	2,305	2,170	2,502	2,497	2,254	2,031	2,014	2,119	1,895
East Coast	126	152	169	151	160	409	713	775	657
Hawkes Bay	1,864	3,213	3,302	2,552	2,343	2,022	2,353	2,537	2,625
Taranaki	4,539	4,625	5,666	5,542	5,156	5,754	5,382	4,739	4,443
Manawatu	6,860	6,763	7,587	6,077	6,898	6,447	5,918	6,714	7,640
Wairarapa	5,141	4,626	5,130	4,728	4,895	4,514	4,548	3,495	4,124
Nelson / Marlborough	3,834	4,404	4,648	4,545	3,592	3,688	3,555	2,946	4,039
West Coast	4,954	5,569	6,101	6,702	8,647	8,451	7,679	7,449	7,334
North Canterbury	45,613	58,751	69,553	73,242	68,046	64,334	62,180	57,287	59,486
South Canterbury	23,820	24,033	25,647	24,764	23,969	25,921	21,490	21,732	21,492
Otago	19,747	23,992	28,119	28,332	25,911	26,052	23,274	20,101	22,900
Southland	31,994	39,970	46,107	42,047	38,941	37,679	36,893	31,120	33,281
New Zealand	201,622	230,144	258,719	252,456	239,806	239,287	223,526	203,275	218,572

Graph 4.4: Trend in the percentage of cows to Artificial Breeding

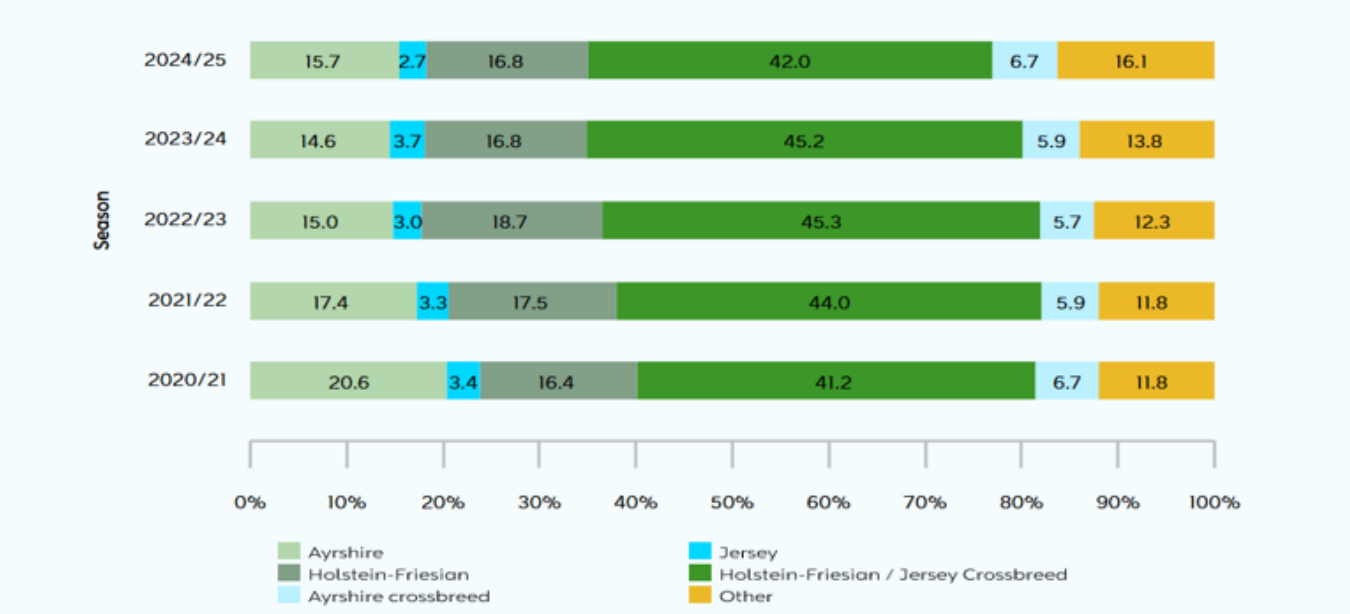
In 2024/25, the average number of inseminations per cow remained steady at 1.38, the same as in the previous two seasons (Graph 4.5).

Graph 4.5: Average number of inseminations per cow

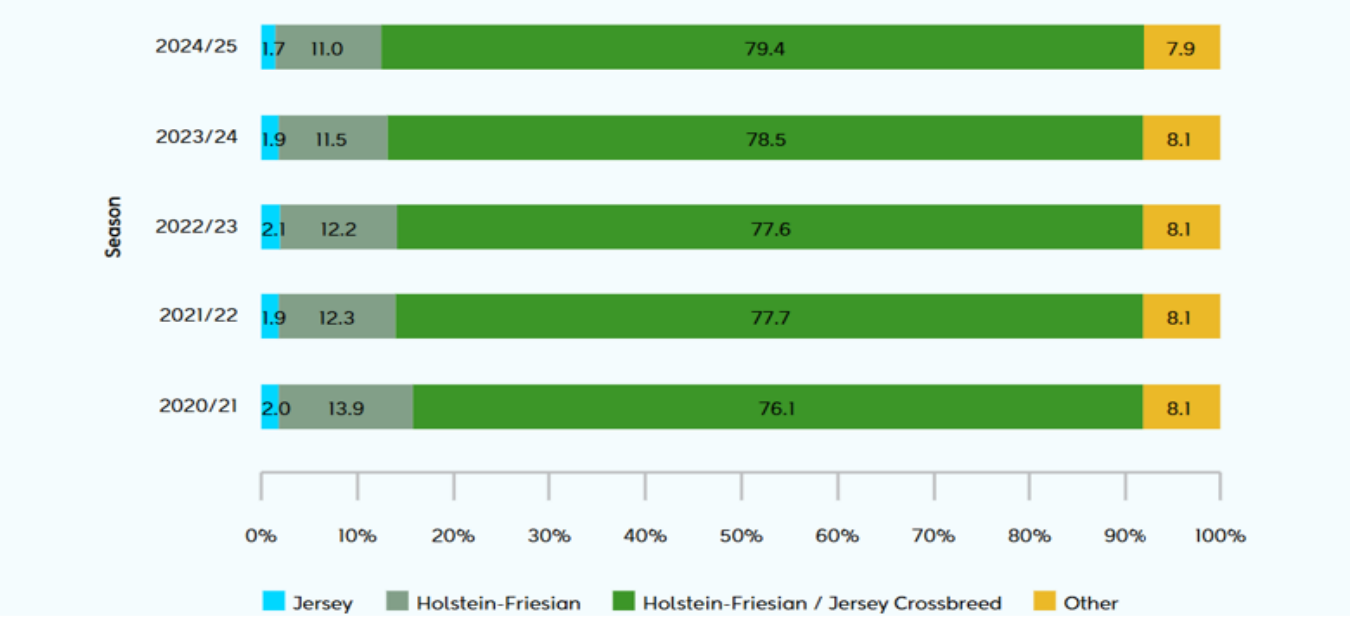


Graphs 4.6, 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9 show the use of Ayrshire, Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed, Jersey and Holstein-Friesian semen over different cow breeds for the past five seasons. In 2024/25, Ayrshire semen was predominantly used over Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed cows (42.0%) and Holstein-Friesian cows (16.8%) as shown in Graph 4.6. Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed semen was predominantly used over Holstein-Friesian/Jersey crosses 79.4% (Graph 4.7). Jersey semen was predominately used over Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed cows (43.8%) and Jersey cows (42.2%), as illustrated in Graph 4.8. The use of Holstein-Friesian semen remains predominately over Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed cows (53.3%), followed by Holstein-Friesian cows (39.1%) (Graph 4.9).

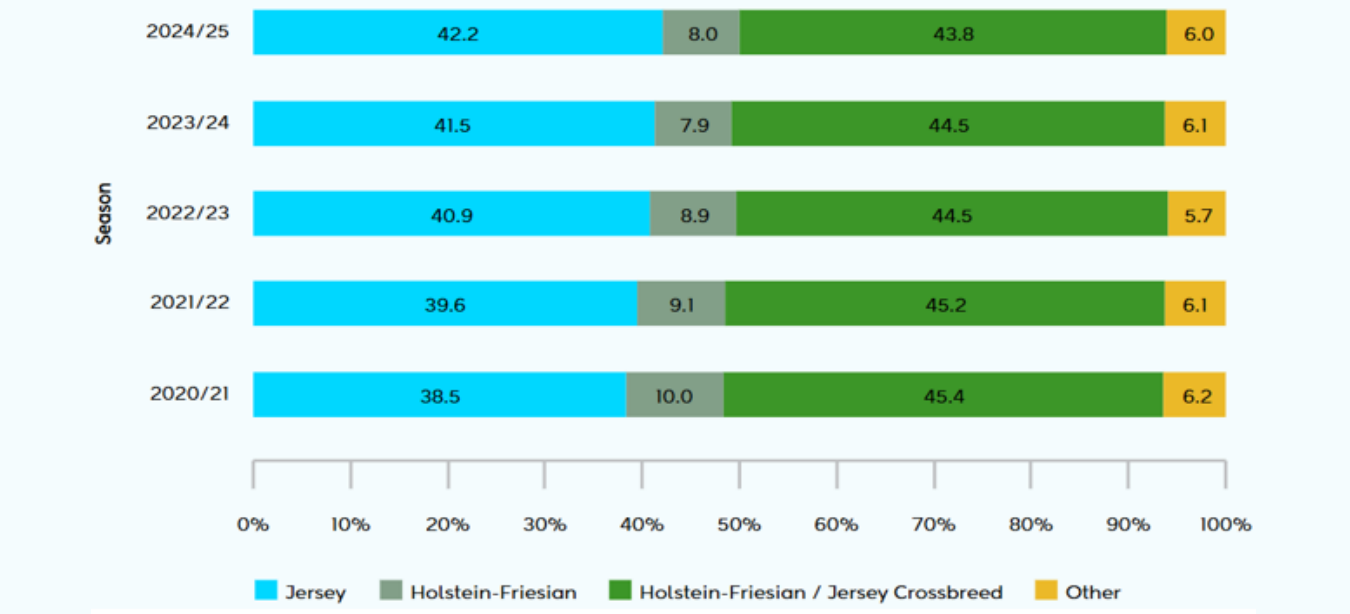
Graph 4.6: Ayrshire semen usage (%) over breed category



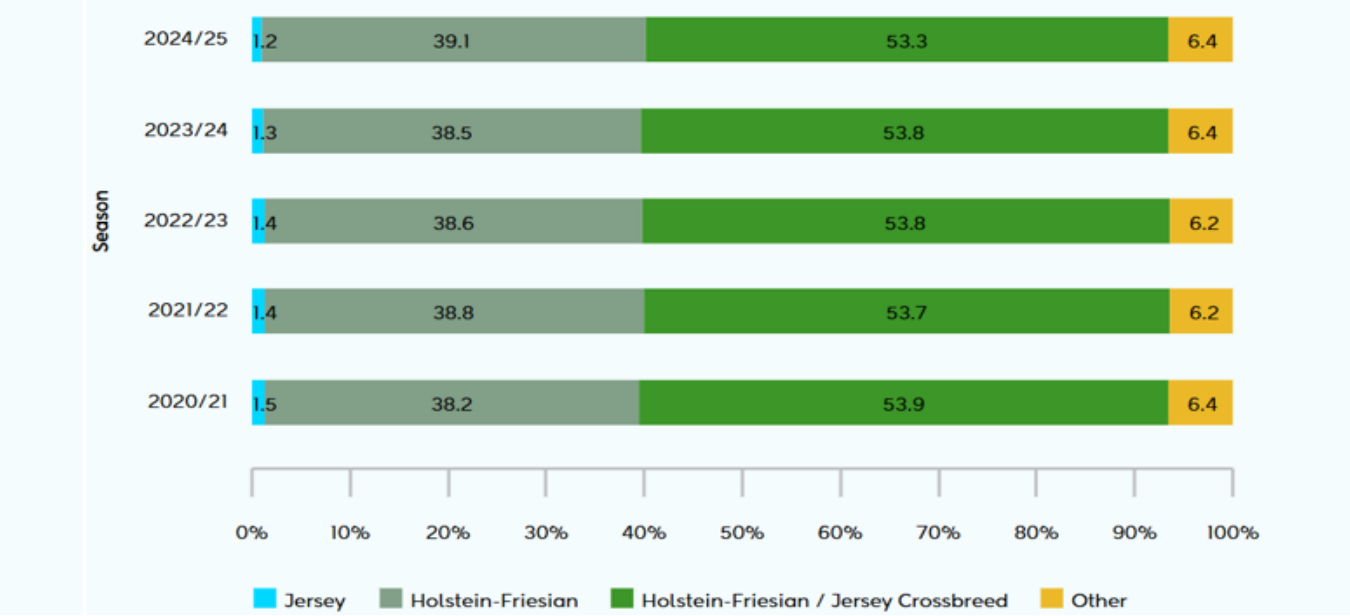
Graph 4.7: Holstein-Friesian / Jersey Crossbreed semen usage (%) over breed category



Graph 4.8: Jersey semen usage (%) over breed category



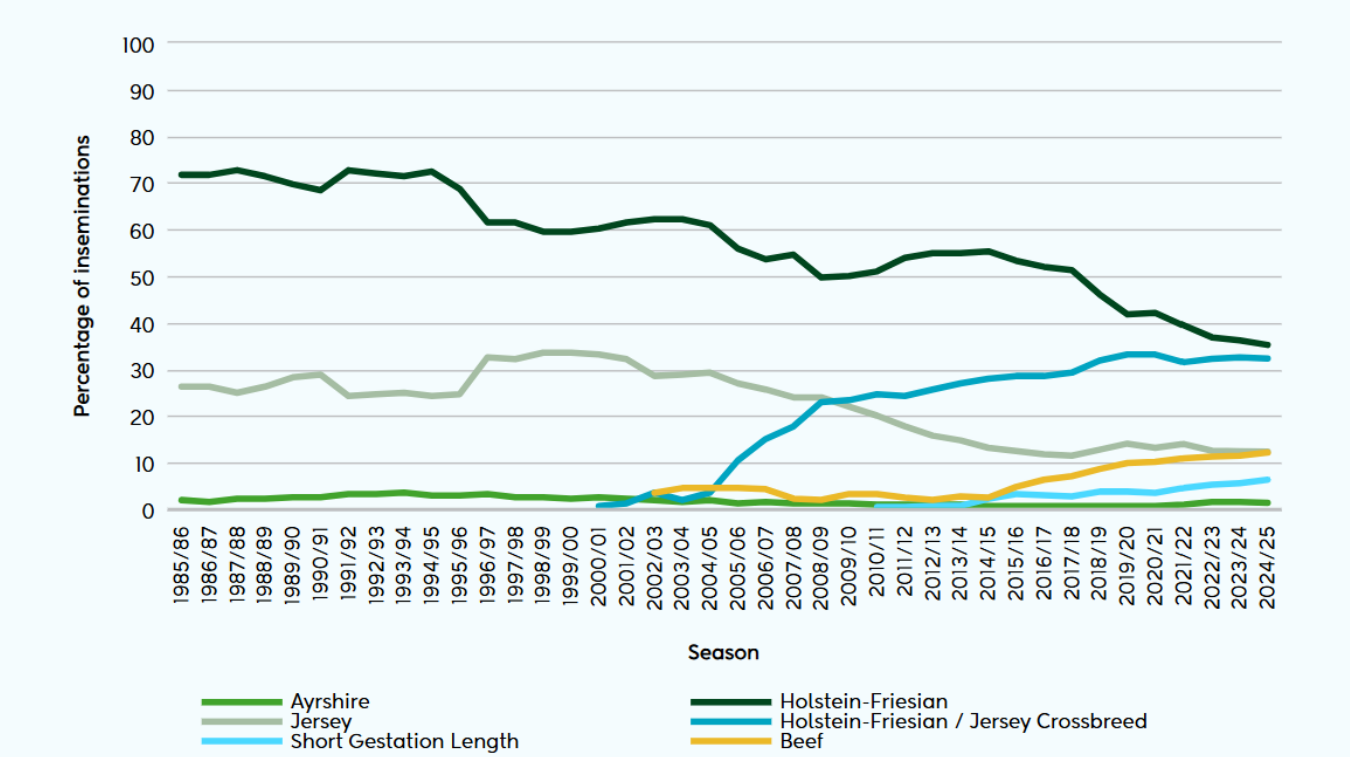
Graph 4.9: Holstein-Friesian semen usage (%) over breed category



Graph 4.10 shows the percentage of inseminations across the main breed categories (Holstein-Friesian, Jersey, Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed, Ayrshire), including beef breeds and Short Gestation Length (SGL).

In 2024/25, the percentage of inseminations for Jersey, Holstein-Friesian, Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed and Ayrshire cows decreased slightly, while the percentage of inseminations for SGL and beef increased.

Graph 4.10: Trend in the percentage of inseminations of each breed category



4.4. Herd Reproduction

- 2024/25 was the highest year on record for 6-week in-calf rate and 3-week submission rate.

The statistics in this section are based on LIC MINDA® data and represents herds that contributed data for the Detailed and Intermediate Fertility Focus Reports.

Reproductive performance is a key determinant of dairy farm productivity. The 6-week in-calf rate is an important measure of herd reproductive performance and is used to compare performance between herds and to monitor national performance.

The not-in-calf rate at the end of mating is important at a herd level but is not ideal for comparison between herds due to differences in the length of mating period. The actual 6-week in-calf rate, reported in the Detailed Fertility Focus Report, is calculated for herds with adequate records of early-age pregnancy tests (at least 80% of cows in the herd pregnancy tested, and at least 80% of all pregnancy test results are less than or equal to 122 days pregnant, or non-pregnant).

The estimated 6-week in-calf rate, reported in the Intermediate Fertility Focus Report, is calculated from calving and mating data for herds without sufficient early-age pregnancy test records. Conception rates are reported in the Detailed Fertility Focus Report, but they are not available in Intermediate Fertility Focus Reports.

Since the launch of the DairyNZ InCalf programme in 2008/09, there has been a trend towards more early-stage pregnancy testing, resulting in an increase in the actual results available from Detailed Fertility Focus Reports. The number of herds with detailed reports has steadily increased from 354 in 2008/09 to 4,884 in 2024/25 (Table 4.9).

In 2024/25, the actual mean 6-week in-calf rate reached 70.0%, making it the highest on record. The estimated mean 6-week in-calf rates have fluctuated between 61.6% and 64.9% since 2008/09, but reached a record high of 65.7% in 2024/25 (Graph 4.11). The actual mean 3-week submission rate increased from 70.0% in 2023/24 to 80.5% in 2024/25, which is above the 5-year average of 79.8% (Table 4.9 and Graph 4.11). In 2024/25, the mean conception rate (53.7%) was higher than the previous four seasons.

Table 4.9: Trend in mean herd reproductive performance

	Actual				Estimated		
Mating season	Number of herds	Mean 6-week in-calf rate (%)	Mean 3-week submission rate	Mean conception rate (%)	Number of herds	Mean 6-week in-calf rate (%)	Mean 3-week submission rate (%)
2009/10	712	63.5	77.5	51	4,749	61.6	72.2
2010/11	982	64.4	78.7	50.7	4,090	61.9	72.6
2011/12	1,341	66.8	80.7	52.2	4,051	63.3	76.0
2012/13	1,862	67.8	81.6	52.9	4,034	64.3	76.6
2013/14	2,363	67.2	80.8	52.5	3,874	64.5	76.5
2014/15	2,895	66.8	81.1	52.6	3,918	64.2	76.2
2015/16	3,646	66.5	80.0	52.4	4,778	63.7	75.0
2016/17	3,952	65.8	78.1	53.4	4,566	62.7	72.0
2017/18	3,963	66.6	79.1	54.0	4,035	62.3	73.2
2018/19	4,207	67.5	80.7	54.1	3,883	64.3	76.0
2019/20	4,430	67.8	80.2	54.2	3,624	64.3	75.7
2020/21	4,492	67.7	81.3	52.7	3,527	64.9	76.4
2021/22	4,671	67.4	80.4	51.8	3,208	64.2	75.9
2022/23	4,607	66.6	77.6	50.9	3,087	63.2	73.9
2023/24	4,700	69.3	79.0	53.2	2,854	64.3	76.2
2024/25	4,884	70.0	80.5	53.7	2,632	65.7	78.4

Note: Results for 2008/09 and 2009/10 are based on version 1.0 of the Fertility Focus Report software. Results for 2010/11 until 2015/16 are from version 2.15 and results for 2016/17 onwards are from version 3.01. These updated versions had improvements made to calculations and reflect more correctly what the national performance is.

Graph 4.11: Trend in mean actual and estimated 6-week in-calf rate

Note: Results for 2008/09 and 2009/10 are based on version 1.0 of the Fertility Focus Report software. Results for 2010/11 until 2015/16 are from version 2.15 and results for 2016/17 onwards are from version 3.01. Each update in these versions has improved calculations to reflect national performance better.

Across regions, the actual mean 6-week in-calf rate varied between 67.6% (Hawkes Bay/Manawatu/Wairarapa) and 71.0% (Waikato/Western Uplands) in 2024/25 (Table 4.10). The range in actual mean 6-week in-calf rate in 2024/25 (3.3 percentage points) was lower than in 2022-23 (4.3 percentage points) and 2023-24 (5.3 percentage points). In most regions, the actual mean 6-week in-calf rate increased slightly compared to the previous season.

Table 4.10: Mean 6-week in-calf rate by farming region

	Actual						Estimated					
	2022/23		2023/24		2024/25		2022/23		2023/24		2024/25	
Region	Number of herds	Mean 6-week in-calf rate (%)	Number of herds	Mean 6-week in-calf rate (%)	Number of herds	Mean 6-week in-calf rate (%)	Number of herds	Mean 6-week in-calf rate (%)	Number of herds	Mean 6-week in-calf rate (%)	Number of herds	Mean 6-week in-calf rate (%)
Northland / Auckland	210	64.5	221	65.9	238	69.1	321	61.4	293	61.6	253	63.8
Waikato / Western Uplands	1,173	65.8	1,228	69.2	1,299	71.0	1,009	63.4	905	64.1	827	66.1
BoP / Central Plateau / East Coast	373	66.0	389	68.1	397	69.6	287	63.0	247	63.8	235	66.4
Taranaki	423	67.0	427	70.2	469	70.2	733	64.0	711	65.8	654	66.5
Hawkes Bay / Manawatu / Wairarapa	356	64.0	355	66.6	349	67.6	228	62.2	223	62.7	229	64.7
West Coast / Nelson / Marlborough	196	68.4	208	71.2	212	69.7	220	63.7	194	65.6	184	66.1
North & South Canterbury	888	67.6	908	70.2	927	70.4	115	63.6	105	64.8	92	64.8
Otago / Southland	988	67.5	964	70.1	993	69.7	174	63.3	176	65.3	158	64.5

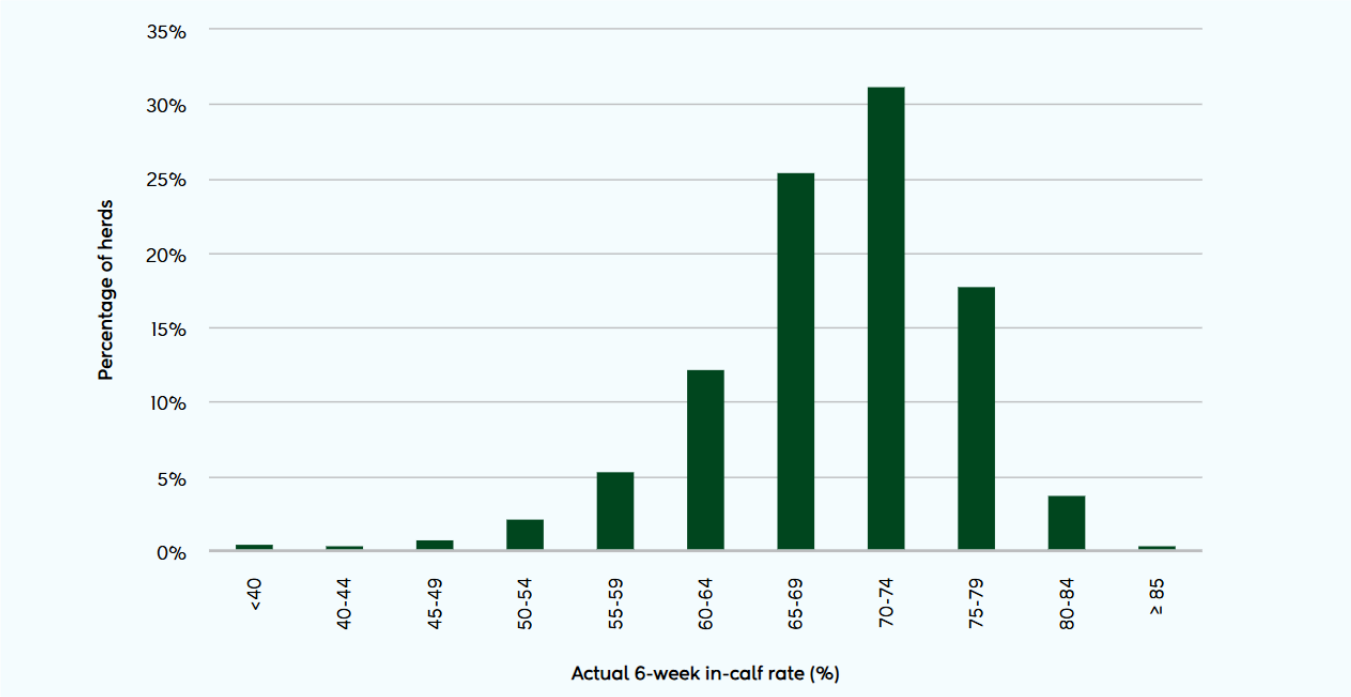
Note: Since 2020/21, the results reported in this table are from an improved version of the Fertility Focus Report software and will differ from earlier publications.

The distribution of actual 6-week in-calf rates is shown in Table 4.11 and Graph 4.12. In 2024/25, 50% of herds had an actual 6-week in-calf rate of 71% or higher and 10% had an in-calf rate of 78% or higher (Table 4.11). Ten percent of herds had a 6-week-in-calf rate of 61.0% or lower. Ninety-two of herds had an actual 6-week in-calf rate between 55% and 79% (Graph 4.12).

Table 4.11: Percentile Distribution of Actual 6-week in-calf rate in 2024/25

	Number of herds	Median	Top 10%	Top 25%	Bottom 25%	Bottom 10%
6-week in-calf rate	4,884	71	> 78	> 75	< 66	< 61

Graph 4.12: Distribution of actual 6-week in-calf rate in 2024/25

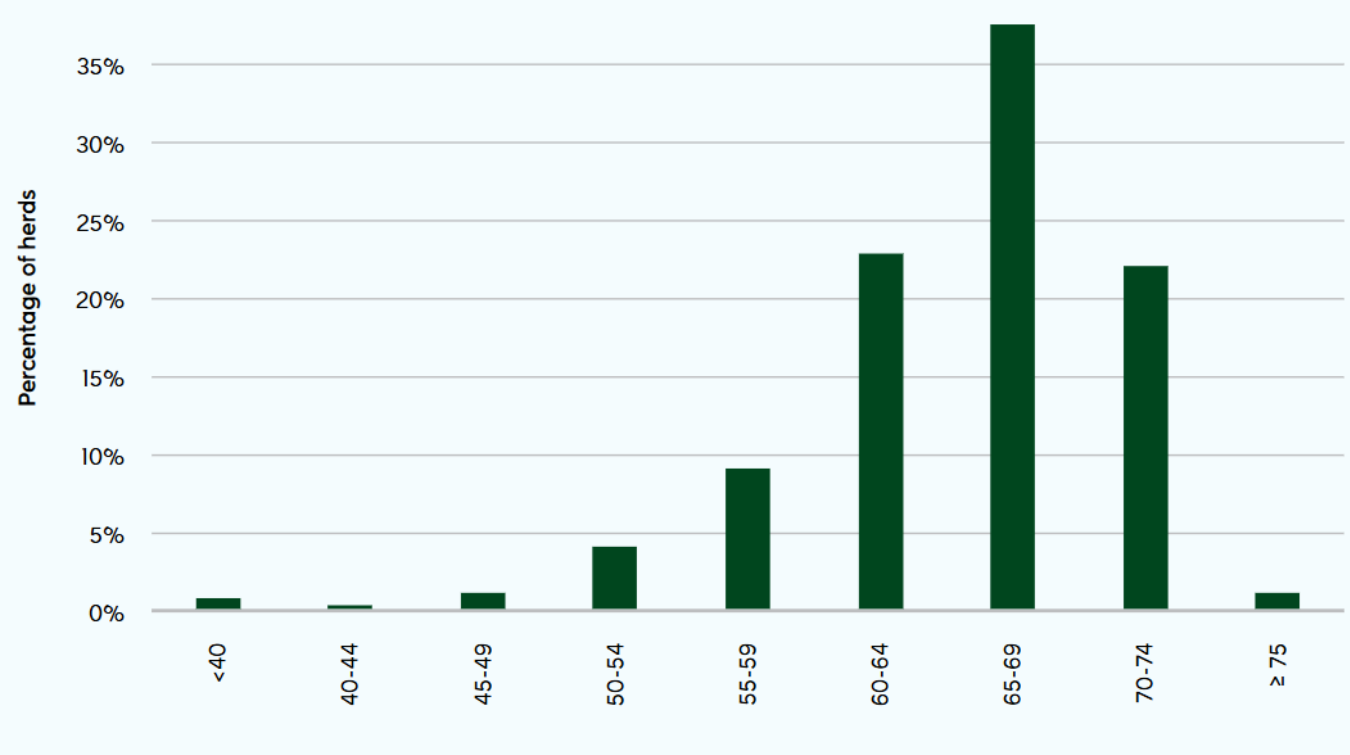


In 2024/25, 50% of herds achieved an estimated 6-week in-calf rate of 67% or higher, with 10% of herds reaching 72% or higher (Table 4.12). Conversely, 10% of herds had an in-calf rate of 58% or lower. Approximately 92% of herds fell within an estimated 6-week in-calf rate range of 55% to 74% (Graph 4.13).

Table 4.12: Percentile Distribution of Estimated 6-week in-calf rate in 2024/25

	Number of herds	Median	Top 10%	Top 25%	Bottom 25%	Bottom 10%
6-week in-calf rate	2,632	67	> 72	> 70	< 63	< 58

Graph 4.13: Distribution of estimated 6-week in-calf rate in 2024/25



4.5. Calving

4.5.1. Planned start of calving and median calving dates

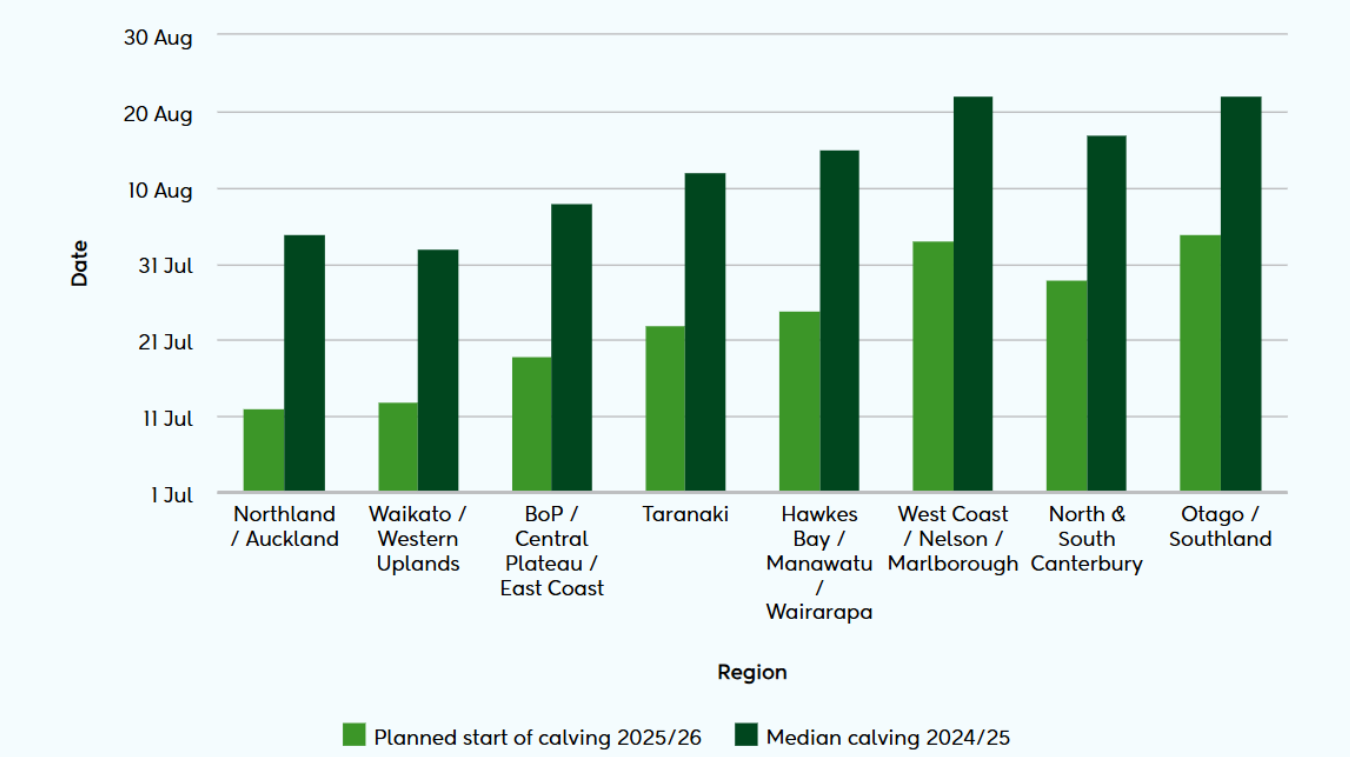
The trend in calving dates within and between regions is best shown by the "planned start of calving" date. The planned start of calving date is 279 days from the date that mating is started in the herd. Farmers can decide when mating starts and have the flexibility to adjust its timing.

Historically, mating and calving information has been sourced from the LIC Herd Improvement Database, which covered approximately 80-85% of all herds. LIC data was used to produced Graphs 4.14 and 4.15 until 2020/21. Since the 2021/22 season, the data for these graphs has been sourced from the Dairy Industry Good Animal Database (DIGAD).

The median calving date is the date that occupies the middle position after the calving dates of all cows in a herd are arranged in ascending order. The median calving date is used as an indicator of calving spread. The values reported in Graph 4.14 are the average median calving date of herds in each region.

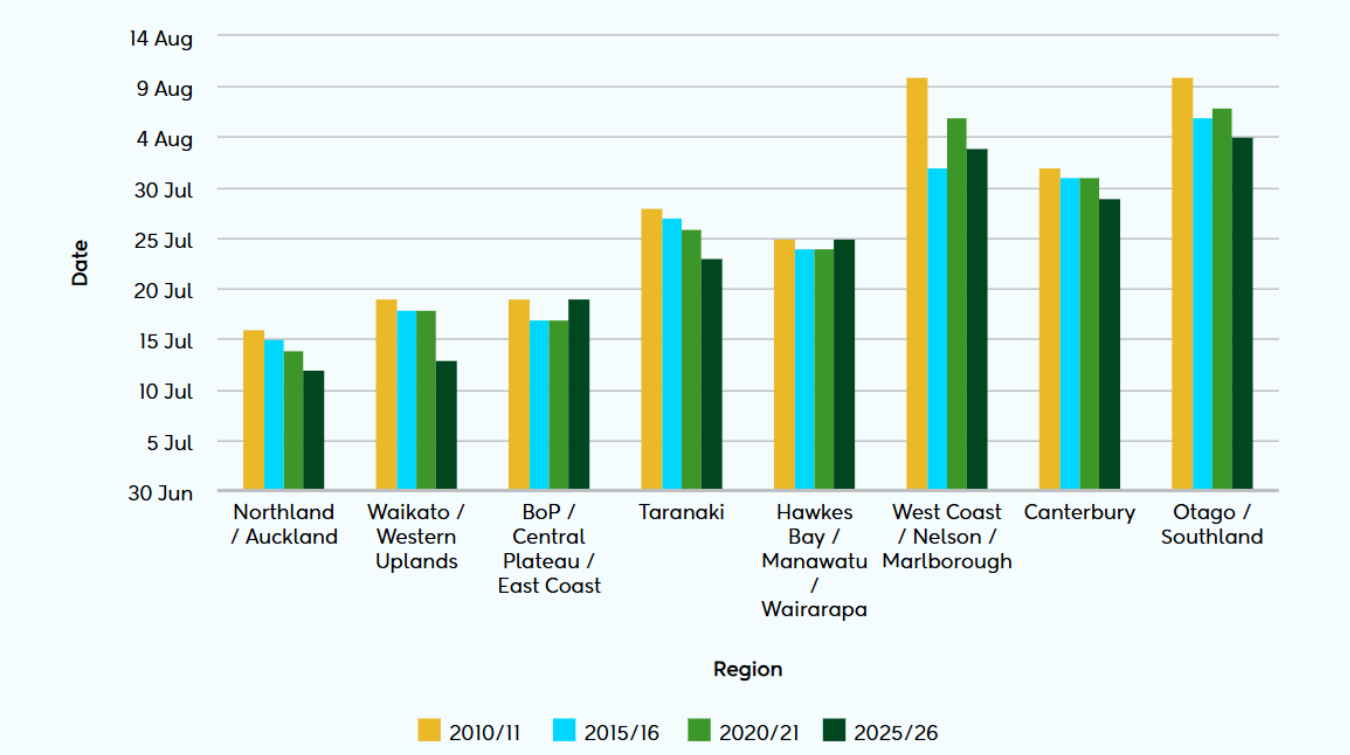
The planned start of calving is forecasted for the 2025/26 season, while the median calving dates for cows in the 2024/25 season (excluding first calvers) are shown in Graph 4.14. In the North Island, the median calving date in 2024/25 was between August 2 and August 15, while in the South Island it was between August 17 and August 22 (Graph 4.14).

Graph 4.14: Planned start of calving and median calving dates for cows (excluding first calvers) by region



The planned start of calving for five-yearly intervals since 2010/11 is shown in Graph 4.15. Overall, the trend is toward an earlier planned start of calving (Graph 4.15). In the majority of regions, the planned start of calving in the 2025/26 season is noticeably earlier than it was five, ten and fifteen years ago.

Graph 4.15: Trend in planned start of calving dates for cows (excluding first calvers) by region



4.5.2. Calving interval

Maintaining an optimal calving interval helps ensure synchrony between feed demand and pasture supply, supporting efficient milk production and overall farm performance. The calving interval for a cow is defined as the number of days between her calving date in the current season and her calving date in the previous season. First-calving heifers do not have a calving interval calculated. The average calving interval is estimated using all recorded calving dates for cows that calve between June 1 and November 30. Records where pregnancy was terminated are excluded from this calculation.

Table 4.13: Trend in mean calving interval by breed

	All breeds		Holstein-Friesian		Jersey		Friesian/Jersey Cross		Ayrshire	
Season	Average number of days	Number of records	Average number of days	Number of records	Average number of days	Number of records	Average number of days	Number of records	Average number of days	Number of records
2004/05	369.5	2,210,747	370.1	1,040,243	368.8	383,759	369	666,562	370.6	23,169
2005/06	367.8	2,241,175	368.2	1,013,546	367.7	390,971	367.4	706,441	368.2	23,129
2006/07	368.9	2,260,512	369.3	1,002,099	369	387,357	368.2	739,493	370.4	22,785
2007/08	369.9	2,349,042	370.4	985,422	369.7	366,954	369.5	853,422	371	21,239
2008/09	370.1	2,359,392	371	953,577	368.9	359,509	369.5	891,949	371.9	19,948
2009/10	368.7	2,477,122	369.1	972,118	368.3	361,329	368.5	980,435	369.3	16,745
2010/11	368.6	2,628,672	369.2	1,000,637	368.2	364,664	368.2	1,088,976	370.5	19,719
2011/12	368.3	2,807,333	368.5	1,030,006	368	370,877	368.2	1,213,169	369.1	20,164
2012/13	368.8	2,927,817	368.7	1,323,053	368.4	370,796	368.7	1,323,053	369.5	20,643
2013/14	368.4	3,054,915	368.8	1,051,940	368.2	366,500	368.2	1,427,255	369.8	20,337
2014/15	368.4	3,087,517	368.9	1,037,413	367.8	350,376	368.1	1,478,464	368.9	18,949
2015/16	369.5	3,063,466	370	1,002,362	368.5	327,521	369.4	1,515,761	370	17,358
2016/17	370.9	3,102,833	371.6	1,010,574	370.3	310,334	370.7	1,553,638	370.8	16,162
2017/18	368.6	3,088,021	369.3	1,011,453	367.8	293,988	368.4	1,557,077	369.9	15,086
2018/19	368.9	3,092,199	369.4	935,436	368.5	274,187	368.9	1,653,697	369.5	14,178
2019/20	369	3,085,761	369.3	753,923	368.3	247,196	369	1,866,661	369.2	13,276
2020/21	369.4	3,038,733	369.8	716,265	368.9	235,352	369.3	1,853,430	369.3	11,988
2021/22	369.2	2,986,978	369.6	679,394	369	227,480	369.2	1,850,683	370.1	11,238
2022/23	369	2,940,868	369.4	646,732	368.5	222,433	368.9	1,835,419	370.9	10,619
2023/24	368.5	2,867,208	368.8	613,245	368.5	214,807	368.5	1,815,198	368.1	9,882

4.6. Animal Evaluation

The genetic merit of New Zealand dairy cows and sires is estimated using a statistical model that evaluates animals from different breeds simultaneously, taking into account recorded genetic relationships. Given the significant presence of crossbred cows and mixed-breed herds within the national herd, the evaluation system is specifically designed to compare animals across breeds, both nationally and within herds. This approach helps farmers identify and select the most profitable animals to enhance future herd performance.

There are two types of evaluations calculated for New Zealand dairy animals:

1. **Trait evaluations:** These are estimates of an animal's genetic merit for individual traits (Breeding Values, BV) including milkfat, protein, volume, liveweight, somatic cell, fertility, gestation length, body condition score, functional survival and udder overall. There are also estimates of an animal's lifetime productive ability (Production Values) for milkfat, protein, volume, somatic cell and liveweight.

2. **Economic evaluations:** These combine an animal's individual trait evaluations to estimate its comparative ability to convert feed into profit, through breeding replacements (Breeding Worth) and lifetime production (Production Worth).

For each economic index, Economic Values are calculated for the relevant traits. For Breeding Worth (BW), the Economic Values represent the net income per unit of feed from breeding replacements with a one-unit genetic improvement in the trait. For Production Worth, the Economic Values represent the net income per unit of feed from milking cows with a one unit improved productive ability in the trait. In each case the base unit of feed is five tonnes of dry matter in average quality pasture.

The profit-related traits are combined into a single economic index called Breeding Worth. For example,

Breeding Worth	=	Milkfat BV	x	$EV (Milkfat)	+
		Protein BV	x	$EV (Protein)	+
		Milk BV	x	$EV (Milk)	+
		Liveweight BV	x	$EV (Liveweight)	+
		Somatic Cell BV	x	$EV (Somatic Cell)	+
		Fertility BV	x	$EV (Fertility)	+
		Gestation Length BV	x	$EV (Gestation Length)	+
		Body Cond. Score BV	x	$EV (Body Cond. Score)	+
		Functional Survival BV	x	$EV (Functional Survival)	+
		Udder Overall BV	x	$EV (Udder Overall)	

where: BV = Breeding Value for each trait, $EV = economic value for each trait for breeding replacements

Production Worth is calculated using Production Values for the 3 production traits, somatic cell and liveweight, multiplied by the respective economic values.

NZ Animal Evaluation provides a tool for ranking animals in terms of their expected profit per unit of feed consumed. The Economic Values are presented below for 2025 (Table 4.14). The Economic Values are reviewed annually and are adjusted to represent the current on-farm economic conditions and may change year to year. Up until the 2021/22 season, the economic updates were made in February. Since then, NZ Animal Evaluation has aligned major Animal Evaluation updates, including changes to the Economic Values, with the international Interbull evaluation schedule.

Table 4.14: Economic values used from 16 May 2025

Key performance indicator	Milkfat ($/kg)	Protein ($/kg)	Milk ($/kg)	Liveweight ($/kg)	Somatic Cell ($/score)	Fertility ($/CR42)	Gestation Length ($/day)	Body Cond. Score ($/score)	Udder Overall ($/unit)	Functional Survival ($/%)
Breeding Worth	5.27	7.1	-0.115	-1.68	-46.43	5.9	-1.95	174.6	a	1.90
Production Worth	5.82	6.62	-0.116	-1.7	-46.49	-	-	-	-	-

Note:

a Udder overall ($/unit) has a non-linear economic value: Udder overall EV = (60.33 x Udder Overall BV) + (-34.36 x Udder Overall BV^2). For Udder Overall BV above 0.878, the dollar contribution to Breeding Worth is fixed at $26.48.

The information for all Animal Evaluation statistics was sourced from cows and sires in DIGAD as of 16th May 2025. The evaluations were conducted with reference to a genetic base of cows born in 2005. The genetic base (also known as the base cow), refers to a group of cows from a specific year whose BW is used as the reference point zero, with the BW of all other animals reported relative to this group. For more information on economic values, follow these links www.dairynz.co.nz/animal/animal-evaluation/interpreting-the-info/economic-values and www.lic.co.nz/about/animal-evaluation.

4.6.1. Sire Evaluations

The BV and BW by breed for all bulls born in 2020, which were first proven in the 2024/25 season and have a BW Reliability of 70% or greater are shown in Table 4.15. BW reliability is measured on a scale from 0% to 99%. A value 0% indicates that there are no performance records for any related animal used in the bull's evaluation, while a value of 99% indicates that the bull has a large number of performance-recorded daughters.

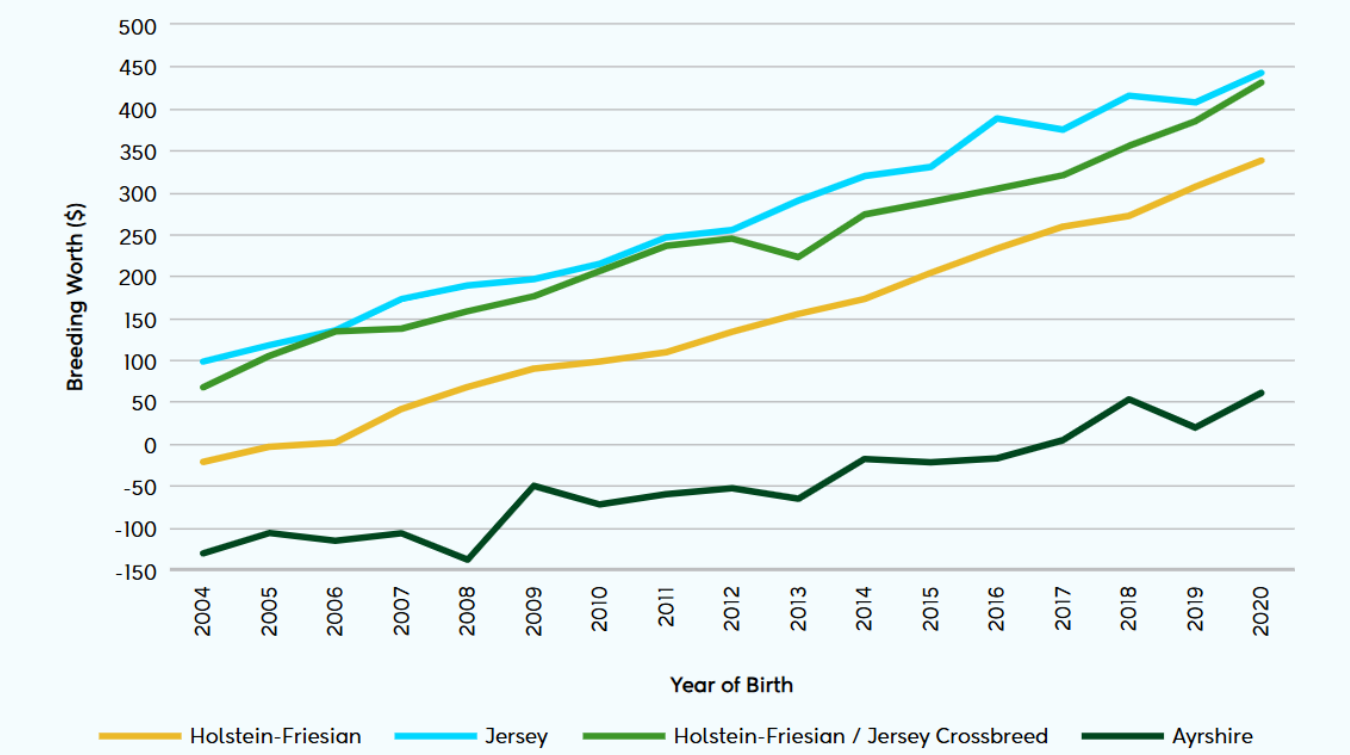
Table 4.15: Average Breeding Values and Breeding Worth of 2020 born bulls (BW reliability of 70% or greater)

Breed category	Milk Fat BV	Protein BV	Milk Volume BV	Liveweight BV	Somatic Cell BV	Fertility BV	Gestation Length BV	Body Condition Score BV	Functional Survival BV	Udder Overall BV	Breeding Worth	Number of Bulls
Holstein-Friesian	42.0	40.3	852.4	58.2	0.08	-0.5	-1.618	0.03	2.0	0.515	337.8	131
Jersey	33.9	14.8	-220.0	-39.1	-0.24	4.9	-0.183	0.03	1.6	0.444	442.4	69
Holstein-Friesian / Jersey Crossbreed	41.2	27.7	247.2	3.2	-0.01	2.6	-2.370	0.05	2.1	0.411	430.8	90
Ayrshire	19.4	15.5	560.4	17.1	-0.08	-8.6	0.919	-0.13	0.8	0.227	60.7	4

(Evaluation date: 16 May 2025)

The genetic trend of all proven dairy bulls is shown in Graph 4.16. BW has consistently increased over the years in Holstein-Friesian, Jersey and Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed cows.

Graph 4.16: Genetic trend of proven dairy bulls by year of birth (BW reliability of 70% or greater)



(Evaluation date: 16 May 2025)

Young bulls are initially selected for use in artificial breeding based on the genetic merit of their sire and dam and/or genomic indices. These young sires are then progeny tested to estimate their Breeding Worth more accurately via the performance of their daughters. Each year some progeny tested bulls are returned to service for use as proven sires.

The number of sires, categorised by birth year and breed, for which the BW Reliability was at least 70% is shown in Table 4.16. This table is updated annually for all age groups to include older bulls that have now been proven in New Zealand.

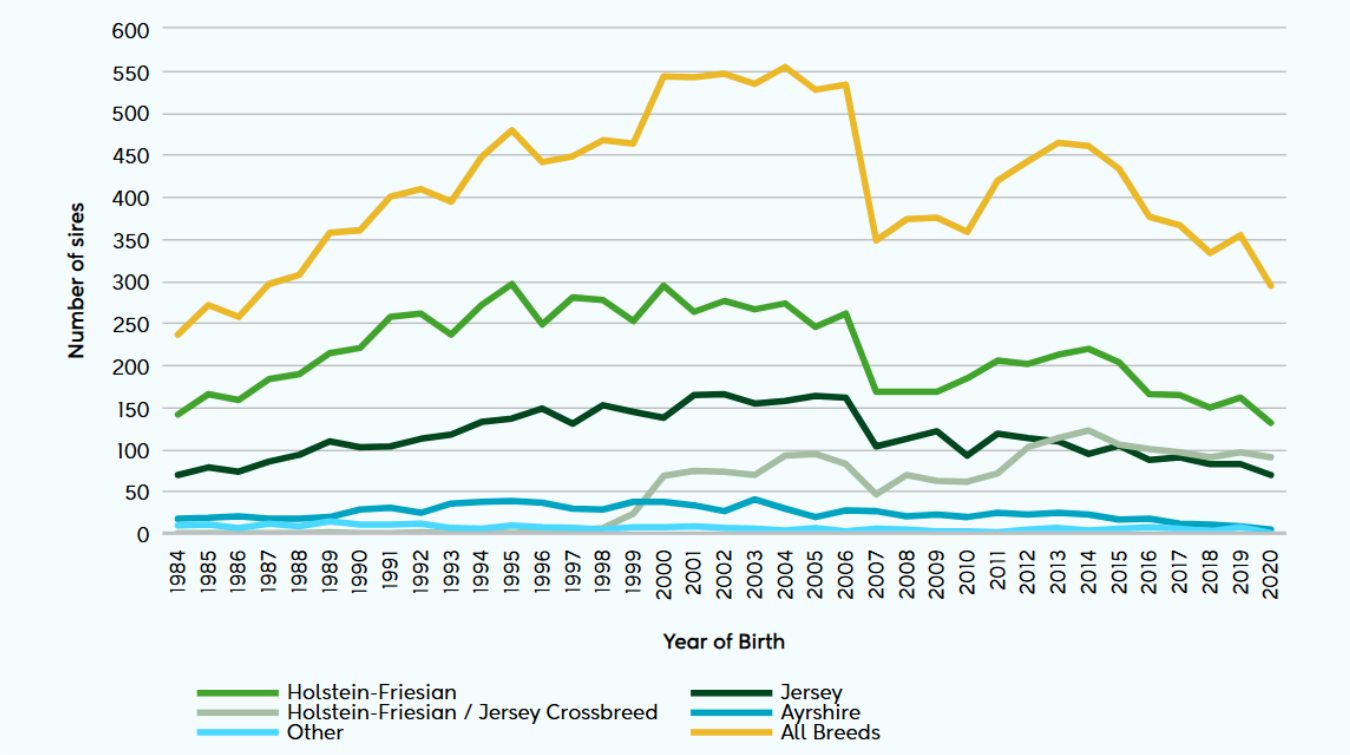
Table 4.16: Number of Sires by birth year and breed category (reliability of BW 70% or greater, includes overseas bulls)

Year of Birth	Number of Sires	Holstein-Friesian	Jersey	Holstein-Friesian / Jersey Crossbreed	Ayrshire	Other
2004	554	273	157	92	29	3
2005	527	245	163	94	19	6
2006	533	261	161	82	27	2
2007	348	168	103	46	26	5
2008	373	168	112	69	20	4
2009	375	168	121	62	22	2
2010	358	184	92	61	19	2
2011	419	205	118	71	24	1
2012	442	201	113	102	22	4
2013	464	212	109	113	24	6
2014	460	219	94	122	22	3
2015	433	203	104	105	16	5
2016	376	165	87	100	17	7
2017	366	164	90	96	11	5
2018	333	149	82	90	10	2
2019	354	161	82	96	8	7
2020	294	131	69	90	4	0
Total	7,009	3,277	1,857	1,491	320	64

(Evaluation date: 16 May 2025)

Holstein-Friesian sires continue to make up the largest share of those available for artificial breeding (Graph 4.16a). In recent years, the number of Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreeds sires available for artificial breeding has increased, reflecting a potential shift towards more hybrid vigour.

Graph 4.16a: Number of sires by year of birth (BW reliability of 70% or greater, includes overseas bulls)



(Evaluation date: 16 May 2025)

4.6.2. Cow Evaluations

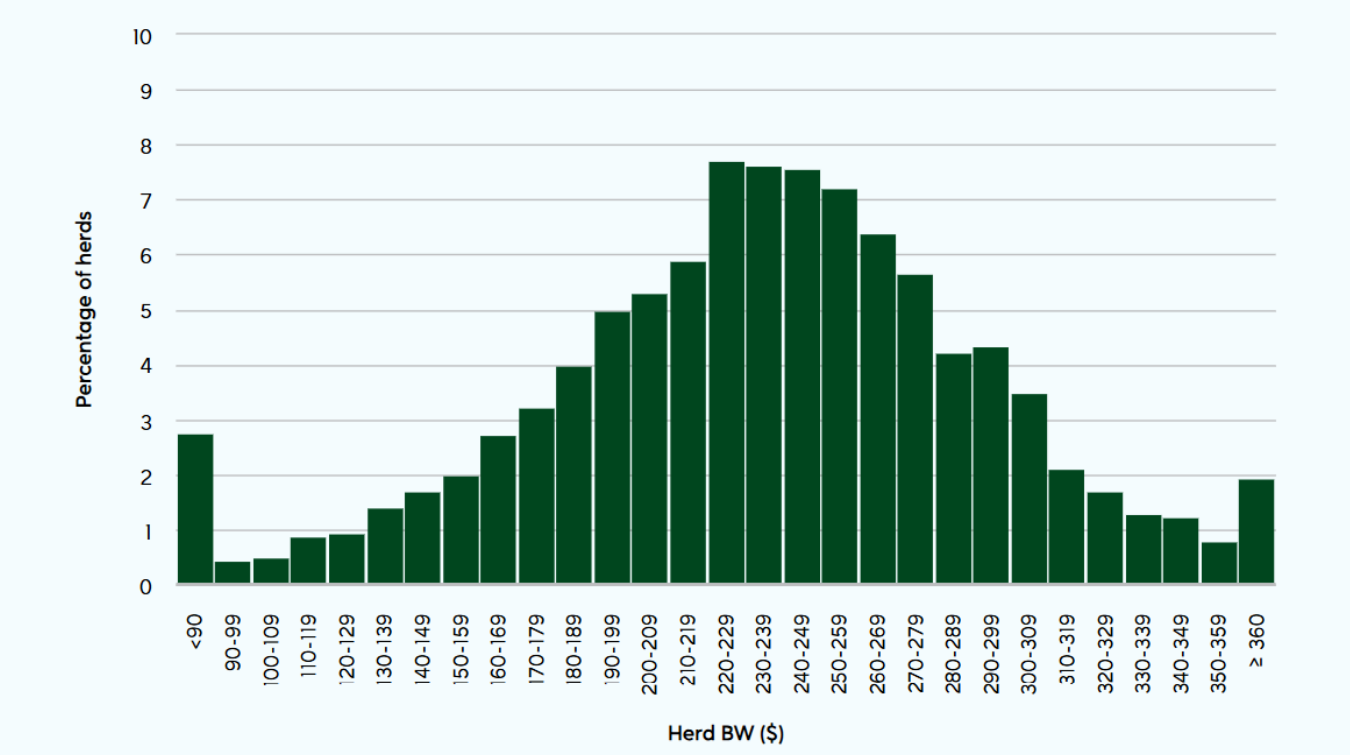
The BW for herds presented below (Table 4.17 and Graph 4.17) is based on cows from herds with at least 80 cows that have been herd tested during the 2024/25 season. Of these herds, 50% had a BW of 238 or higher, and 25% had a BW of 273 or higher (Table 4.17).

Table 4.17: Percentile Distribution of herd Breeding Worth in 2024/25

	Median	Top 5%	Top 10%	Top 25%	Bottom 25%	Bottom 10%	Bottom 5%
Herd BW	238	>332	>308	>273	<199	<157	<125

(Evaluation date: 16 May 2025)

Graph 4.17: Distribution of Herd Breeding Worth in 2024/25



(Evaluation date: 16 May 2025)

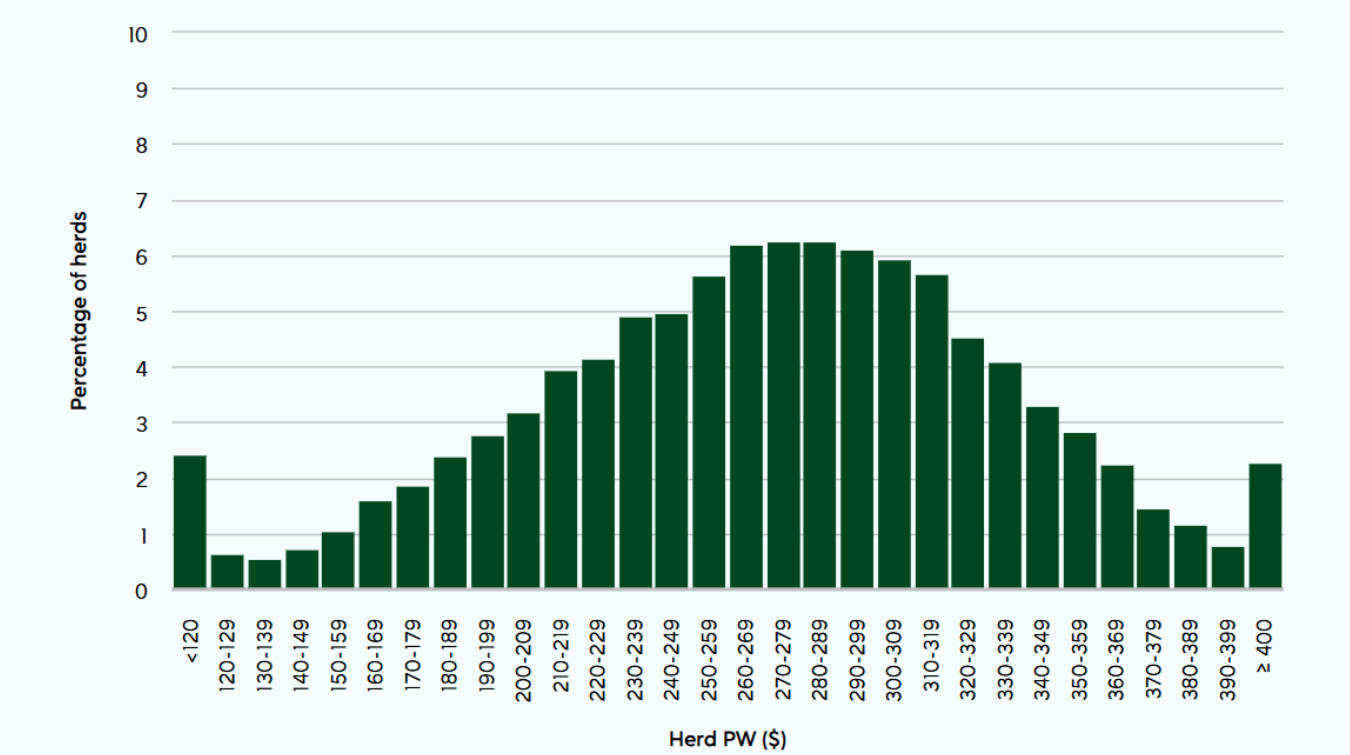
The Production Worth (PW) for herds presented below (Table 4.18 and Graph 4.18) is based on cows of the users of herd testing services, in herds with at least 80 cows, in the 2024/25 season. Table 4.18 shows that 50% of these herds had a PW of 275 or above and 25% of these herds had a PW of 316 or above.

Table 4.18: Percentile Distribution of herd Production Worth in 2024/25

	Median	Top 5%	Top 10%	Top 25%	Bottom 25%	Bottom 10%	Bottom 5%
Herd PW	275	>375	>353	>316	<229	<184	<158

(Evaluation date: 16 May 2025)

Graph 4.18: Distribution of Herd Production Worth in 2024/25



(Evaluation date: 16 May 2025)

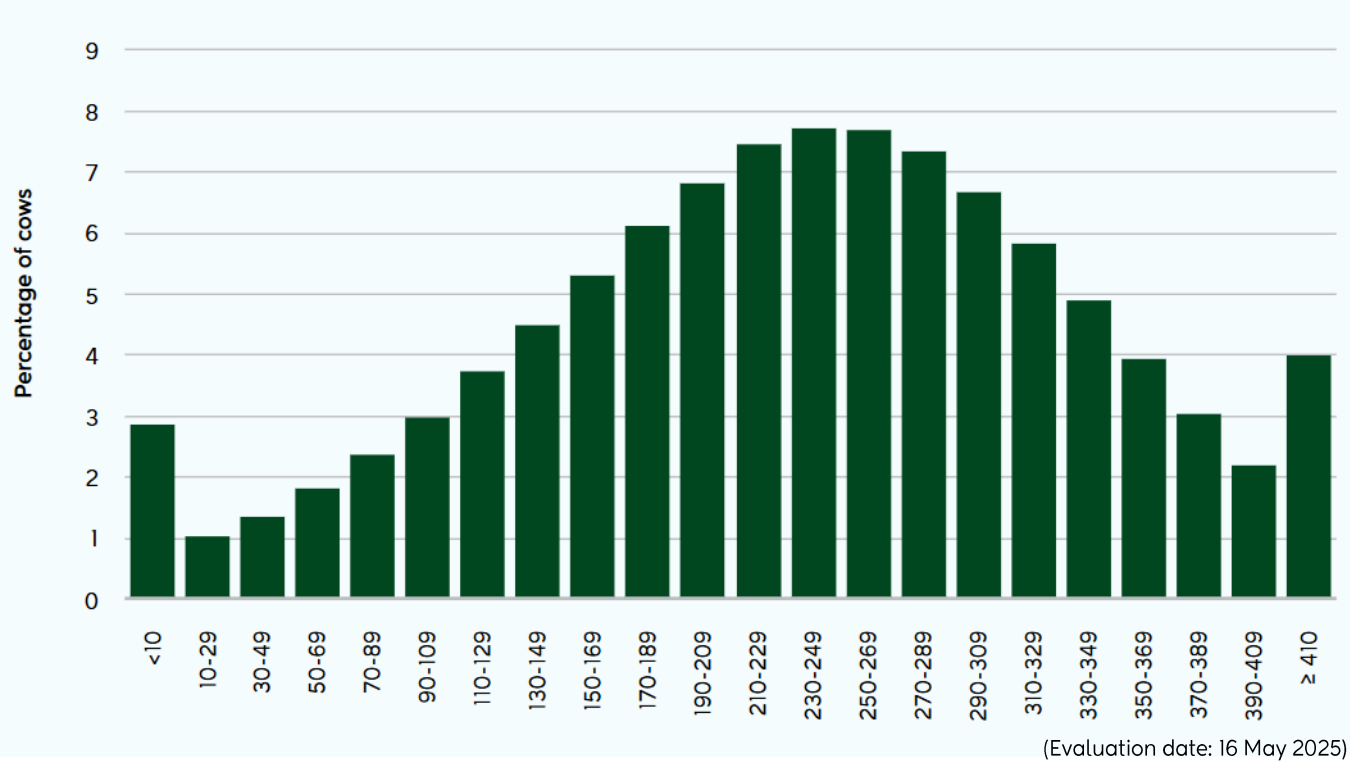
The BW for cows presented below (Table 4.19 and Graph 4.19) is based on all cows from herd-testing farms with at least 80 animals that participated in herd testing during the 2024/25 season. Table 4.19 shows that 50% of these cows had a BW of 239 or above and that 25% of these cows had a BW of 307 or above.

Table 4.19: Percentile Distribution of cow Breeding Worth in 2024/25

	Median	Top 5%	Top 10%	Top 25%	Bottom 25%	Bottom 10%	Bottom 5%
Cow BW	239	>400	>366	>307	<166	<94	<46

(Evaluation date: 16 May 2025)

Graph 4.19: Distribution of Cow Breeding Worth in 2024/25



(Evaluation date: 16 May 2025)

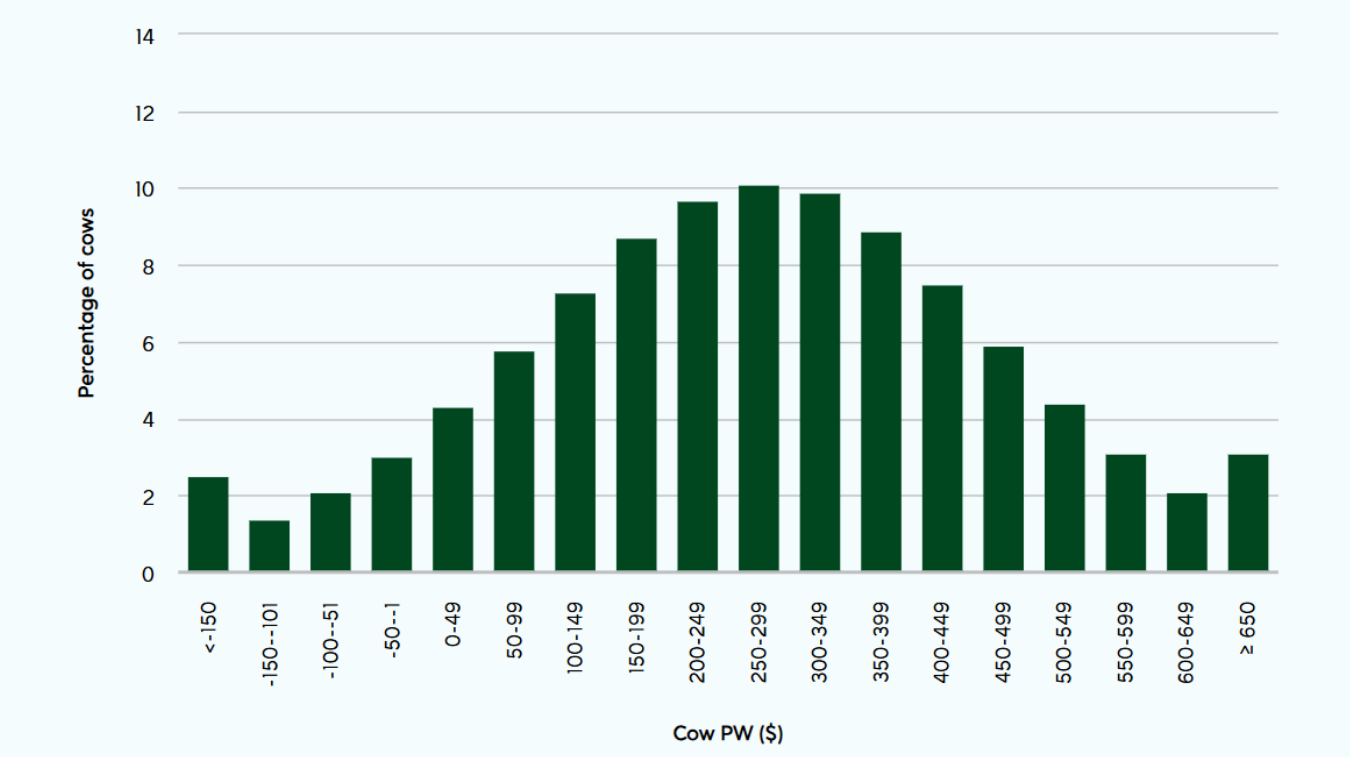
The PW for cows presented below (Table 4.20 and Graph 4.20) is based on all cows from herd-testing farms with at least 80 animals that participated in herd testing during the 2024/25 season. Table 4.20 shows that 50% of these cows had a PW of 275 or above and that 25% of these cows had a PW of 407 or above.

Table 4.20: Percentile Distribution of cow Production Worth in 2024/25

	Median	Top 5%	Top 10%	Top 25%	Bottom 25%	Bottom 10%	Bottom 5%
Cow PW	275	>604	>529	>407	<141	<12	<-72

(Evaluation date: 16 May 2025)

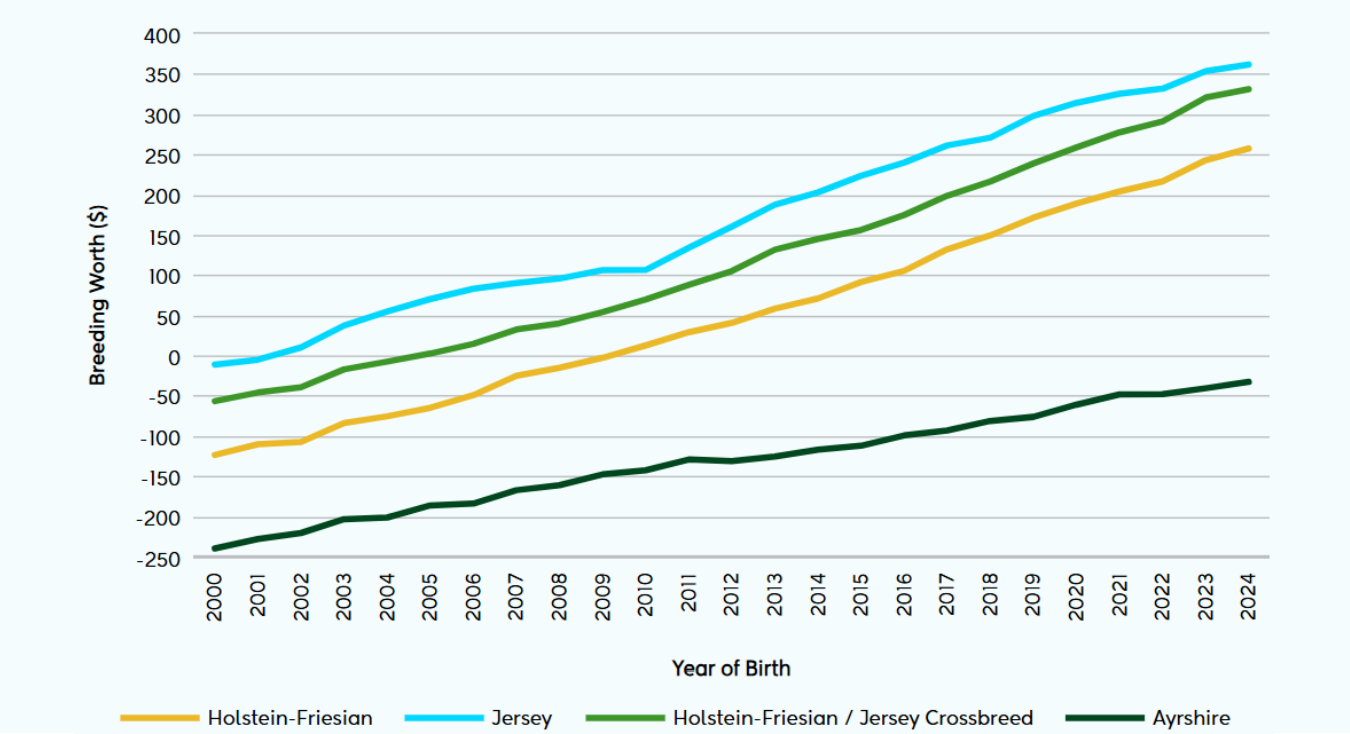
Graph 4.20: Distribution of Cow Production Worth in 2024/25



(Evaluation date: 16 May 2025)

The genetic trend for cows is based on all cows (alive or dead) recorded in DIGAD as of 16 May 2025. Also included are the estimated BW and PW for replacement stock (2023 and 2024 born animals). All evaluations can be compared across breeds. Consistent with previous years, BW continued to increase steadily across all breed categories (Graph 4.21). Animals born in 2024 had a higher estimated average BW than those born in previous years, with Jersey cows recording the highest average BW among all breeds.

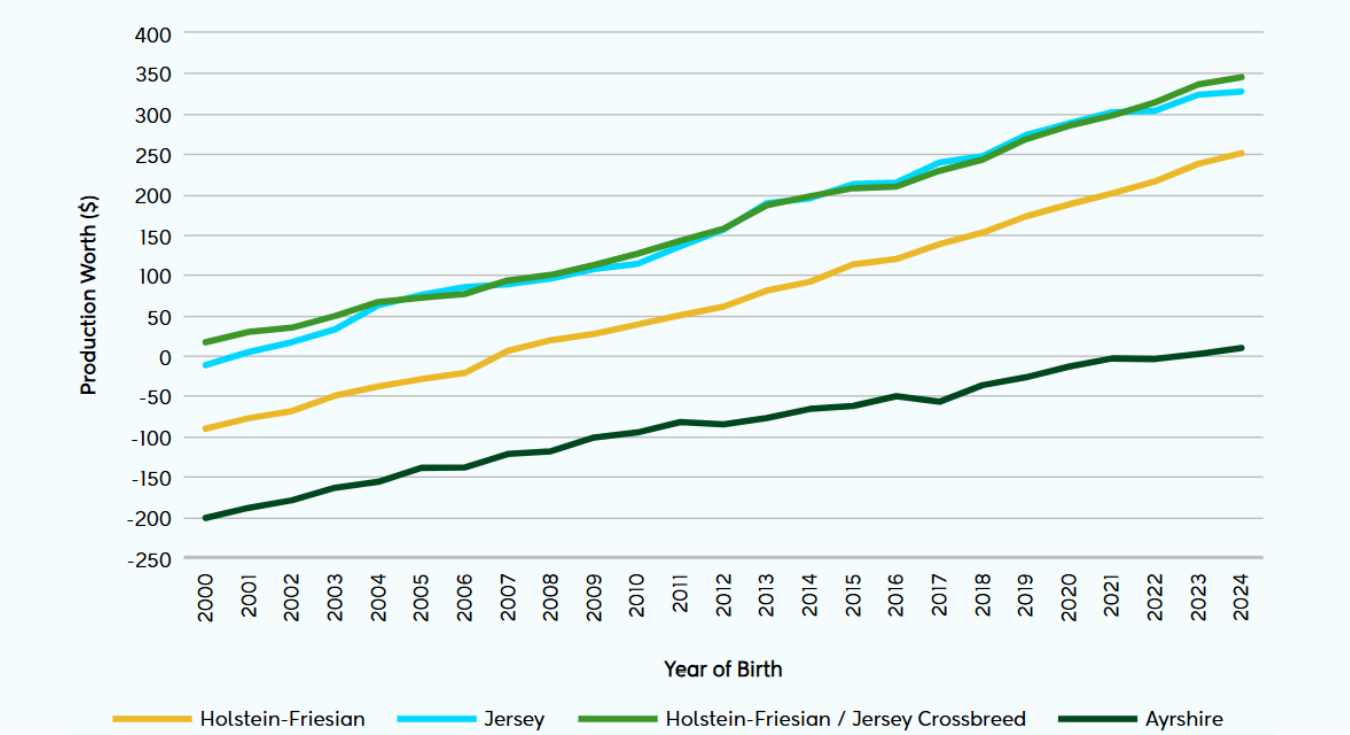
Graph 4.21: Trend in Breeding Worth for all cows



(Evaluation date: 16 May 2025)

The trend for PW by breed is presented in Graph 4.22. The increasing value of the protein component of milk has resulted in a favourable outcome for crossbred animals with the additional value of hybrid vigour (heterosis) also expressed in PW for crossbred animals. Among animals born in 2024, Crossbreed cows recorded a higher estimated PW than those of other breed categories (Graph 4.22).

Graph 4.22: Trend in Production Worth for all cows



(Evaluation date: 16 May 2025)

Table 4.21 shows the average BVs and BW by breed category, of all current 2022 born cows. The Jersey cows had the highest average BW at 334. Holstein-Friesian cows had the highest milkfat, protein, and milk volume BVs. All evaluations are comparable across breeds.

Table 4.21: Average Breeding Worth and Breeding Values of all current cows born in 2022 by breed category

Breed	BW $	Milkfat BV (kg)	Protein BV (kg)	Milk Volume BV (kg)	Liveweight BV (kg)	Somatic Cell BV (score)	Fertility BV (%)	Gestation Length BV (days)	Body Cond. Score (score)	Functional Survival BV (%)	Udder Overall BV (unit)	Cow Numbers
Holstein-Friesian	221	29	29.1	693	44.4	0.06	-0.6	-1.4	0	1.4	0.39	213,532
Jersey	334.4	22.2	8.2	-272	-46.2	-0.16	3.8	-0.3	0.01	1.2	0.345	67,636
Holstein-Friesian / Jersey Crossbreed	295.1	28.7	22.6	308	7.3	-0.02	1.4	-1.5	0.01	1.6	0.298	555,169
Ayrshire	-43.8	3.4	6.1	313	21.8	-0.21	-6.5	0.5	-0.08	0.5	0.213	3,726
Guernsey	-330.8	-19.3	-16.1	-385	38.4	0.11	-2.8	5.7	-0.17	-5.1	-0.3	47
Milking Shorthorn	-226.4	-17.2	-5.4	37	26.9	-0.07	-2	2.1	-0.05	-3.6	-0.263	69
Brown Swiss	-125.9	-6.8	5.3	137	43.3	-0.22	-4.7	6	-0.02	-1.8	-0.02	97
Other	208.1	21.4	18.9	287	13.5	-0.07	0	-0.8	-0.01	1	0.233	67,560
Weighted Average	272.6	27.6	22.7	353	12.6	-0.02	0.9	-1.3	0	1.4	0.318	907,836

(Evaluation date: 16 May 2025)

Survivability is measured by the percentage of cows that have a lactation recorded for consecutive years. The value in the "2-3 years" age group is the percentage of cows that were milking as two-year-olds in the 2023/24 season and are now milking as three-year-olds in the 2024/25 season.

In the 2024/25 season, survivability was slightly higher than the previous year for animals in the age groups of 6-7 years. For animals in the other age groups, survivability decreased slightly compared to the previous season. In the 2024/25 season, cows aged 3-4 years had the highest percentage of survival (86.7%), followed by animals aged 4-5 years (85.2%) and 2-3 years (84.5%).

Table 4.22: Trend in survivability percentages (% of age group surviving to next lactation)

Season	2-3 years	3-4 years	4-5 years	5-6 years	6-7 years	7-8 years	8-9 years
2005/06	82.5	88.5	88.6	84.9	80.2	77.0	70.8
2006/07	82.7	88.1	88.5	84.7	80.2	75.2	71.7
2007/08	81.5	88.4	87.9	84.2	80.7	75.1	70.1
2008/09	83.9	87.8	88.0	83.7	80.4	76.2	71.1
2009/10	83.1	88.1	87.5	83.0	78.5	73.8	68.1
2010/11	83.4	87.8	86.2	81.4	77.4	72.0	66.5
2011/12	84.5	89.4	87.8	82.6	77.2	72.6	65.7
2012/13	84.2	89.7	88.3	83.2	78.2	72.4	67.1
2013/14	84.4	88.4	87.2	82.5	77.6	72.1	64.9
2014/15	83.7	86.3	85.6	81.1	76.6	71.0	64.7
2015/16	83.8	87.8	85.5	80.7	75.8	70.2	63.9
2016/17	81.8	85.6	84.5	79.4	74.6	69.2	63.1
2017/18	82.6	85.7	84.9	80.3	74.4	69.9	64.5
2018/19	83.0	86.2	86.0	81.2	76.0	69.7	65.1
2019/20	83.7	85.8	85.7	81.2	76.1	71.4	65.3
2020/21	84.4	86.1	85.2	80.7	75.9	71.3	65.8
2021/22	85.0	87.3	86.2	81.2	76.7	71.1	65.8
2022/23	85.0	87.3	86.9	81.4	75.8	70.5	65.2
2023/24	85.1	86.9	86.2	81.8	75.7	70.0	65.1
2024/25	84.5	86.7	85.2	81.1	75.9	69.8	64.4

5. Prices received

5.1. Milk prices

Up until the end of the 2000/01 season, dairy farmers received payment from the New Zealand Dairy Board through a system of advance and final payouts via dairy companies. Now, in addition to advance and final payouts, farmers get a margin based on dairy company efficiency, product mix and investment policies (dividends); together known as the total payout.

The introduction of the Dairy Industry Restructuring Act 2001 opened the way for New Zealand's largest dairy companies, Kiwi Cooperative Dairy Company (Kiwi) and New Zealand Dairy Group (NZDG) to merge with the Dairy Board to form Fonterra. Further, the Act allowed the smaller dairy companies, such as Tatua and Westland, to remain separate co-operatives. Consequently, the historic payment system became redundant. As of 2019/20, Tatua and Fonterra are the two remaining dairy cattle co-operatives with established commercial arrangements for sale of dairy products. Payments to seasonal supply farmers are based on the "A+B±C" system, which incorporates payments for milkfat (A) and protein (B) with an adjustment for milk volume (C). The payment system for winter milk supply varies between companies. Some winter milk payment systems are based on the milk volume only, whereas other payment systems are similar to seasonal supply payment systems, which incorporate the milkfat, protein, and volume components of milk.

- The average dairy co-operative payout in 2024/25 was $10.75/kg of milksolids.

The weighted average dairy co-operative total payout (per kilogram of milksolids) received by dairy farmers from seasonal milk supply is shown in Table 5.1 and Graph 5.1 (weightings are based on the number of herds supplying each dairy co-operative). The average payout is given in both nominal and inflation-adjusted dollars using the Consumers Price Index (CPI) provided by Statistics New Zealand.

The nominal average dairy cooperative payout in 2024/25 was $10.75 per kg milksolids, $1.61 above the five-year average of $9.14. However, when adjusted for inflation, the 2024/25 payout was actually $0.90 above the five-year inflation-adjusted average of $9.85 per kg milksolids.

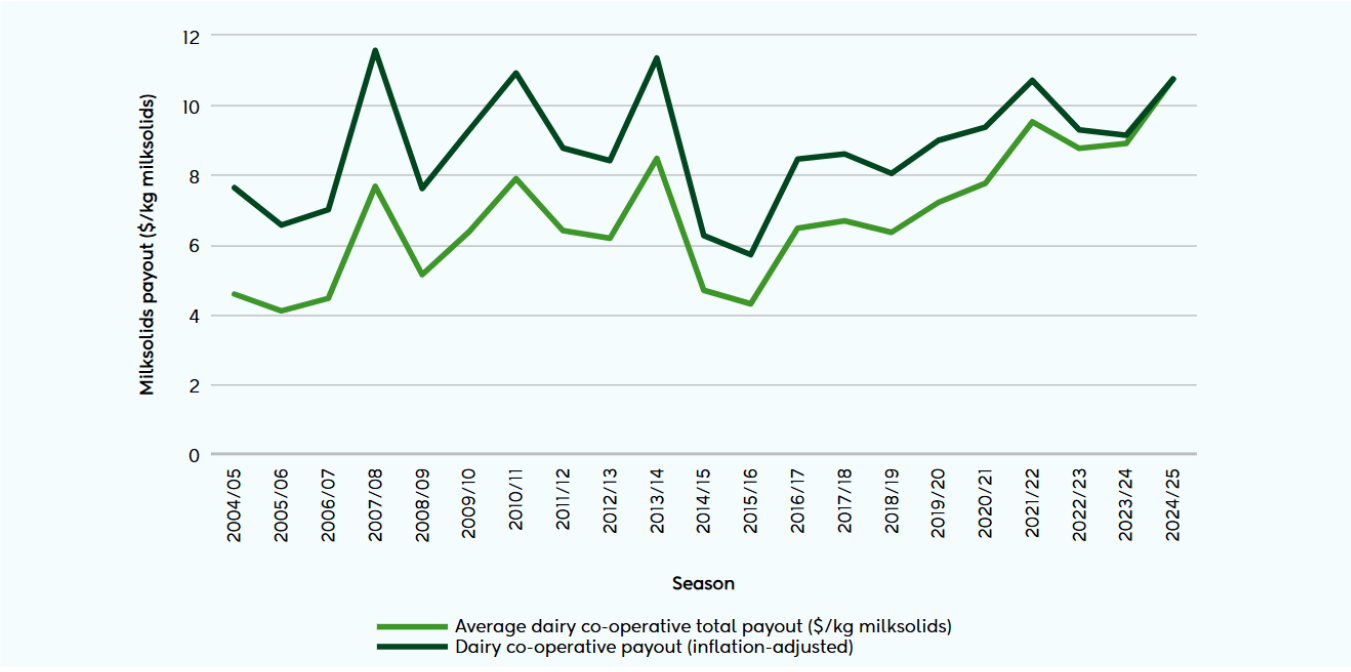
Table 5.1: Trend in prices received for milksolids

Season	Average dairy co-operative total payout ($/kg milksolids)	Dairy co-operative payout (inflation-adjusted)
2004/05	4.58	7.63
2005/06	4.10	6.56
2006/07	4.46	7.00
2007/08	7.67	11.57
2008/09	5.14	7.61
2009/10	6.37	9.28
2010/11	7.89	10.92
2011/12	6.40	8.77
2012/13	6.18	8.41
2013/14	8.47	11.35
2014/15	4.69	6.26
2015/16	4.30	5.71
2016/17	6.47	8.45
2017/18	6.68	8.60
2018/19	6.35	8.04
2019/20	7.21	8.99
2020/21	7.76	9.37
2021/22	9.52	10.71
2022/23	8.76	9.29
2023/24	8.90	9.14
2024/25	10.75	10.75

Note:

- Milksolids payout excludes dairy co-operative retentions and deduction for DairyNZ Levy.
- The "Dairy co-operative payout (inflation-adjusted)" values have been weighted to give real dollar values using the Consumers Price Index for the end of the June quarter (sourced from Statistics New Zealand).
- Between 2009/10 and 2018/19, the average dairy co-operative payout was estimated from the Fonterra, Tatua, and Westland payouts.
- From 2019/20 the average dairy co-operative payout is estimated from the Fonterra and Tatua payouts (the Fonterra payout includes dividend payments).
- The Fonterra milksolids payout for the 2023/24 season included the additional payment from the divestment of Soprole.

Graph 5.1: Trend in milksolids payout to dairy farmers



5.2. Dairy farm land prices

- The number of dairy farms sold in 2024/25 was higher than in the previous two seasons.
- Dairy land price per hectare in 2024/25 is higher than in the previous season.

Dairy land sales are based on data provided by the Real Estate Institute of New Zealand (REINZ) on a seasonal basis. Up until the 2019/20 season, raw data provided by REINZ was weighted by the number of farms in each region. From the 2019/20 season onwards, data is no longer weighted due to changes in the way data is provided by REINZ. The new method produces values that are consistent with changes observed and past season figures. The farms sold are considered to be business entities.

The average size of the farms sold in 2024/25 was 163 ha, similar to the previous season (164 ha). The average sale price of dairy farms increased to $5.9 million in 2024/25, about $900,000 higher than the previous season (Table 5.2). The nominal dairy land average sale price per hectare increased by 18% percent, from $30,584 in 2023/24 to $36,231 in 2024/25, and was the highest of the previous six seasons. After adjusting for inflation, the 2024/25 dairy land price per hectare was higher than last season but remained below the levels of earlier seasons (Graph 5.2).

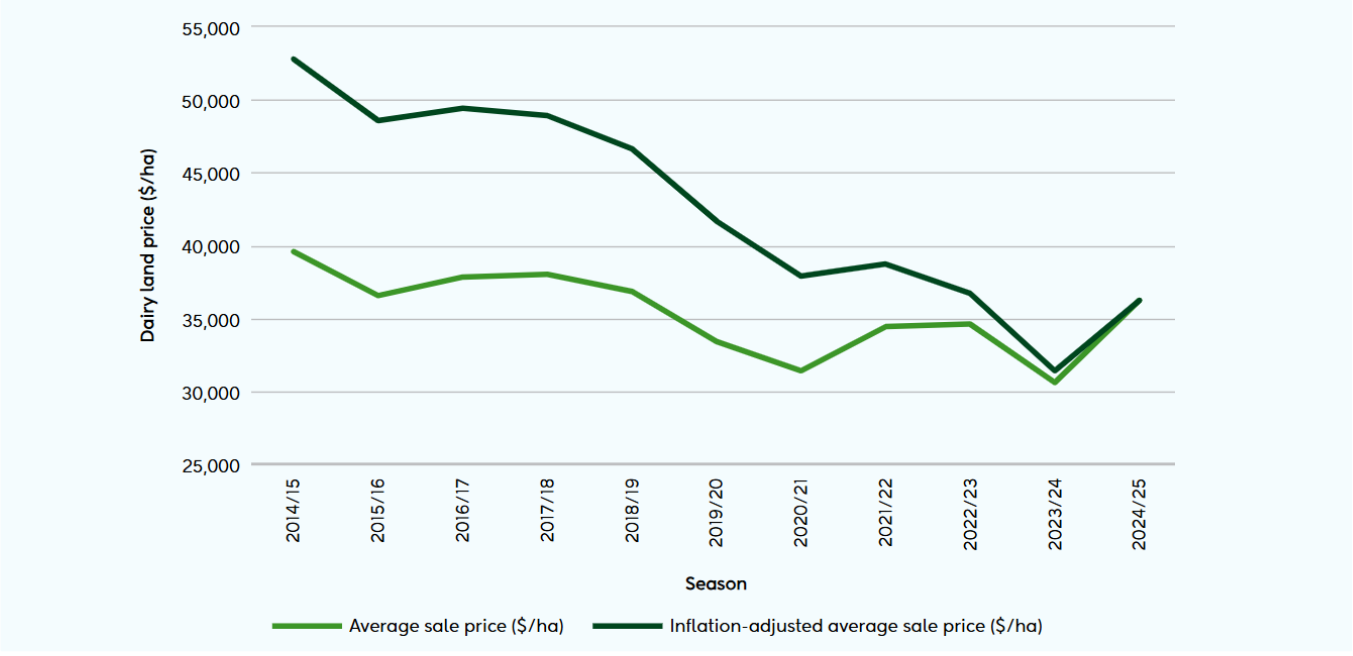
Table 5.2: Trend in dairy land sale values

Season	Number of dairy farms sold	Average sale price ($)*	Inflation adjusted average sale price ($)	Average land area (ha)*	Average sale price/ha ($)*	Inflation adjusted average sale price/ha ($)	Average sale price/KgMS ($)*	CPI
2014/15	244	5,228,018	6,974,251	132	39,577	52,796	44	979
2015/16	192	5,381,697	7,150,047	169	36,557	48,569	39	983
2016/17	217	4,808,676	6,280,131	151	37,835	49,413	40	1,000
2017/18	226	4,935,487	6,350,489	130	38,015	48,914	40	1,015
2018/19	148	5,125,837	6,486,767	144	36,846	46,629	38	1,032
2019/20	113	4,451,927	5,553,216	133	33,410	41,675	37	1,047
2020/21	198	4,810,641	5,806,559	153	31,393	37,892	35	1,082
2021/22	200	4,800,278	5,399,796	139	34,427	38,727	35	1,161
2022/23	140	4,869,150	5,165,808	141	34,600	36,708	37	1,231
2023/24	117	5,004,578	5,138,348	164	30,584	31,401	36	1,272
2024/25	196	5,895,283	5,895,283	163	36,231	36,231	37	1,306

Note:
- Source: Real Estate Institute of New Zealand (REINZ), Statistics New Zealand, DairyNZ.
- Inflation-adjusted values were calculated using the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
- Number of dairy farms sold is for a season (01-Jun to 31-May) and excludes support blocks and non-economic entities.

* Pre-2019/20 figures have been weighted by the number of dairy farms in each region. From 2019/20 onwards, figures have not been weighted.

Graph 5.2: Trend in dairy land sale price per hectare



6. Disease control

6.1. Tuberculosis (TB) control

Control of Tuberculosis (TB) over the agricultural industry is managed by TBfree New Zealand. The primary objective of TBfree is to reduce the number of infected herds and to prevent TB vector free areas becoming vector risk areas. The status of a vector area is determined by the prevalence of wild animals (e.g., possums and ferrets) that are considered a source of infection.

In 2024/25, the total number of infected dairy herds was 5 (Table 6.1), compared to 6 in 2023/24. The North Island recorded 4 infected herds in 2024/25, 1 herd lower than in 2023/24. The South Island recorded 1 infected herd in 2024/25, the same number as the previous season. The number of tuberculous dairy cattle increased from 11 in 2023/24 to 16 in 2024/25, but it was still below the five-year average of 21.

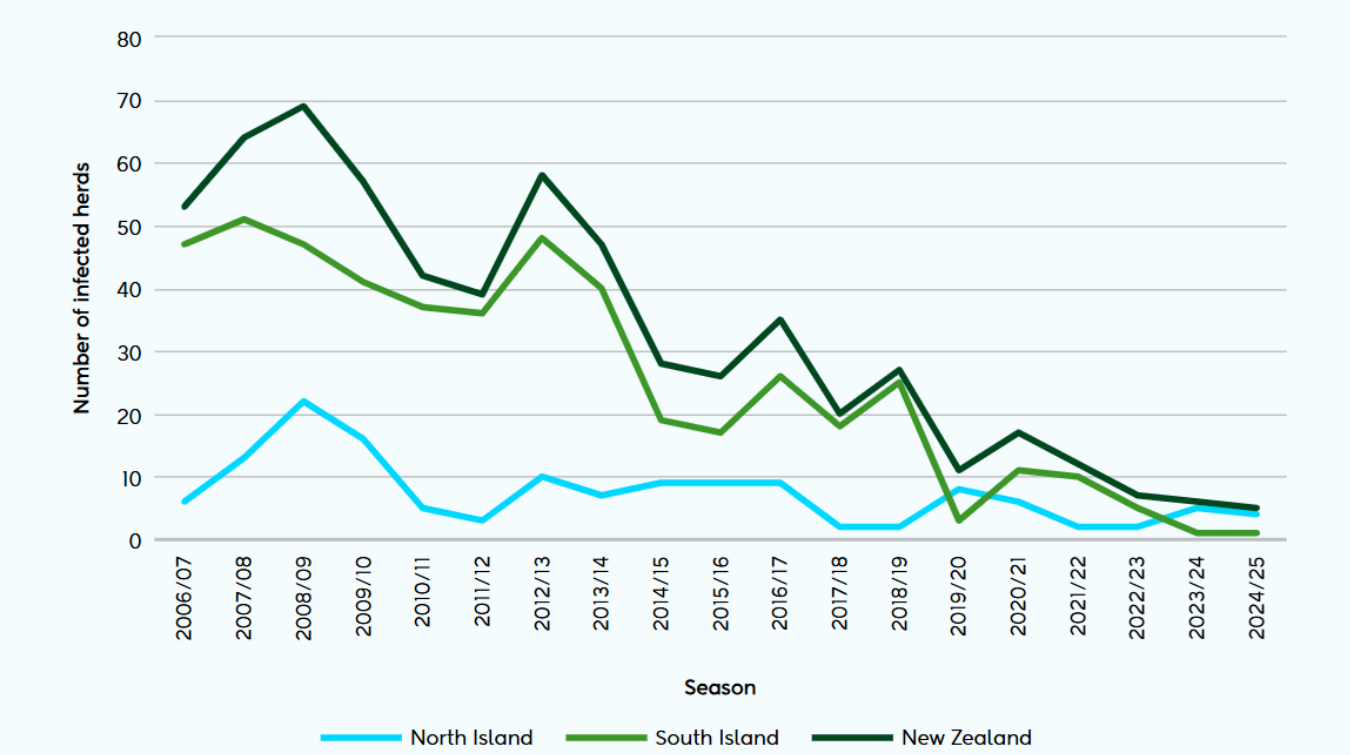
Table 6.1: Tuberculosis (Tb) testing and results in 2024/25

Region	Vector Status	Number of infected dairy herds at the end of the season (30 June)	Number of dairy cattle primary tested during the season	Number of tuberculous dairy cattle
Northland	Free	0	39,342	0
Auckland	Free	0	6,330	0
Waikato	Free	2	236,102	5
	Risk	1	14,232	2
Bay of Plenty	Free	0	29,655	0
Gisborne	Free	0	100	0
Hawkes Bay	Free	0	12,735	0
	Risk	1	23,852	1
Taranaki	Free	0	57,154	0
Manawatu/Wanganui	Free	0	50,867	0
	Risk	0	765	0
Wellington	Free	0	15,313	0
	Risk	0	39,875	0
North Island	Free	2	447,598	5
	Risk	2	78,724	3
North Island	Total	4	526,322	8
Marlborough	Free	0	2,626	0
Tasman/Nelson	Free	0	15,243	0
	Risk	0	4,998	0
West Coast	Free	0	5,548	0
	Risk	1	146,362	8
Canterbury	Free	0	124,241	0
	Risk	0	19,709	0
Otago	Free	0	94,956	0
	Risk	0	60,461	0
Southland	Free	0	140,667	0
South Island	Free	0	383,281	0
	Risk	1	231,530	8
South Island	Total	1	614,811	8
New Zealand	Free	2	830,879	5
	Risk	3	310,254	11
New Zealand	Total	5	1,141,133	16

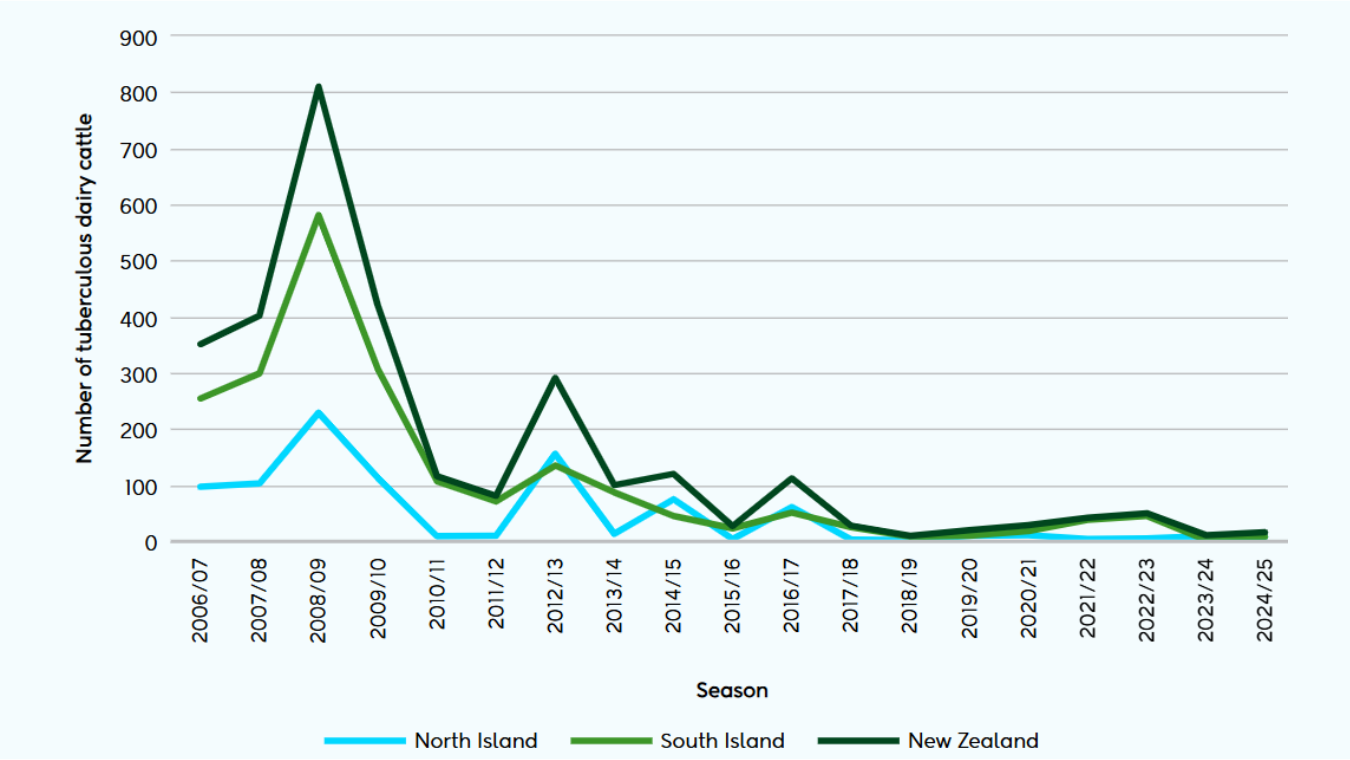
Note: Data sourced from TBfree New Zealand. Tuberculous animals include lesioned reactor cattle and lesioned cull cattle.

Nationally, the past 19 seasons has seen an 90.5% decrease in the number of infected herds (Graph 6.1). The overall number of infected animals has decreased by 95.4% over the same period (Graph 6.2).

Graph 6.1: Trend in the number of infected herds since 2006/07



Graph 6.2: Trend in the number of tuberculous dairy cattle since 2006/07



7. Appendices

7.1. Appendix 1: Farming regions and districts

The following map shows the farming regions used in all analyses presented in this report. The list of districts, which follow territorial local authority boundaries (except in Auckland, Christchurch and Banks Peninsula), within each region is also given.

1 Northland
Far North
Whangarei
Kaipara

2 Auckland
Rodney
North Shore
Waitakere
Auckland
Manukau
Papakura
Franklin

3 Waikato
Thames/Coromandel
Hauraki
Waikato
Matamata/Piako
Hamilton
Waipa
Otorohanga
South Waikato

4 Bay of Plenty
Western Bay of Plenty
Tauranga
Whakatane
Kawerau
Opotiki

5 Central Plateau
Rotorua
Taupo

6 Western Uplands
Waitomo
Ruapehu

7 East Coast
Gisborne
Wairoa

8 Hawkes Bay
Hastings
Napier
Central Hawkes Bay

9 Taranaki
New Plymouth
Stratford
South Taranaki

10 Manawatu
Wanganui
Rangitikei
Manawatu
Palmerston North
Horowhenua
Kapiti
Porirua
Upper Hutt
Lower Hutt
Wellington

11 Wairarapa
Tararua
Masterton
Carterton
South Wairarapa

12 Nelson/Marlborough
Tasman
Nelson
Marlborough
Kaikoura

13 West Coast
Buller
Grey
Westland

14 North Canterbury
Hurunui
Waimakariri
Christchurch
Banks Peninsula
Selwyn
Ashburton

15 South Canterbury
Timaru
Mackenzie
Waimate

16 Otago
Waitaki
Central Otago
Queenstown/Lakes
Dunedin
Clutha

17 Southland
Southland
Gore
Invercargill