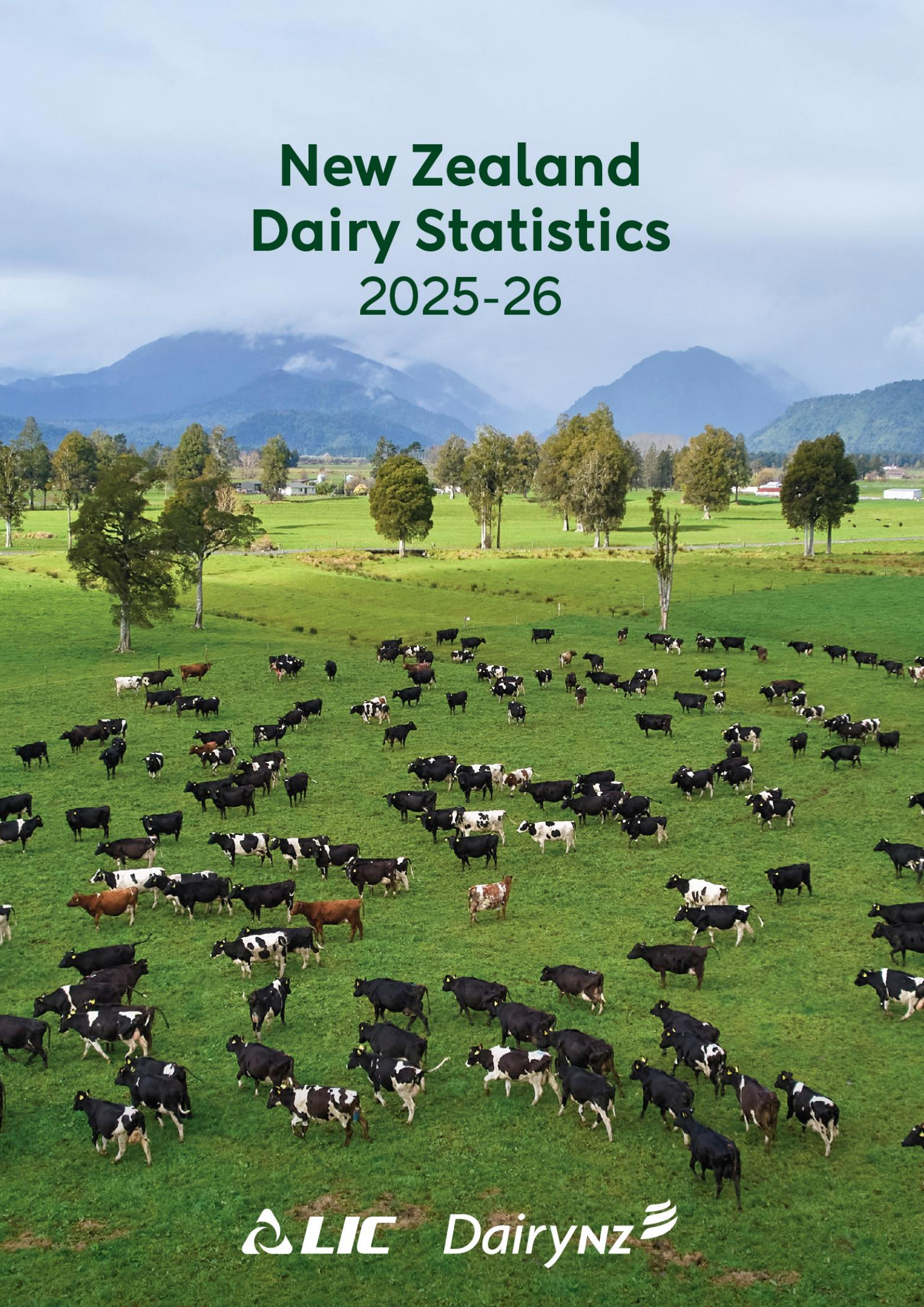
# New Zealand Dairy Statistics 2025-26



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# Contents


1. Introduction ..... 4
   1.1. Introduction ..... 4
   1.2. Executive Summary ..... 5
      1.2.1. Milk Production ..... 5
      1.2.2. Cow Numbers ..... 5
      1.2.3. Number of Dairy Herds and Herd Size ..... 5
      1.2.4. Herd Improvement ..... 6
      1.2.5. Cow Breed ..... 6
      1.2.6. Milk Prices ..... 6
   1.3. Commentary ..... 7

2. National dairy statistics ..... 8
   2.1. Industry statistics ..... 8
      2.1.1. Production ..... 8
      2.1.2. Population ..... 9
   2.2. Herd production statistics ..... 11
      2.2.1. Production per cow and per hectare ..... 12
      2.2.2. Herd size distribution ..... 13

3. Regional dairy statistics ..... 15
   3.1. Regions ..... 15
   3.2. Districts ..... 17
   3.3. Operating structures ..... 21
   3.4. Breed breakdown ..... 26

4. Herd improvement ..... 28
   4.1. Use of herd testing ..... 28
   4.2. Herd test averages ..... 30
      4.2.1. Seasonal averages ..... 30
      4.2.2. Monthly averages ..... 32
      4.2.3. Breed category averages ..... 35
   4.3. Artificial Breeding (AB) statistics ..... 38
   4.4. Herd Reproduction ..... 43
   4.5. Calving ..... 46
      4.5.1. Planned start of calving and median calving dates ..... 46
      4.5.2. Calving interval ..... 48
   4.6. Animal Evaluation ..... 49
      4.6.1. Sire Evaluations ..... 50
      4.6.2. Cow Evaluations ..... 52

5. Prices received ..... 58
   5.1. Milk prices ..... 58
   5.2. Dairy farm land prices ..... 60

6. Disease control ..... 61
   6.1. Tuberculosis (Tb) control ..... 61

7. Appendices ..... 63
   7.1. Appendix 1: Farming regions and districts ..... 63

# List of tables


Table 2.1: Summary of milk production statistics ..... 8
Table 2.2: Summary of herd statistics since 1975/76 ..... 10
Table 2.3: Summary of herd production since 1975/76 ..... 11
Table 2.4: Average production per cow by herd size in 2025/26 ..... 13
Table 3.1: Herd analysis by region in 2025/26 ..... 16
Table 3.2: Herd production analysis by region in 2025/26 ..... 17
Table 3.3: Herd analysis by district in 2025/26 ..... 18
Table 3.4: Herd production analysis by district in 2025/26 ..... 20
Table 3.5: Herd analysis by operating structure in 2025/26 ..... 22
Table 3.6: Herd production analysis by operating structure in 2025/26 ..... 22
Table 3.7: Trend in the percentage of herds in each operating structure for the last 10 seasons ..... 23
Table 3.8: Trend in the number of herds in each operating structure for the last 10 seasons ..... 23
Table 3.9: Operating structure by region in 2025/26 ..... 24
Table 3.10: Operating structure by herd size in 2025/26 ..... 25
Table 4.1: Trend in the use of herd testing services ..... 28
Table 4.2: Use of herd testing by region in 2025/26 ..... 29
Table 4.3: Season herd test averages per cow by region in 2025/26 ..... 31
Table 4.4: Trend in the national herd test averages ..... 32
Table 4.5: Monthly herd test averages by region in 2025/26 ..... 33
Table 4.6: Herd test averages by breed category and cow age in 2025/26 ..... 35
Table 4.7: Liveweight by age and by breed category of cow in 2025/26 ..... 37
Table 4.8: Cows and yearlings to AB ..... 38
Table 4.9: Trend in mean herd reproductive performance ..... 44
Table 4.10: Mean 6-week in-calf rate by farming region ..... 45
Table 4.11: Percentile Distribution of Actual 6-week in-calf rate in 2025/26 ..... 45
Table 4.12: Percentile Distribution of Estimated 6-week in-calf rate in 2025/26 ..... 46
Table 4.13: Trend in mean calving interval by breed ..... 48
Table 4.14: Economic values used from 22 May 2026 ..... 49
Table 4.15: Average Breeding Values and Breeding Worth of 2021 born bulls (BW reliability of 70% or greater) ..... 50
Table 4.16: Number of Sires by birth year and breed category (reliability of BW 70% or greater, includes overseas bulls) ..... 51
Table 4.17: Herd Breeding Worth in 2025/26 ..... 52
Table 4.18: Percentile Distribution of Herd Production Worth in 2025/26 ..... 53
Table 4.19: Cow Breeding Worth in 2025/26 ..... 54
Table 4.20: Percentile Distribution of cow Production Worth in 2025/26 ..... 55
Table 4.21: Average Breeding Worth and Breeding Values of all current cows born in 2023 by breed category ..... 57
Table 4.22: Trend in survivability percentages (% of age group surviving to next lactation) ..... 57
Table 5.1: Trend in prices received for milksolids ..... 59
Table 5.2: Trend in dairy land sale values ..... 60
Table 6.1: Tuberculosis (Tb) testing and results in 2025/26 ..... 61

# List of graphs


Graph 2.1: Trend in the number of herds and average herd size ..... 9
Graph 2.2: Milksolids production per cow and per effective hectare ..... 12
Graph 2.3: Distribution of herds by milksolids production per cow ..... 13
Graph 2.4: Herd size distribution for 2024/25 compared with that of 10 seasons ago ..... 14
Graph 3.1: Regional distribution of dairy cows in 2024/25 ..... 15
Graph 3.2: Breed category percentages of cows for New Zealand in 2024/25 ..... 26
Graph 3.3: Breed category percentages of cows by region in 2024/25 ..... 26
Graph 3.4: Change in breed category percentages across time ..... 27
Graph 4.1: Trend in the percentage of herds testing ..... 29
Graph 4.2: Average milkfat and protein production per cow by region in 2024/25 ..... 31
Graph 4.3: Liveweight by age and by breed category of cow in 2024/25 ..... 37
Graph 4.4: Trend in the percentage of cows to Artificial Breeding ..... 40
Graph 4.5: Average number of inseminations per cow ..... 40
Graph 4.6: Ayrshire semen usage (%) over breed category ..... 41
Graph 4.7: Holstein-Friesian / Jersey Crossbreed semen usage (%) over breed category ..... 41
Graph 4.8: Jersey semen usage (%) over breed category ..... 42
Graph 4.9: Holstein-Friesian semen usage (%) over breed category ..... 42
Graph 4.10: Trend in the percentage of inseminations of each breed category ..... 43
Graph 4.11: Trend in mean actual and estimated 6-week in-calf rate ..... 44
Graph 4.12: Distribution of actual 6-week in-calf rate in 2024/25 ..... 45
Graph 4.13: Distribution of estimated 6-week in-calf rate in 2024/25 ..... 46
Graph 4.14: Planned start of calving and median calving dates for cows (excluding first calvers) by region ..... 47
Graph 4.15: Trend in planned start of calving dates for cows (excluding first calvers) by region ..... 47
Graph 4.16: Genetic trend of proven dairy bulls by year of birth (BW reliability of 70% or greater) ..... 50
Graph 4.16a: Number of Sires by year of birth (BW reliability of 70% or greater, includes overseas bulls) 50
Graph 4.17: Distribution of Herd Breeding Worth in 2025/26 50
Graph 4.18: Distribution of Herd Production Worth in 2025/26 50
Graph 4.19: Percentile Distribution of cow Breeding Worth in 2025/26 50
Graph 4.20: Distribution of Cow Production Worth in 2025/26 50
Graph 4.21: Trend in Breeding Worth for all cows 50
Graph 4.22: Trend in Production Worth for all cows 50
Graph 5.1: Trend in milksolids payout to dairy farmers ..... 59
Graph 5.2: Trend in dairy land sale price per hectare ..... 60
Graph 6.1: Trend in the number of infected herds since 2006/07 ..... 62
Graph 6.2: Trend in the number of tuberculous dairy cattle since 2006/07 ..... 62

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Introduction

**Kia ora and welcome to the 2025/26 edition of New Zealand Dairy Statistics.**

The 2025/26 Dairy Statistics tell an impressive story of sustained progress across the sector. New Zealand dairy companies processed a record 2.02 billion kilograms of milksolids, the first-time production has exceeded 2 billion kilograms, alongside gains in herd performance, reproduction and milk quality.

Reproductive performance reached a new high, with the national six-week in-calf rate rising to a record 70.2%. That compares with 63.5% in 2008 – a substantial improvement that reflects farmers' continued investment in herd management, genetics and long-term productivity. Herd testing participation also reached its highest level since the early 2000s, while the proportion of cows mated through artificial breeding was the highest recorded in the last three decades.

Milk composition is another striking measure of progress. Over the past 25 years, milksolids have increased from 8.48% of milk in 2000/01 to 9.27% in 2025/26. These gains were supported in part by continued genetic improvement, with Breeding Worth and Production Worth increasing across all breeds. Favourable summer rainfall in many regions, and the use of imported feed, are also likely to have contributed to higher production, helping cows reach a record of 280 days in milk, four days longer than a decade ago. Together with record-low somatic cell counts and a strong milksolids payout, these results highlight a resilient, adaptable sector achieving more value from every litre of milk.



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Chief Executive
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Chief Executive
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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 4.5% increase in total milksolids production for 2025/26, driven by increases in both cow numbers (+1%) and production per cow. Dairy companies processed a record 2.02 billion kilograms of milksolids, exceeding 2 billion kilograms for the first time. The trend towards fewer but larger herds continued this season.

The number of cows herd-tested and mated to artificial breeding increased in 2025/26. Herd testing reached 83.3% of cows and 78.7% of herds, the highest proportion since the early 2000s, while the proportion of cows mated to AB increased to 85.2%, the highest level recorded in the last three decades. Reproductive performance also improved, with the national six-week in-calf rate reaching a record 70.2%.

The increase in total milksolids production reflects continued gains in cow production and milk quality. Herd-tested cows achieved record production levels for milk yield, as well as milkfat and protein yields and percentages. Somatic cell count declined to a record low of 149,000 cells/mL, indicating continued improvements in udder health and milk quality. The average dairy co-operative payout was $10.44/kg milksolids, the second highest on record.

## 1.2.1. Milk Production

In the 2025/26 season, dairy companies processed 21.8 billion litres of milk containing 2.02 billion kilograms of milksolids. Compared with the previous season, this was a 3.5% (~ 745 million litres) increase in litres and a 4.5% (~ 87 million kg) increase in kilograms of milksolids processed, associated to a greater proportion of milksolids in the milk processed.

Average milk production per cow across the country was 428 kilograms of milksolids (made up of 242 kilograms of milkfat and 187 kg of protein). Average milksolids production per effective hectare increased in 2025/26 to 1,194 kg/ha, surpassing the record level from the 2020/21 season (1,137 kg/ha).




## 1.2.2. Cow Numbers

Cow numbers increased.

Cow numbers increased by 1% in 2025/26, reaching 4.72 million. This is equivalent to the five-year average of 4.72 million.




## 1.2.3. Number of Dairy Herds and Herd Size

The average herd size increased and the number of herds decreased.

There were 10,268 herds this season, 102 fewer than the previous season. The national average herd size was 460, which was nine cows more than 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, milksolids makeup 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 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.

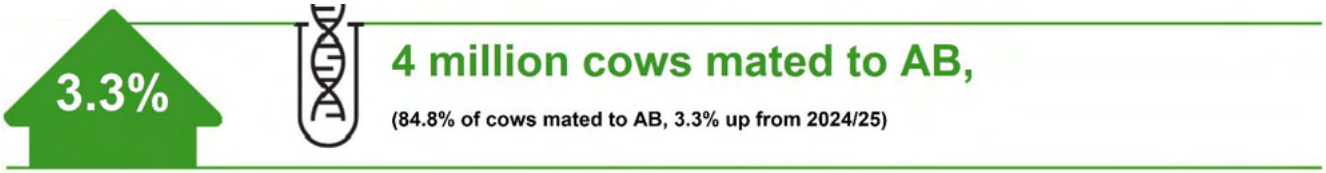
A total of 3.94 million cows were herd tested in 2025/26 – a 1.2% increase from the previous season. That equates to 83.3% of cows in the national herd being herd tested in 2025/26. The percentage of total herds tested (78.7%) was higher than the five-year average of 76.4%.




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

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

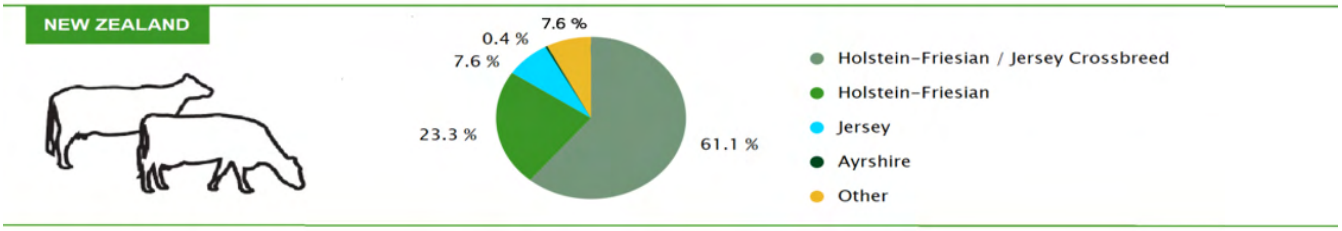
There were 4 million cows mated to AB in 2025/26. The percentage of cows mated to AB increased 3.3 percent, from 81.5% in 2024/25 to 84.8% in 2025/26, the highest of the last three decades.




## 1.2.5. Cow Breed

Sixty 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. Breed composition remained relatively stable in 2025/26, with Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbred cows making up 61.1% of the national herd, compared with 23.3% for Holstein-Friesian cows and 7.6% for Jersey cows.




## 1.2.6. Milk Prices

The average dairy co-operative payout (including dividends) was $10.44 per kilograms of milksolids.

The average dairy co-operative payout in 2025/26 ($10.44 per kg milksolids) was $0.77 above the five-year average of $9.67. When adjusted for inflation, the 2025/26 payout was $0.05 above the five-year inflation-adjusted average of $10.39 per kg milksolids.



# 1.3. Commentary

### A Season of record production and continued system improvement

The 2025/26 season stands out as a record year for New Zealand dairy, but the more important story is how that production was achieved. Dairy companies processed 21.8 billion litres of milk, containing a record 2.02 billion kg of milksolids (MS), the first time national production exceeded 2 billion kg. This represents an increase of 9% (162 million kg MS) over the past decade and 60% (757 million kg MS) over two decades. Despite having fewer herds than a decade ago, New Zealand's dairy herds are larger. In 2025/26, the number of herds fell by 102 to 10,268, while the total number of dairy cows increased by around 47,000, returning to levels last seen in 2021/22. Average herd size reached a record 460 cows, up 9 from the previous season and 41 from a decade ago. This points to a sector continuing to lift output through stronger performance at both cow and farm level.

Several factors contributed to record milksolids production in 2025/26. Average production increased to a record 428 kg MS per cow and 1,194 kg MS/ha, up 56 kg MS/cow and 123 kg MS/ha from a decade ago. Among herd-tested cows (83% of all cows), average milk production reached a record 4,999 litres per cow. Average milkfat, protein and milksolids production per cow also reached record highs of 252, 201 and 452 kg, respectively, compared with 217, 176 and 393 kg a decade ago. The percentages of milkfat, protein and milksolids also reached record high in 2024/25. Meanwhile, the average somatic cell count decreased to a record-low of 149,000 cells/ml, down 8,000 from the previous season and 31,000 from a decade ago, suggesting improvements in udder health and milk quality.

These gains were supported in part by continued genetic improvement, with Breeding Worth and Production Worth increasing across all breeds. Favourable summer rainfall in many regions and the use of imported feed are also likely to have contributed to higher production, helping cows reach a record of 280 days in milk, four days longer than a decade ago.

Herd testing increased to 78.7% of herds, up from 77.2% in 2024/25 and returning to levels last seen in the early 2000s. This greater access to performance information may have helped farmers identify under-performing cows, monitor animal health and make more informed breeding decisions.

The mean six-week in-calf rate reached 70.2%, while the three-week submission rate was among the highest of the past decade. These results suggest that farmers have benefited from effective reproductive management, helping them get cows in calf earlier and then maintain a compact calving pattern for the following season. Both genetics and on-farm management influence these outcomes.

Breeding strategies also continued to evolve. The proportion of cows mated through artificial breeding rose from 81.5% to 84.8%, the highest in 20 years, while average inseminations reached 1.41 per cow. Beef semen accounted for 13.7% of inseminations, up from 12.4%, alongside increased use of short-gestation-length semen. These changes may reflect farmers taking a more targeted approach to improving herd genetics, managing calving timing and increasing the value of calves not needed as replacements.

The milksolids payout of $10.44 per kg MS (including dividends), although lower than the previous season, this was the sixth-highest payout of the past 20 seasons after adjusting for inflation. This relatively high payout may have encouraged farmers to invest in their farms and improve production, contributing to the record output.

Together, these trends show how the sector has continued to lift output through changes in farm systems, genetics, management and herd performance. The next opportunity is to build on these gains by improving productivity, which measures how efficiently farm inputs are converted into economic returns. DairyNZ research indicates that productivity on New Zealand dairy farms has remained relatively flat since 2012/13, suggesting that higher production has not always translated into greater economic benefits, as it has often required additional inputs. Combining production growth with improved productivity will help the sector get more value from their inputs.

Taken together, 2025/26 tells a positive and useful story. Record production is the highlight, but better performance per cow, longer lactations, improving reproduction, lower SCC and greater use of herd information may be more important signals for the future. Future gains are likely to depend more heavily on how efficiently farms convert feed, genetics, technology and management into profitable and resilient milk production.

# 2. National dairy statistics

## 2.1. Industry statistics

### 2.1.1. Production

- Milk volume increased for the second consecutive season, and milksolids production surpassed 2 billion kilograms for the first time.

In 2025/26, dairy companies processed 21.8 billion litres of milk containing 2.024 billion kilograms of milksolids, compared with 1.937 billion kilograms in the previous season (Table 2.1). This season set new records for both milk volume processed by dairy companies and milksolids production, with milksolids production surpassing 2 billion kilograms for the first time.

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) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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 |
| 2019/20 | 21,145 | 1,059 | 836 | 1,896 |

| Season | Milk processed (million litres) | Milkfat processed (million kgs) | Protein processed (million kgs) | Milksolids processed (million kgs) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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 |
| 2025/26 | 21,757 | 1,142 | 882 | 2,024 |

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.

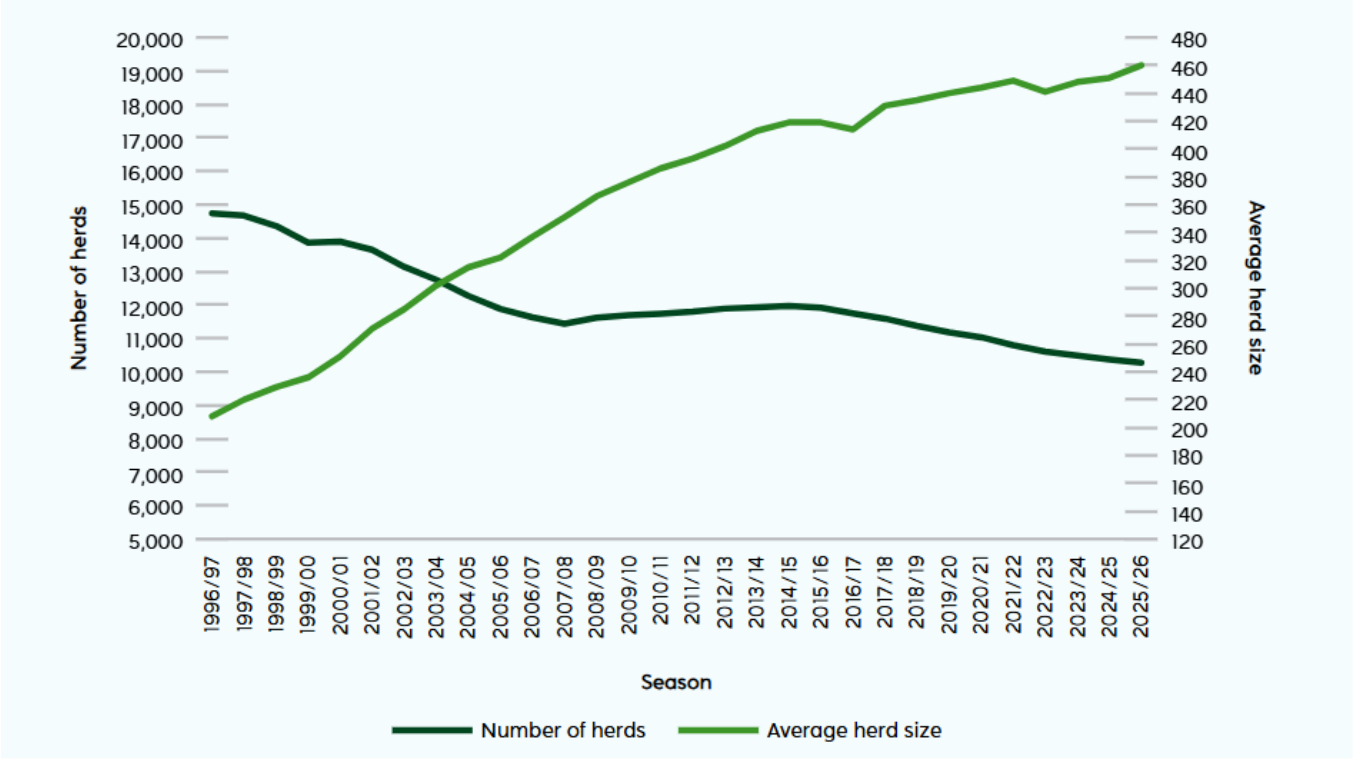
## 2.1.2. Population

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

Between 1996/97 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 155 herds per year, reaching 10,268 in 2025/26.

The average herd size has shown a steady upward trend over the years reaching 460 in 2025/26.

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 between the 2022/23 and 2023/24 publications. These fluctuations did not persist in later season-to-season differences.

Total cows have mostly trended downwards after peaking at 5.02 million in 2014/15. But in 2025/26 it increased to 4.7 million cows (Table 2.2). The average farm size (effective hectares) continued to rise, reaching a new high of 165 in 2025/26. Total effective hectares (milking platform with support block excluded) peaked in 2017/18, before decreasing from 1.76 to 1.69 million hectares in 2025/26.

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 |
| 2025/26 | 10,268 | 4,724,498 | 1,694,201 | 460 | 165 | 2.79 |

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 reached a record 197,000 kilograms for the first time, following two consecutive strong production seasons.
- Milksolids production per cow and per effective hectare in 2025/26 continued the strong growth observed in 2024/25.

Average milksolids production per herd has increased in most years since 1992/93, except for 1998/99, 2007/08, 2012/13, 2015/16 and 2021/22, with the first four being drought-affected seasons (Table 2.3). Following strong growth in 2024/25, average milksolids production per herd reached a record 197,088 kg in 2025/26, 5% higher than the previous season.

The average milksolids production per hectare in 2025/26 was 1,194 kg, 5% higher than the previous season. Meanwhile, production per cow increased by 14 kg (+3.4%) in 2025/26, matching the increase recorded in 2024/25 and reaching a new record high of 428 kg.

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 milk solids per herd | Average kg milkfat per effective hectare | Average kg protein per effective hectare | Average kg milk solids per effective hectare | Average litres per cow | Average kg milkfat per cow | Average kg protein per cow | Average kg milk solids 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 |

| Season | 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 litres per cow | Average kg milkfat per cow | Average kg protein per cow | Average kg milk solids per cow |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2018/19 | 1,865,731 | 92,868 | 72,806 | 165,674 | 606 | 475 | 1,081 | 4,290 | 214 | 167 | 381 |
| 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 |
| 2025/26 | 2,118,927 | 111,177 | 85,911 | 197,088 | 674 | 521 | 1,194 | 4,605 | 242 | 187 | 428 |

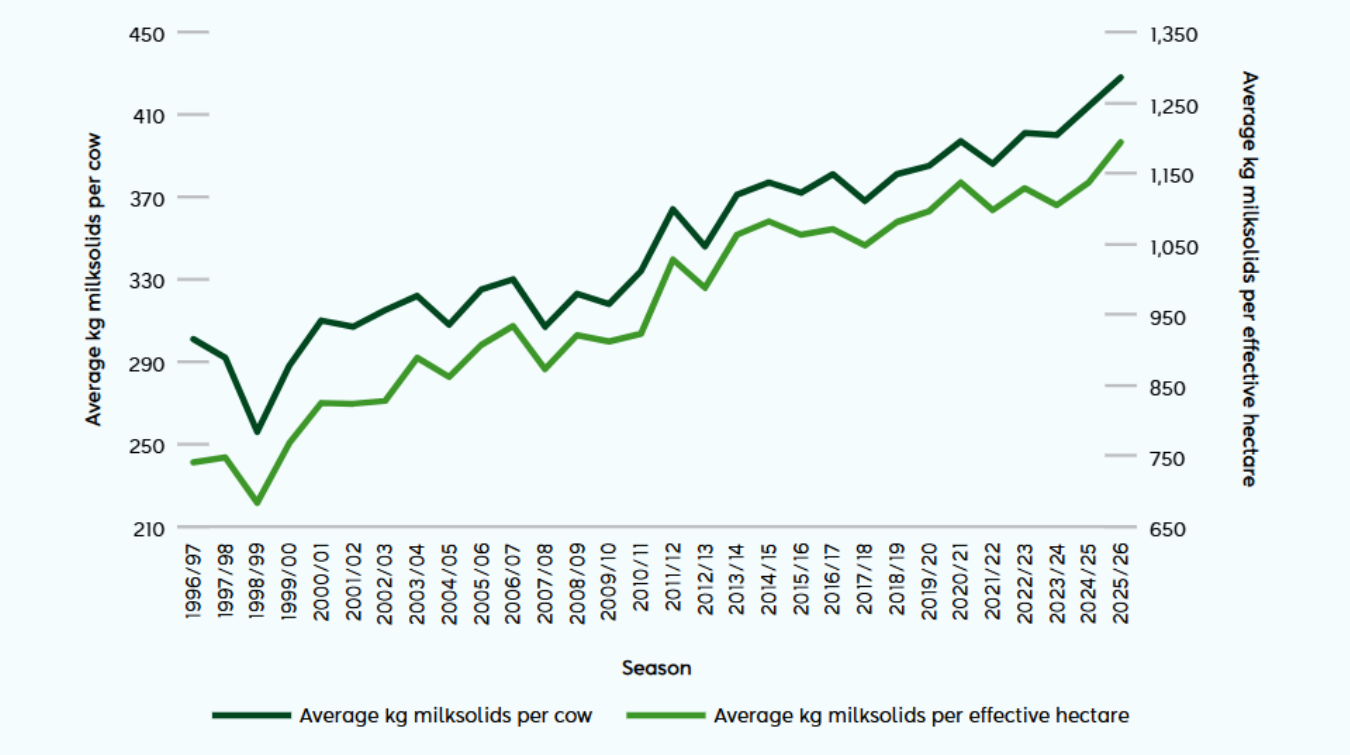
Note:

- 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.
- The methodology for collecting and estimating farm size and herd size data was updated in 2022/23 (See footnote for Table 2.2)

## 2.2.1. Production per cow and per hectare

Seasonal milksolids production remains highly sensitive to climatic variability. Historic patterns show that widespread droughts in 2007/08 and 2012/13 reduced national milk output, while favourable pasture growth and increased supplementary feed in 2013/14 enabled high production levels (Graph 2.2). In 2025/26, milksolids production per cow reached 428 kg, 5.5% above the five-year average of 406 kg, while milksolids production per hectare was 1,194 kg, 5.4% above the five-year average of 1,133 kg.

Graph 2.2: Milksolids production per cow and per effective hectare



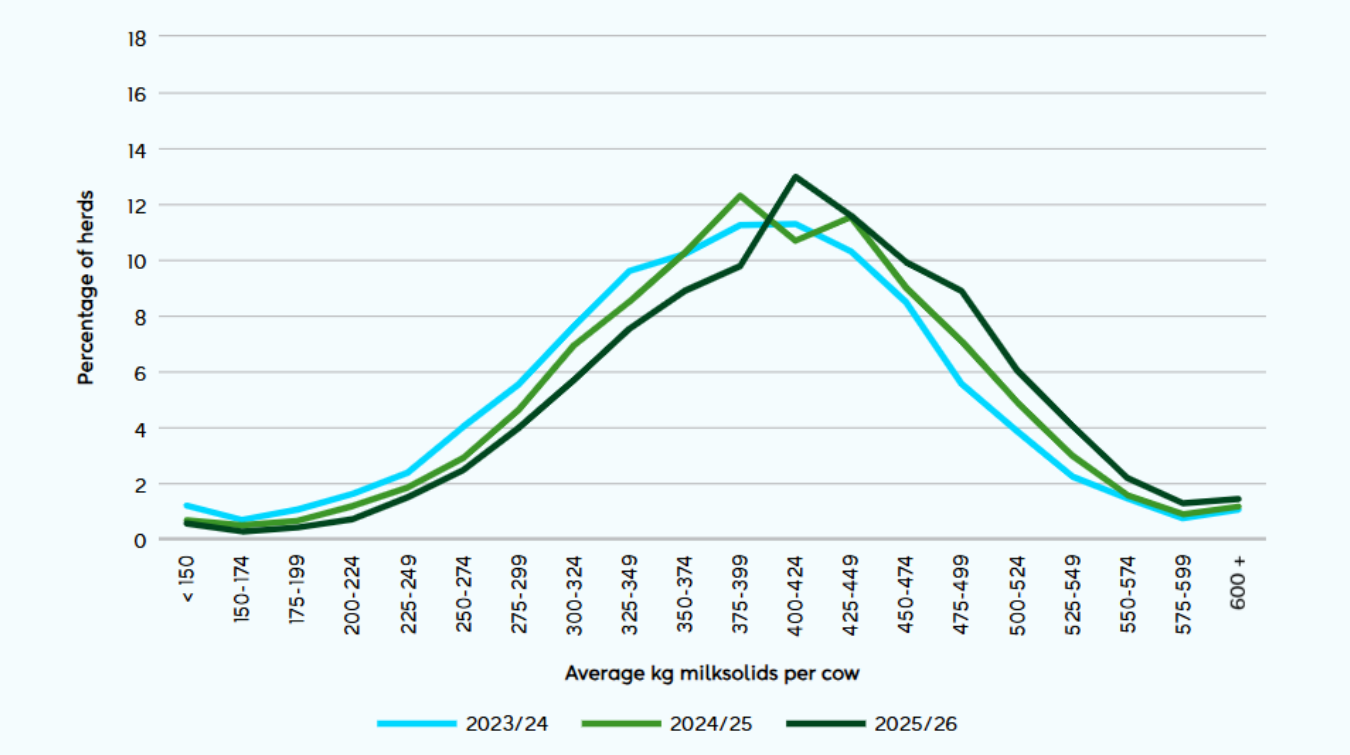
Average milksolids production per cow varies considerably between farms, reflecting differences in climatic, biological, and management factors. Key determinants include temperature, rainfall, soil fertility (which influences pasture growth), as well as stocking rate, herd genetic merit, supplementary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

Graph 2.3 shows the distribution of milksolids production per cow in 2025/26, alongside data from the previous two seasons.

Milksolids production per cow across 2023/24 and 2024/25 showed a consistent concentration in the 325–449 kg range, with 51% to 53% of herds in this range. The distribution shifted slightly higher in 2025/26, with 53% of herds producing between 350-475 kg per cow, and the highest percentage of herds fell within the 400-425 kg per cow range (13% of herds).

Only 1% of herds had an average milksolids production below 200 kg per cow, while 4.9% 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

- 53% of herds had fewer than 400 cows.
- 17% of herds had 700 or more cows.
- 6% of herds had 1,000 or more cows.

In the 2025/26 season, herd size distributions were approximately similar to the previous season with 13% of herds having fewer than 200 cows, 53% had fewer than 400 cows, 34% had 500 or more cows, 17% had 700 or more cows, and 6% had 1,000 or more cows (Table 2.4). The average milksolids per cow were 368 kg for herds with fewer than 400 cows, 434 kg for herds with 400 to 700 cows, and 450 kg for herds with more than 700 cows. The highest average milksolids per cow are found in herds of 1,500 or more.

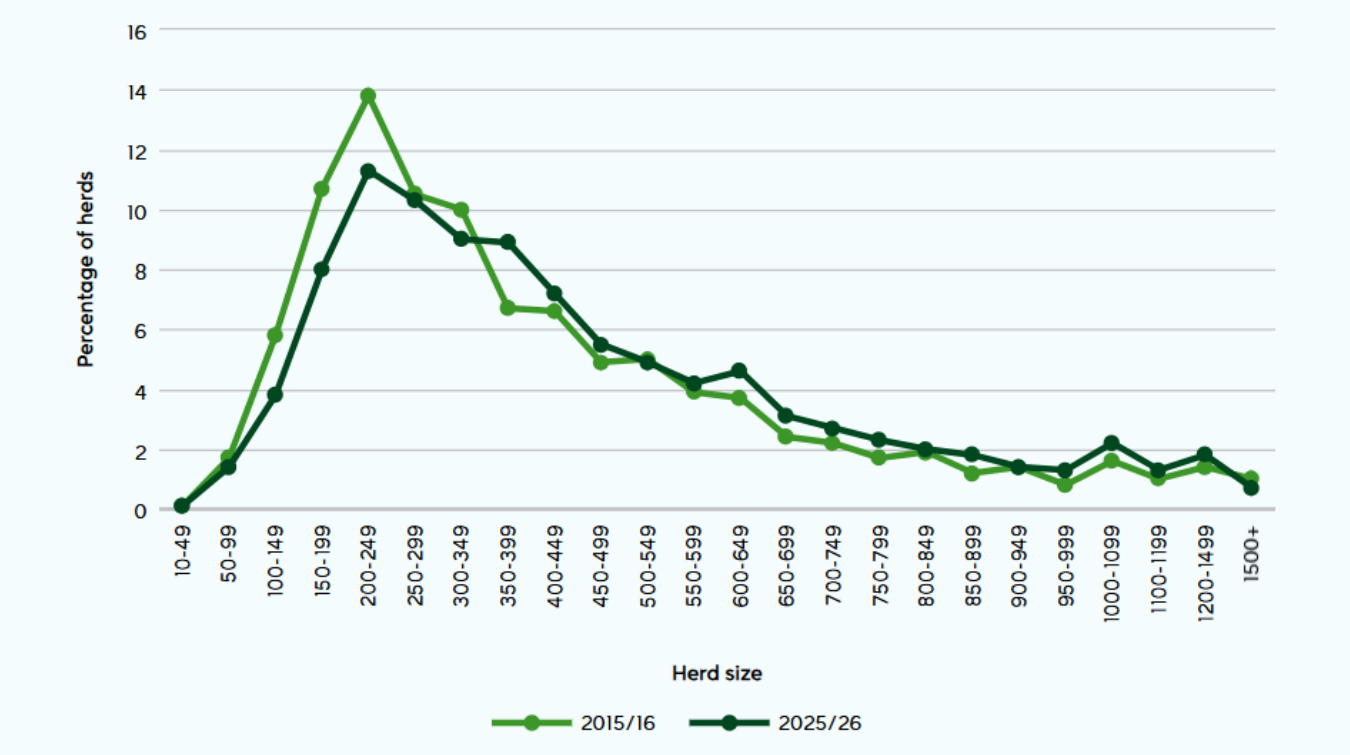
Table 2.4: Average production per cow by herd size in 2025/26

| 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 | 15 | 0.1 | 527 | 0.0 | 203 | 155 | 358 |
| 50-99 | 140 | 1.4 | 11,245 | 0.2 | 156 | 120 | 276 |
| 100-149 | 388 | 3.8 | 49,866 | 1.1 | 187 | 143 | 329 |
| 150-199 | 822 | 8.0 | 144,530 | 3.1 | 214 | 164 | 378 |
| 200-249 | 1,160 | 11.3 | 258,866 | 5.5 | 224 | 171 | 395 |

| 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 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 250-299 | 1,053 | 10.3 | 286,713 | 6.1 | 224 | 172 | 396 |
| 300-349 | 925 | 9.0 | 297,346 | 6.3 | 227 | 174 | 400 |
| 350-399 | 918 | 8.9 | 340,265 | 7.2 | 235 | 179 | 414 |
| 400-449 | 736 | 7.2 | 310,340 | 6.6 | 237 | 182 | 419 |
| 450-499 | 567 | 5.5 | 267,700 | 5.7 | 241 | 185 | 426 |
| 500-549 | 507 | 4.9 | 263,933 | 5.6 | 242 | 187 | 428 |
| 550-599 | 436 | 4.2 | 249,626 | 5.3 | 247 | 191 | 438 |
| 600-649 | 476 | 4.6 | 295,878 | 6.3 | 251 | 193 | 444 |
| 650-699 | 323 | 3.1 | 216,458 | 4.6 | 252 | 196 | 448 |
| 700-749 | 278 | 2.7 | 200,494 | 4.2 | 253 | 198 | 450 |
| 750-799 | 236 | 2.3 | 182,010 | 3.9 | 251 | 196 | 447 |
| 800-849 | 210 | 2.0 | 171,938 | 3.6 | 258 | 201 | 459 |
| 850-899 | 189 | 1.8 | 164,568 | 3.5 | 254 | 198 | 451 |
| 900-949 | 140 | 1.4 | 128,772 | 2.7 | 258 | 201 | 459 |
| 950-999 | 133 | 1.3 | 129,223 | 2.7 | 248 | 193 | 441 |
| 1000-1099 | 227 | 2.2 | 236,056 | 5.0 | 252 | 196 | 448 |
| 1100-1199 | 132 | 1.3 | 150,785 | 3.2 | 250 | 194 | 444 |
| 1200-1499 | 189 | 1.8 | 249,265 | 5.3 | 250 | 195 | 445 |
| 1500+ | 68 | 0.7 | 118,094 | 2.5 | 258 | 204 | 461 |
| Total/Avg | 10,268 | 100 | 4,724,498 | 100 | 242 | 187 | 428 |

Graph 2.4 illustrates the distribution of herd sizes in 2025/26, compared to data from ten seasons ago. Over the past decade, the proportion of herds with fewer than 200 cows decreased from 18% to 13%, and the percentage of herds with fewer than 350 cows dropped from 53% to 44%. Meanwhile, the proportion of herds with 500 cows or more increased from 29% to 34%. The most common herd size remains in the range of 200 to 249 cows, which accounted for 11.3% of herds in 2025/26 (compared to 13.9% in 2015/16).

Graph 2.4: Herd size distribution for 2025/26 compared with that of 10 seasons ago



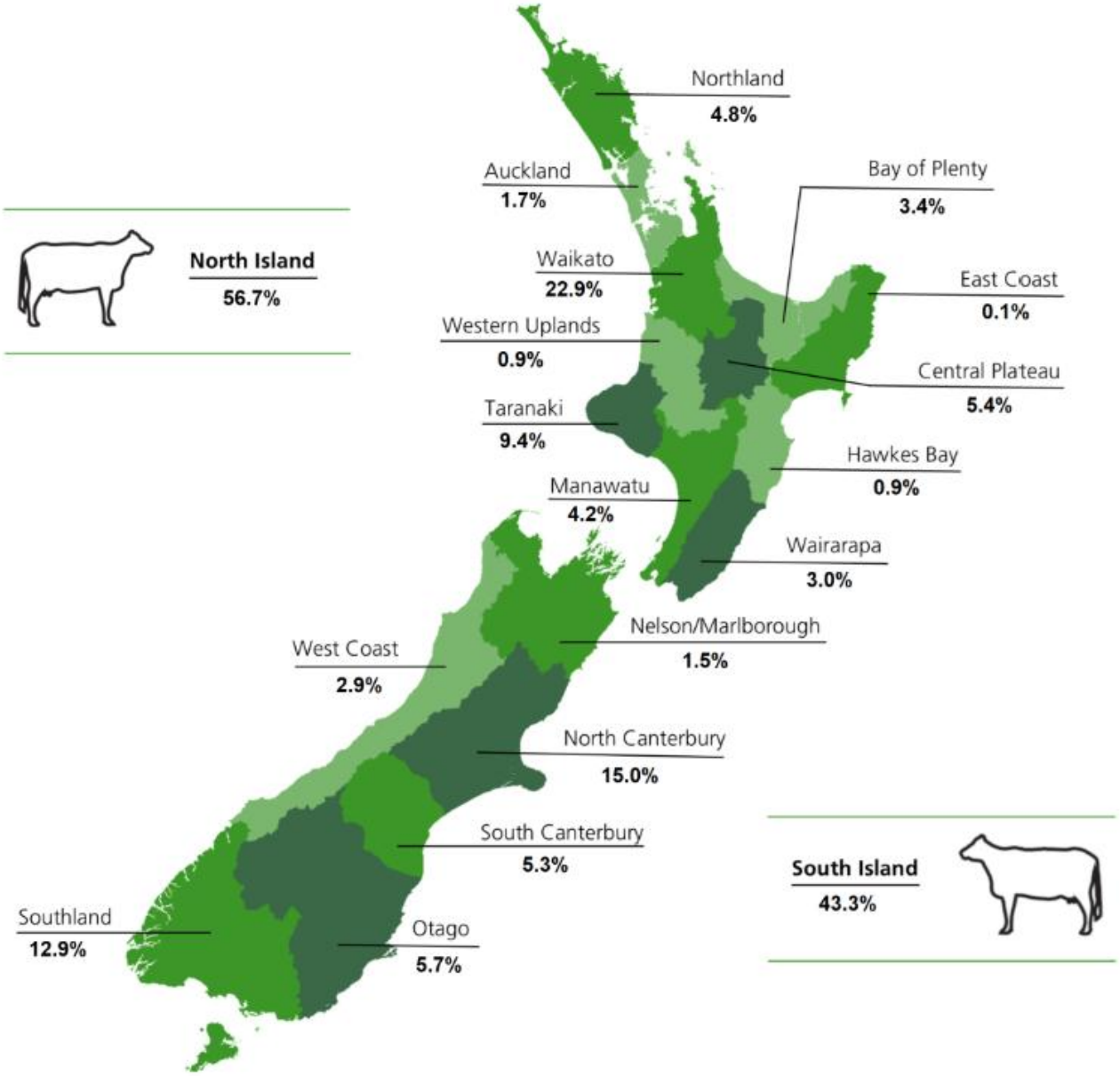
# 3. Regional dairy statistics

## 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 (15.0%), Southland (12.9%), and Taranaki (9.4%).

Graph 3.1: Regional distribution of dairy cows in 2025/26



- North Canterbury has the largest average herd size, at 811 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 2025/26, North Island herds were on average smaller (140 ha and 375 cows) than South Island herds (223 ha and 656 cows). Herds in the North Island also had lower average stocking rates (2.69 cows/ha) than herds in the South Island (2.94 cows/ha).

The East Coast in the North Island and South Canterbury had the largest average effective land areas per herd, at 251 and 248 hectares respectively, while Taranaki had the smallest average effective land area with 118 hectares. When it comes to herd sizes, North Canterbury, South Canterbury, and Hawkes Bay lead with averages of 811, 805, and 673 cows per herd, respectively. In contrast, the smallest herds are found in Auckland and Taranaki, with averages of 295 and 316 cows per herd. Stocking rates are also highest in North Canterbury, South Canterbury, and Waikato with averages of 3.45, 3.24, and 2.91 cows per hectare, respectively. At the other end, West Coast and the Northland have the lowest stocking rates, at 2.03 and 2.21 cows per hectare.

Table 3.1: Herd analysis by region in 2025/26

| 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 | 650 | 6.3 | 224,505 | 4.8 | 101,526 | 6.0 | 345 | 156 | 2.21 |
| Auckland | 278 | 2.7 | 81,920 | 1.7 | 35,364 | 2.1 | 295 | 127 | 2.32 |
| Waikato | 2,969 | 28.9 | 1,080,423 | 22.9 | 370,888 | 21.9 | 364 | 125 | 2.91 |
| Bay of Plenty | 432 | 4.2 | 161,581 | 3.4 | 57,781 | 3.4 | 374 | 134 | 2.80 |
| Central Plateau | 453 | 4.4 | 254,766 | 5.4 | 96,608 | 5.7 | 562 | 213 | 2.64 |
| Western Uplands | 78 | 0.8 | 42,413 | 0.9 | 16,342 | 1.0 | 544 | 210 | 2.60 |
| East Coast | 6 | 0.1 | 3,811 | 0.1 | 1,504 | 0.1 | 635 | 251 | 2.53 |
| Hawkes Bay | 65 | 0.6 | 43,739 | 0.9 | 15,772 | 0.9 | 673 | 243 | 2.77 |
| Taranaki | 1,402 | 13.7 | 443,133 | 9.4 | 165,465 | 9.8 | 316 | 118 | 2.68 |
| Manawatu | 461 | 4.5 | 200,148 | 4.2 | 80,509 | 4.8 | 434 | 175 | 2.49 |
| Wairarapa | 354 | 3.4 | 142,218 | 3.0 | 55,453 | 3.3 | 402 | 157 | 2.56 |
| **North Island** | **7,148** | **69.6** | **2,678,657** | **56.7** | **997,212** | **58.9** | **375** | **140** | **2.69** |
| Nelson / Marlborough | 179 | 1.7 | 69,032 | 1.5 | 27,472 | 1.6 | 386 | 153 | 2.51 |
| West Coast | 343 | 3.3 | 136,089 | 2.9 | 67,010 | 4.0 | 397 | 195 | 2.03 |
| North Canterbury | 874 | 8.5 | 708,839 | 15.0 | 205,757 | 12.1 | 811 | 235 | 3.45 |
| South Canterbury | 313 | 3.0 | 251,866 | 5.3 | 77,649 | 4.6 | 805 | 248 | 3.24 |
| Otago | 429 | 4.2 | 270,383 | 5.7 | 95,185 | 5.6 | 630 | 222 | 2.84 |
| Southland | 982 | 9.6 | 609,632 | 12.9 | 223,916 | 13.2 | 621 | 228 | 2.72 |
| **South Island** | **3,120** | **30.4** | **2,045,841** | **43.3** | **696,989** | **41.1** | **656** | **223** | **2.94** |
| **New Zealand** | **10,268** | **100** | **4,724,498** | **100** | **1,694,201** | **100** | **460** | **165** | **2.79** |

- 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 (379,642 kg milksolids/herd), which was approximately 2.4% higher than in the previous season (Table 3.2). This high level of production was achieved through large herd sizes (811 cows on average) and high milksolids production per cow (468 kg). In the North Island, Hawkes Bay recorded the highest milksolids production per herd (268,990 kg milksolids), reflecting its large herd sizes (673 cows/herd on average).

In 2025/26, 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 (1,613 kg MS/ha) for the 19th season in a row. In the North Island, Waikato had the highest average milksolids production per hectare (1,197 kg MS/ha).

In the South Island, Southland had the highest milksolids per cow (481 kg MS/cow on average), and in the North Island, Manawatu had the highest average milksolids per cow (431 kg MS/cow).

Table 3.2: Herd production analysis by region in 2025/26

| Region | Total kg milk solids | Percent milk solids | 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 | 77,979,672 | 3.9 | 1,299,725 | 68,017 | 51,952 | 119,969 | 435 | 333 | 768 | 197 | 150 | 347 |
| Auckland | 31,900,304 | 1.6 | 1,269,966 | 64,711 | 50,039 | 114,749 | 509 | 393 | 902 | 220 | 170 | 389 |
| Waikato | 443,998,189 | 21.9 | 1,625,823 | 84,889 | 64,655 | 149,545 | 680 | 518 | 1,197 | 233 | 178 | 411 |
| Bay of Plenty | 60,839,660 | 3.0 | 1,530,855 | 79,898 | 60,934 | 140,833 | 597 | 456 | 1,053 | 214 | 163 | 377 |
| Central Plateau | 105,566,885 | 5.2 | 2,548,513 | 131,968 | 101,072 | 233,039 | 619 | 474 | 1,093 | 235 | 180 | 414 |
| Western Uplands | 14,010,579 | 0.7 | 1,907,506 | 102,200 | 77,423 | 179,623 | 488 | 370 | 857 | 188 | 142 | 330 |
| East Coast | 1,364,606 | 0.1 | 2,423,364 | 129,237 | 98,197 | 227,434 | 516 | 392 | 907 | 203 | 155 | 358 |
| Hawkes Bay | 17,484,377 | 0.9 | 2,939,708 | 151,189 | 117,801 | 268,990 | 623 | 485 | 1,109 | 225 | 175 | 400 |
| Taranaki | 187,641,320 | 9.3 | 1,428,950 | 75,764 | 58,075 | 133,838 | 642 | 492 | 1,134 | 240 | 184 | 423 |
| Manawatu | 86,322,427 | 4.3 | 2,048,082 | 105,291 | 81,959 | 187,250 | 603 | 469 | 1,072 | 243 | 189 | 431 |
| Wairarapa | 57,390,118 | 2.8 | 1,728,882 | 91,671 | 70,448 | 162,119 | 585 | 450 | 1,035 | 228 | 175 | 404 |
| North Island | 1,084,498,138 | 53.6 | 1,644,478 | 85,943 | 65,778 | 151,721 | 616 | 471 | 1,088 | 229 | 176 | 405 |
| Nelson / Marlborough | 27,443,855 | 1.4 | 1,622,326 | 87,194 | 66,124 | 153,318 | 568 | 431 | 999 | 226 | 171 | 398 |
| West Coast | 50,907,729 | 2.5 | 1,546,467 | 84,657 | 63,762 | 148,419 | 433 | 326 | 760 | 213 | 161 | 374 |
| North Canterbury | 331,807,338 | 16.4 | 4,053,955 | 212,716 | 166,927 | 379,642 | 904 | 709 | 1,613 | 262 | 206 | 468 |
| South Canterbury | 115,067,145 | 5.7 | 3,915,601 | 205,994 | 161,633 | 367,627 | 830 | 652 | 1,482 | 256 | 201 | 457 |
| Otago | 121,039,762 | 6.0 | 3,010,729 | 158,197 | 123,947 | 282,144 | 713 | 559 | 1,272 | 251 | 197 | 448 |
| Southland | 292,940,355 | 14.5 | 3,178,450 | 167,361 | 130,949 | 298,310 | 734 | 574 | 1,308 | 270 | 211 | 481 |
| South Island | 939,206,184 | 46.4 | 3,205,902 | 168,990 | 132,037 | 301,028 | 756 | 591 | 1,348 | 258 | 201 | 459 |
| New Zealand | 2,023,704,321 | 100 | 2,118,927 | 111,177 | 85,911 | 197,088 | 674 | 521 | 1,194 | 242 | 187 | 428 |

## 3.2. Districts

South Taranaki remains the district with the highest number of herds, totalling 861 herds (8.4% of all herds), followed by Matamata-Piako with 840 herds (8.2%) and Southland with 721 herds (7%). Southland also has the highest number of cows, with 450,625 cows (9.5% of the national total), followed by Ashburton with 353,885 cows (7.5%) and South Taranaki with 291,270 cows (6.2%). The Mackenzie and Ashburton districts in South and North Canterbury have the largest average herd sizes, with 1,068 and 859 cows per herd, respectively (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 shows the distribution of business types across districts and regions. Fifty-five percent of herds are run by owner-operators, 14.6% by contract milkers, 28.4% by sharemilkers of various types, and the remaining 2.4% are unclassified (Table 3.5).

Table 3.3: Herd analysis by district in 2025/26

| 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 | 178 | 123 | 15 | 39 | 62,530 | 27,564 | 351 | 155 | 2.27 |
| | Whangarei | 228 | 131 | 26 | 70 | 80,205 | 34,583 | 352 | 152 | 2.32 |
| | Kaipara | 244 | 162 | 31 | 49 | 81,770 | 39,379 | 335 | 161 | 2.08 |
| Auckland | Rodney / Auckland | 106 | 61 | 10 | 35 | 31,630 | 14,159 | 298 | 134 | 2.23 |
| | Manukau / Papakura | 7 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 1,691 | 932 | 242 | 133 | 1.81 |
| | Franklin | 165 | 82 | 19 | 64 | 48,599 | 20,273 | 295 | 123 | 2.40 |
| Waikato | Waikato | 573 | 276 | 73 | 188 | 207,972 | 75,466 | 363 | 132 | 2.76 |
| | Hamilton City | 18 | 8 | 2 | 6 | 5,119 | 1,972 | 284 | 110 | 2.60 |
| | Waipa | 489 | 233 | 93 | 133 | 187,820 | 62,491 | 384 | 128 | 3.01 |
| | Otorohanga | 323 | 151 | 43 | 108 | 124,233 | 42,913 | 385 | 133 | 2.90 |
| | Thames-Coromandel | 70 | 35 | 18 | 12 | 23,452 | 8,817 | 335 | 126 | 2.66 |
| | Hauraki | 336 | 144 | 72 | 99 | 111,740 | 39,950 | 333 | 119 | 2.80 |
| | Matamata-Piako | 840 | 317 | 152 | 318 | 281,980 | 92,107 | 336 | 110 | 3.06 |
| | South Waikato | 320 | 126 | 78 | 95 | 138,107 | 47,171 | 432 | 147 | 2.93 |
| Bay of Plenty | Western Bay of Plenty | 147 | 77 | 36 | 34 | 55,564 | 19,078 | 378 | 130 | 2.91 |
| | Tauranga | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3,686 | 1,326 | 614 | 221 | 2.78 |
| | Kawerau / Whakatane | 226 | 131 | 30 | 65 | 84,775 | 30,413 | 375 | 135 | 2.79 |
| | Opotiki | 53 | 29 | 6 | 18 | 17,556 | 6,964 | 331 | 131 | 2.52 |
| Central Plateau | Taupo | 192 | 114 | 37 | 40 | 135,420 | 52,298 | 705 | 272 | 2.59 |
| | Rotorua | 261 | 148 | 43 | 70 | 119,346 | 44,310 | 457 | 170 | 2.69 |
| Western Uplands | Waitomo | 55 | 28 | 7 | 20 | 30,765 | 11,561 | 559 | 210 | 2.66 |
| | Ruapehu | 23 | 16 | 2 | 5 | 11,648 | 4,780 | 506 | 208 | 2.44 |
| East Coast | Gisborne / Wairoa | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3,811 | 1,504 | 635 | 251 | 2.53 |
| Hawkes Bay | Napier / Hastings | 26 | 18 | 4 | 4 | 14,657 | 5,807 | 564 | 223 | 2.52 |
| | Central Hawke's Bay | 39 | 28 | 2 | 9 | 29,082 | 9,964 | 746 | 255 | 2.92 |
| Taranaki | New Plymouth | 343 | 201 | 43 | 99 | 98,140 | 38,996 | 286 | 114 | 2.52 |
| | Stratford | 198 | 131 | 20 | 47 | 53,723 | 20,620 | 271 | 104 | 2.61 |
| | South Taranaki | 861 | 475 | 138 | 248 | 291,270 | 105,850 | 338 | 123 | 2.75 |
| Manawatu | Wanganui | 17 | 11 | 4 | 2 | 7,186 | 3,423 | 423 | 201 | 2.10 |
| | Rangitikei | 77 | 49 | 14 | 14 | 38,417 | 14,720 | 499 | 191 | 2.61 |
| | Manawatu | 210 | 131 | 27 | 52 | 86,135 | 35,079 | 410 | 167 | 2.46 |
| | Palmerston North City | 46 | 33 | 4 | 9 | 23,406 | 8,793 | 509 | 191 | 2.66 |
| | Horowhenua | 98 | 65 | 10 | 23 | 40,785 | 16,633 | 416 | 170 | 2.45 |
| | Kapiti Coast / Upper Hutt | 13 | 7 | 1 | 5 | 4,219 | 1,862 | 325 | 143 | 2.27 |
| Wairarapa | Tararua | 233 | 140 | 39 | 54 | 82,284 | 33,741 | 353 | 145 | 2.44 |
| | Masterton | 14 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 8,238 | 2,786 | 588 | 199 | 2.96 |
| | Carterton | 43 | 33 | 10 | 0 | 18,669 | 7,026 | 434 | 163 | 2.66 |
| | South Wairarapa | 64 | 34 | 16 | 14 | 33,027 | 11,899 | 516 | 186 | 2.78 |
| **North Island** | **North Island** | 7,148 | 3,762 | 1,132 | 2,060 | 2,678,657 | 997,212 | 375 | 140 | 2.69 |

| 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 | 23 | 7 | 10 | 14,694 | 5,735 | 367 | 143 | 2.56 |
| | Kaikoura | 19 | 12 | 0 | 7 | 9,437 | 3,154 | 497 | 166 | 2.99 |
| | Tasman/Nelson City | 120 | 86 | 12 | 22 | 44,901 | 18,582 | 374 | 155 | 2.42 |
| West Coast | Buller | 112 | 86 | 0 | 26 | 43,273 | 20,508 | 386 | 183 | 2.11 |
| | Grey | 94 | 77 | 0 | 17 | 43,067 | 20,398 | 458 | 217 | 2.11 |
| | Westland | 137 | 106 | 0 | 31 | 49,749 | 26,104 | 363 | 191 | 1.91 |
| North Canterbury | Hurunui | 97 | 53 | 20 | 24 | 80,584 | 25,122 | 831 | 259 | 3.21 |
| | Waimakariri | 98 | 52 | 15 | 31 | 68,021 | 21,482 | 694 | 219 | 3.17 |
| | Christchurch City | 35 | 23 | 5 | 7 | 27,901 | 8,390 | 797 | 240 | 3.33 |
| | Banks Peninsula | 6 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 2,247 | 909 | 375 | 151 | 2.47 |
| | Selwyn | 226 | 156 | 32 | 38 | 176,201 | 50,922 | 780 | 225 | 3.46 |
| | Ashburton | 412 | 209 | 76 | 127 | 353,885 | 98,932 | 859 | 240 | 3.58 |
| South Canterbury | Timaru | 178 | 119 | 14 | 45 | 132,458 | 38,922 | 744 | 219 | 3.40 |
| | Mackenzie | 17 | 7 | 2 | 8 | 18,155 | 5,862 | 1,068 | 345 | 3.10 |
| | Waimate | 118 | 58 | 9 | 51 | 101,253 | 32,865 | 858 | 279 | 3.08 |
| Otago | Waitaki | 149 | 70 | 23 | 50 | 109,572 | 32,778 | 735 | 220 | 3.34 |
| | Dunedin City | 60 | 38 | 0 | 20 | 28,241 | 10,161 | 471 | 169 | 2.78 |
| | Clutha | 186 | 113 | 17 | 49 | 105,085 | 42,225 | 565 | 227 | 2.49 |
| | Central Otago / Lakes | 34 | 26 | 3 | 4 | 27,485 | 10,020 | 808 | 295 | 2.74 |
| Southland | Gore | 162 | 101 | 19 | 36 | 98,023 | 37,797 | 605 | 233 | 2.59 |
| | Invercargill | 99 | 51 | 13 | 31 | 60,984 | 22,027 | 616 | 222 | 2.77 |
| | Southland | 721 | 373 | 101 | 220 | 450,625 | 164,093 | 625 | 228 | 2.75 |
| **South Island** | **South Island** | 3,120 | 1,842 | 368 | 857 | 2,045,841 | 696,989 | 656 | 223 | 2.94 |
| **New Zealand** | **New Zealand** | 10,268 | 5,604 | 1,500 | 2,917 | 4,724,498 | 1,694,201 | 460 | 165 | 2.79 |

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 441,564 kg of milksolids followed by Ashburton with 405,806 kg of milksolids (Table 3.4). Ashburton had the highest average milksolids per effective hectare, producing 1,690 kg, followed by Christchurch City district with 1,649 kg per hectare. Christchurch City recorded the highest average milksolids production per cow at 496 kg, with Southland close behind at 488 kg. In the North Island, Central Hawke's Bay achieved the highest milksolids production per herd, averaging 309,924 kg, followed by Taupo with 290,840 kg. Among North Island districts, Masterton and South Waikato had the highest average milksolids per hectare, producing 1,323 kg and 1,277 kg, respectively. Palmerston North City and Masterton led in milksolids per cow, each averaging more than 440 kg per cow.

Table 3.4: Herd production analysis by district in 2025/26

| 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 | 1,334,321 | 69,979 | 53,307 | 123,286 | 452 | 344 | 796 | 199 | 152 | 351 |
| | Whangarei | 1,392,995 | 72,801 | 55,698 | 128,500 | 480 | 367 | 847 | 207 | 158 | 365 |
| | Kaipara | 1,187,332 | 62,114 | 47,463 | 109,578 | 385 | 294 | 679 | 185 | 142 | 327 |
| Auckland | Rodney / Auckland | 1,174,842 | 61,447 | 46,683 | 108,130 | 460 | 349 | 810 | 206 | 156 | 362 |
| | Manukau / Papakura | 963,210 | 48,016 | 37,718 | 85,734 | 361 | 283 | 644 | 199 | 156 | 355 |
| | Franklin | 1,344,089 | 67,515 | 52,717 | 120,233 | 549 | 429 | 979 | 229 | 179 | 408 |
| Waikato | Waikato | 1,617,182 | 83,783 | 64,054 | 147,837 | 636 | 486 | 1,122 | 231 | 176 | 407 |
| | Hamilton City | 1,320,746 | 66,932 | 51,413 | 118,345 | 611 | 469 | 1,080 | 235 | 181 | 416 |
| | Waipa | 1,757,318 | 91,429 | 69,786 | 161,215 | 715 | 546 | 1,262 | 238 | 182 | 420 |
| | Otorohanga | 1,672,852 | 87,212 | 66,387 | 153,599 | 656 | 500 | 1,156 | 227 | 173 | 399 |
| | Thames-Coromandel | 1,276,940 | 68,067 | 51,158 | 119,225 | 540 | 406 | 947 | 203 | 153 | 356 |
| | Hauraki | 1,387,306 | 72,722 | 55,321 | 128,043 | 612 | 465 | 1,077 | 219 | 166 | 385 |
| | Matamata-Piako | 1,513,443 | 79,178 | 60,255 | 139,432 | 722 | 550 | 1,272 | 236 | 179 | 415 |
| | South Waikato | 2,031,803 | 106,989 | 81,196 | 188,186 | 726 | 551 | 1,277 | 248 | 188 | 436 |
| Bay of Plenty | Western Bay of Plenty | 1,502,933 | 79,063 | 60,195 | 139,257 | 609 | 464 | 1,073 | 209 | 159 | 368 |
| | Tauranga | 2,397,023 | 129,301 | 98,759 | 228,060 | 585 | 447 | 1,032 | 210 | 161 | 371 |
| | Kawerau / Whakatane | 1,610,412 | 83,671 | 63,866 | 147,537 | 622 | 475 | 1,096 | 223 | 170 | 393 |
| | Opotiki | 1,170,996 | 60,536 | 46,203 | 106,739 | 461 | 352 | 812 | 183 | 139 | 322 |
| Central Plateau | Taupo | 3,177,480 | 164,620 | 126,220 | 290,840 | 604 | 463 | 1,068 | 233 | 179 | 412 |
| | Rotorua | 2,085,824 | 107,948 | 82,572 | 190,519 | 636 | 486 | 1,122 | 236 | 181 | 417 |
| Western Uplands | Waitomo | 1,917,858 | 102,746 | 77,770 | 180,516 | 489 | 370 | 859 | 184 | 139 | 323 |
| | Ruapehu | 1,882,750 | 100,895 | 76,593 | 177,488 | 485 | 369 | 854 | 199 | 151 | 350 |
| East Coast | Gisborne / Wairoa | 2,423,364 | 129,237 | 98,197 | 227,434 | 516 | 392 | 907 | 203 | 155 | 358 |
| Hawkes Bay | Napier / Hastings | 2,255,314 | 117,519 | 90,071 | 207,589 | 526 | 403 | 929 | 208 | 160 | 368 |
| | Central Hawke's Bay | 3,395,971 | 173,636 | 136,288 | 309,924 | 680 | 533 | 1,213 | 233 | 183 | 416 |
| Taranaki | New Plymouth | 1,229,874 | 65,765 | 49,805 | 115,571 | 578 | 438 | 1,017 | 230 | 174 | 404 |
| | Stratford | 1,198,042 | 62,857 | 48,207 | 111,064 | 604 | 463 | 1,066 | 232 | 178 | 409 |
| | South Taranaki | 1,561,358 | 82,715 | 63,638 | 146,353 | 673 | 518 | 1,190 | 245 | 188 | 433 |
| Manawatu | Wanganui | 1,705,172 | 85,821 | 68,009 | 153,830 | 426 | 338 | 764 | 203 | 161 | 364 |
| | Rangitikei | 2,321,548 | 120,028 | 93,451 | 213,478 | 628 | 489 | 1,117 | 241 | 187 | 428 |
| | Manawatu | 1,934,540 | 99,938 | 77,464 | 177,402 | 598 | 464 | 1,062 | 244 | 189 | 433 |
| | Palmerston North City | 2,509,716 | 129,879 | 100,338 | 230,218 | 679 | 525 | 1,204 | 255 | 197 | 452 |
| | Horowhenua | 2,001,413 | 101,566 | 79,684 | 181,250 | 598 | 469 | 1,068 | 244 | 191 | 436 |
| | Kapiti Coast/Upper Hutt | 1,429,207 | 71,014 | 56,875 | 127,889 | 496 | 397 | 893 | 219 | 175 | 394 |
| Wairarapa | Tararua | 1,493,507 | 79,688 | 60,688 | 140,376 | 550 | 419 | 969 | 226 | 172 | 397 |
| | Masterton | 2,895,517 | 146,979 | 116,281 | 263,260 | 739 | 584 | 1,323 | 250 | 198 | 447 |
| | Carterton | 1,936,450 | 100,405 | 77,960 | 178,365 | 614 | 477 | 1,092 | 231 | 180 | 411 |
| | South Wairarapa | 2,191,135 | 117,332 | 90,903 | 208,236 | 631 | 489 | 1,120 | 227 | 176 | 404 |
| **North Island** | **North Island** | 1,644,478 | 85,943 | 65,778 | 151,721 | 616 | 471 | 1,088 | 229 | 176 | 405 |

| 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 | 1,693,199 | 89,424 | 68,226 | 157,651 | 624 | 476 | 1,099 | 243 | 186 | 429 |
| | Kaikoura | 2,256,968 | 119,620 | 92,161 | 211,780 | 721 | 555 | 1,276 | 241 | 186 | 426 |
| | Tasman/Nelson City | 1,498,217 | 81,316 | 61,300 | 142,617 | 525 | 396 | 921 | 217 | 164 | 381 |
| West Coast | Buller | 1,510,053 | 82,012 | 61,872 | 143,883 | 448 | 338 | 786 | 212 | 160 | 372 |
| | Grey | 1,811,451 | 98,366 | 74,265 | 172,631 | 453 | 342 | 796 | 215 | 162 | 377 |
| | Westland | 1,394,422 | 77,412 | 58,102 | 135,514 | 406 | 305 | 711 | 213 | 160 | 373 |
| North Canterbury | Hurunui | 4,213,418 | 223,631 | 172,571 | 396,202 | 863 | 666 | 1,530 | 269 | 208 | 477 |
| | Waimakariri | 3,682,853 | 187,758 | 149,088 | 336,846 | 857 | 680 | 1,537 | 271 | 215 | 485 |
| | Christchurch City | 4,184,756 | 221,324 | 173,914 | 395,238 | 923 | 725 | 1,649 | 278 | 218 | 496 |
| | Banks Peninsula | 1,588,831 | 87,213 | 66,002 | 153,215 | 576 | 436 | 1,012 | 233 | 176 | 409 |
| | Selwyn | 3,698,209 | 194,580 | 152,412 | 346,992 | 864 | 676 | 1,540 | 250 | 195 | 445 |
| | Ashburton | 4,324,613 | 227,127 | 178,679 | 405,806 | 946 | 744 | 1,690 | 264 | 208 | 472 |
| South Canterbury | Timaru | 3,625,098 | 189,921 | 148,689 | 338,610 | 869 | 680 | 1,549 | 255 | 200 | 455 |
| | Mackenzie | 4,766,321 | 244,391 | 197,173 | 441,564 | 709 | 572 | 1,281 | 229 | 185 | 413 |
| | Waimate | 4,231,255 | 224,708 | 176,037 | 400,745 | 807 | 632 | 1,439 | 262 | 205 | 467 |
| Otago | Waitaki | 3,537,181 | 188,477 | 147,125 | 335,602 | 857 | 669 | 1,526 | 256 | 200 | 456 |
| | Dunedin City | 2,375,450 | 122,722 | 97,099 | 219,821 | 725 | 573 | 1,298 | 261 | 206 | 467 |
| | Clutha | 2,637,406 | 136,359 | 107,142 | 243,501 | 601 | 472 | 1,073 | 241 | 190 | 431 |
| | Central Otago / Lakes | 3,867,008 | 207,566 | 161,690 | 369,256 | 704 | 549 | 1,253 | 257 | 200 | 457 |
| Southland | Gore | 2,920,573 | 153,649 | 119,709 | 273,358 | 659 | 513 | 1,172 | 254 | 198 | 452 |
| | Invercargill | 3,102,802 | 162,519 | 127,298 | 289,817 | 730 | 572 | 1,303 | 264 | 207 | 470 |
| | Southland | 3,246,780 | 171,107 | 133,976 | 305,082 | 752 | 589 | 1,340 | 274 | 214 | 488 |
| **South Island** | **South Island** | 3,205,902 | 168,990 | 132,037 | 301,028 | 756 | 591 | 1,348 | 258 | 201 | 459 |
| **New Zealand** | **New Zealand** | 2,118,927 | 111,177 | 85,911 | 197,088 | 674 | 521 | 1,194 | 242 | 187 | 428 |

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 arrangements.

Owner operators own and operate their own farms and sometimes employ a farm manager to operate the farm for a fixed wage. Besides any wages paid out, Owner operators receive all the farm income. Approximately 55% (Table 3.5) of all herds sit within this category of operating structure.

Contract milkers (15% 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 28% 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.

- 55% of all herds are operated as owner-operators.
- 60% 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 2025/26, 55% (5,604) of New Zealand dairy herds operated under an owner-operator structure, 28% (2,917) operated under a sharemilking agreement and 15% operated under a contract milkers' agreement. Approximately fifty-nine percent (1,737) of all sharemilkers have 50/50 agreements.

Table 3.5: Herd analysis by operating structure in 2025/26

| Operating structure | Number of herds | Percentage of herds | Average herd size | Average effective hectares | Average cows per effective hectare |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Owner-operators | 5,604 | 54.6 | 454 | 167 | 2.72 |
| Contract milkers | 1,500 | 14.6 | 496 | 170 | 2.93 |
| Sharemilkers: | | | | | |
| less than 20% | 123 | 1.2 | 765 | 244 | 3.13 |
| 20-29% | 465 | 4.5 | 545 | 194 | 2.81 |
| 30-49% | 136 | 1.3 | 432 | 148 | 2.92 |
| 50/50 | 1,737 | 16.9 | 419 | 149 | 2.8 |
| over 50% | 456 | 4.4 | 433 | 153 | 2.83 |
| All sharemilkers | 2,917 | 28.4 | 456 | 161 | 2.84 |
| Unknown | 247 | 2.4 | 422 | 148 | 2.85 |
| **All farms** | 10,268 | 100 | 460 | 165 | 2.79 |

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 2025/26

| 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 | 2,062,940 | 108,021 | 191,649 | 648 | 1,150 | 238 | 422 |
| Contract milkers | 2,342,641 | 123,466 | 218,818 | 728 | 1,291 | 249 | 441 |
| Sharemilkers: | | | | | | | |
| less than 20% | 3,758,001 | 198,527 | 354,010 | 813 | 1,449 | 259 | 463 |
| 20-29% | 2,553,016 | 134,027 | 238,685 | 692 | 1,233 | 246 | 438 |
| 30-49% | 1,831,127 | 97,517 | 172,228 | 660 | 1,165 | 226 | 399 |
| 50/50 | 1,927,985 | 101,974 | 180,276 | 683 | 1,207 | 244 | 431 |
| over 50% | 2,011,493 | 106,156 | 187,910 | 693 | 1,226 | 245 | 433 |
| All sharemilkers | 2,113,326 | 111,601 | 197,731 | 693 | 1,229 | 245 | 433 |
| Unknown | 2,096,746 | 103,158 | 180,946 | 696 | 1,221 | 244 | 429 |
| **All farms** | 2,118,927 | 111,177 | 197,088 | 674 | 1,194 | 242 | 428 |

Table 3.7 and Table 3.8 show the percentage of herds and the actual number of herds in each operating structure type, respectively. Over the past five seasons, the percentage of owner-operators has remained relatively stable, hovering around 56% but declined slightly to 54.6% in 2025/26. Sharemilker operations also rebounded from the decline recorded in the previous season, increasing to 28.4%.

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

| Operating structure | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Owner-operators | 72.4 | 59.9 | 57.2 | 56.1 | 56.2 | 56 | 56.2 | 55.2 | 58.4 | 54.6 |
| Contract Milkers | | 12.4 | 12.8 | 14.3 | 14.4 | 14.5 | 13.5 | 14.5 | 13.2 | 14.6 |
| Sharemilkers: | | | | | | | | | | |
| less than 20% | 1.1 | 1.1 | 1.2 | 1.3 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 1.2 | 1.1 | 1.2 |
| 20-29% | 5 | 5.1 | 5.2 | 5.5 | 4.8 | 4.5 | 4.6 | 4.9 | 4.4 | 4.5 |
| 30-49% | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.3 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.3 |
| 50/50 | 16.4 | 15.9 | 16.9 | 16.6 | 16.6 | 16.8 | 16.8 | 16.9 | 15.2 | 16.9 |
| over 50% | 3.5 | 3.7 | 4.6 | 4 | 4.7 | 4.8 | 5.5 | 4.4 | 4.2 | 4.4 |
| All sharemilkers | 27.3 | 27.3 | 29.3 | 28.9 | 28.5 | 28.6 | 29.3 | 28.6 | 26.1 | 28.4 |
| Other/Unknown | 0.3 | 0.4 | 0.7 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 0.9 | 1.1 | 1.7 | 2.3 | 2.4 |

Note: For the 2016/17 season, herds with contract milkers were included in the owner-operator category.

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

| Operating structure | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Owner-operators | 8,503 | 6,940 | 6,507 | 6,268 | 6,206 | 6,046 | 5,959 | 5,790 | 6,060 | 5,604 |
| Contract Milkers | | 1,440 | 1,460 | 1,597 | 1,594 | 1,568 | 1,429 | 1,518 | 1,367 | 1,500 |
| Sharemilkers: | | | | | | | | | | |
| less than 20% | 134 | 122 | 138 | 148 | 117 | 115 | 117 | 124 | 112 | 123 |
| 20-29% | 586 | 595 | 589 | 616 | 534 | 489 | 485 | 513 | 455 | 465 |
| 30-49% | 157 | 161 | 159 | 159 | 148 | 149 | 140 | 126 | 122 | 136 |
| 50/50 | 1,925 | 1,848 | 1,919 | 1,857 | 1,831 | 1,817 | 1,778 | 1,771 | 1,580 | 1,737 |
| over 50% | 406 | 433 | 526 | 447 | 515 | 517 | 580 | 462 | 439 | 456 |
| All sharemilkers | 3,208 | 3,159 | 3,331 | 3,227 | 3,145 | 3,089 | 3,100 | 2,996 | 2,708 | 2,917 |
| Other/Unknown | 37 | 51 | 74 | 87 | 89 | 93 | 113 | 181 | 235 | 247 |
| **Total** | 11,748 | 11,590 | 11,372 | 11,179 | 11,034 | 10,796 | 10,601 | 10,485 | 10,370 | 10,268 |

Note: For the 2016/17 season, herds with contract milkers were included in the owner-operator category.

Table 3.9 compares the number (and percentage) of owner-operators, contract milkers and sharemilkers by region in 2025/26. 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 23%, followed by Taranaki, Southland, and North Canterbury with 14.4%, 9.4% and 8.9%, respectively. Seventy-seven percent of all 50/50 sharemilkers are in the North Island and 23% are in the South Island.

Table 3.9: Operating structure by region in 2025/26

| 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 | 416 | 7.4 | 72 | 4.8 | 158 | 5.4 | 100 | 5.8 | 58 | 4.9 | 646 | 6.4 |
| Auckland | 147 | 2.6 | 29 | 1.9 | 102 | 3.5 | 65 | 3.7 | 37 | 3.1 | 278 | 2.8 |
| Waikato | 1,290 | 23 | 531 | 35.4 | 959 | 32.9 | 678 | 39 | 281 | 23.8 | 2,780 | 27.7 |
| Bay of Plenty | 239 | 4.3 | 73 | 4.9 | 120 | 4.1 | 79 | 4.5 | 41 | 3.5 | 432 | 4.3 |
| Central Plateau | 262 | 4.7 | 80 | 5.3 | 110 | 3.8 | 77 | 4.4 | 33 | 2.8 | 452 | 4.5 |
| Western Uplands | 44 | 0.8 | 9 | 0.6 | 25 | 0.9 | 13 | 0.7 | 12 | 1.0 | 78 | 0.8 |
| East Coast | 3 | 0.1 | 2 | 0.1 | 1 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 0.1 | 6 | 0.1 |
| Hawkes Bay | 46 | 0.8 | 6 | 0.4 | 13 | 0.4 | 9 | 0.5 | 4 | 0.3 | 65 | 0.6 |
| Taranaki | 807 | 14.4 | 201 | 13.4 | 394 | 13.5 | 227 | 13.1 | 167 | 14.2 | 1,402 | 14.0 |
| Manawatu | 296 | 5.3 | 60 | 4.0 | 105 | 3.6 | 57 | 3.3 | 48 | 4.1 | 461 | 4.6 |
| Wairarapa | 212 | 3.8 | 69 | 4.6 | 73 | 2.5 | 41 | 2.4 | 32 | 2.7 | 354 | 3.5 |
| **North Island** | 3,762 | 67.0 | 1,132 | 75.0 | 2,060 | 71.0 | 1,346 | 77.0 | 714 | 61.0 | 6,954 | 69.0 |
| Nelson / Marlborough | 121 | 2.2 | 19 | 1.3 | 39 | 1.3 | 25 | 1.4 | 14 | 1.2 | 179 | 1.8 |
| West Coast | 269 | 4.8 | 0 | 0.0 | 74 | 2.5 | 32 | 1.8 | 42 | 3.6 | 343 | 3.4 |
| North Canterbury | 496 | 8.9 | 148 | 9.9 | 230 | 7.9 | 105 | 6.0 | 125 | 10.6 | 874 | 8.7 |
| South Canterbury | 184 | 3.3 | 25 | 1.7 | 104 | 3.6 | 32 | 1.8 | 72 | 6.1 | 313 | 3.1 |
| Otago | 247 | 4.4 | 43 | 2.9 | 123 | 4.2 | 47 | 2.7 | 76 | 6.4 | 413 | 4.1 |
| Southland | 525 | 9.4 | 133 | 8.9 | 287 | 9.8 | 150 | 8.6 | 137 | 11.6 | 945 | 9.4 |
| **South Island** | 1,842 | 33.0 | 368 | 25.0 | 857 | 29.0 | 391 | 23.0 | 466 | 39.0 | 3,067 | 31.0 |
| **New Zealand** | 5,604 | 100 | 1,500 | 100 | 2,917 | 100 | 1,737 | 100 | 1,180 | 100 | 10,021 | 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 200-249 size range (which make up 11.3% of herds nationally) represent the largest percentage within their respective categories. With the exception of Owner-Operators, where the most common herd size range remains unchanged, this is a decrease from the previous season, when the 250–299 herd size range was the most prevalent in all other categories. Owner-operators are distributed across herd sizes, but peak at 11.8% in the 200-249 herd size range, and appear more in herds consisting of less than 500 cows (66%). In contrast, contract milkers have a larger presence in the larger herd sizes compared to owner-operators, especially in the 400+ herd size categories (54%).

Table 3.10: Operating structure by herd size in 2025/26

| 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 | 11 | 0.2 | 1 | 0.1 | 3 | 0.1 | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 0.3 | 15 | 0.1 |
| 50-99 | 121 | 2.2 | 3 | 0.2 | 16 | 0.5 | 7 | 0.4 | 9 | 0.8 | 140 | 1.4 |
| 100-149 | 292 | 5.2 | 9 | 0.6 | 87 | 3.0 | 49 | 2.8 | 38 | 3.2 | 388 | 3.9 |
| 150-199 | 531 | 9.5 | 70 | 4.7 | 221 | 7.6 | 147 | 8.5 | 74 | 6.3 | 822 | 8.2 |
| 200-249 | 662 | 11.8 | 163 | 10.9 | 335 | 11.5 | 217 | 12.5 | 118 | 10.0 | 1,160 | 11.6 |
| 250-299 | 545 | 9.7 | 158 | 10.5 | 349 | 12.0 | 235 | 13.5 | 114 | 9.7 | 1,052 | 10.5 |
| 300-349 | 491 | 8.8 | 148 | 9.9 | 286 | 9.8 | 198 | 11.4 | 88 | 7.5 | 925 | 9.2 |
| 350-399 | 381 | 6.8 | 141 | 9.4 | 204 | 7.0 | 133 | 7.7 | 71 | 6.0 | 726 | 7.2 |
| 400-449 | 392 | 7.0 | 119 | 7.9 | 225 | 7.7 | 144 | 8.3 | 81 | 6.9 | 736 | 7.3 |
| 450-499 | 284 | 5.1 | 91 | 6.1 | 192 | 6.6 | 118 | 6.8 | 74 | 6.3 | 567 | 5.7 |
| 500-549 | 267 | 4.8 | 77 | 5.1 | 163 | 5.6 | 92 | 5.3 | 71 | 6.0 | 507 | 5.1 |
| 550-599 | 232 | 4.1 | 78 | 5.2 | 126 | 4.3 | 73 | 4.2 | 53 | 4.5 | 436 | 4.4 |
| 600-649 | 211 | 3.8 | 79 | 5.3 | 133 | 4.6 | 67 | 3.9 | 66 | 5.6 | 423 | 4.2 |
| 650-699 | 160 | 2.9 | 61 | 4.1 | 101 | 3.5 | 50 | 2.9 | 51 | 4.3 | 322 | 3.2 |
| 700-749 | 153 | 2.7 | 45 | 3.0 | 80 | 2.7 | 41 | 2.4 | 39 | 3.3 | 278 | 2.8 |
| 750-799 | 126 | 2.2 | 50 | 3.3 | 60 | 2.1 | 30 | 1.7 | 30 | 2.5 | 236 | 2.4 |
| 800-849 | 112 | 2.0 | 30 | 2.0 | 68 | 2.3 | 34 | 2.0 | 34 | 2.9 | 210 | 2.1 |
| 850-899 | 111 | 2.0 | 35 | 2.3 | 43 | 1.5 | 18 | 1.0 | 25 | 2.1 | 189 | 1.9 |
| 900-949 | 69 | 1.2 | 27 | 1.8 | 44 | 1.5 | 13 | 0.7 | 31 | 2.6 | 140 | 1.4 |
| 950-999 | 68 | 1.2 | 24 | 1.6 | 41 | 1.4 | 19 | 1.1 | 22 | 1.9 | 133 | 1.3 |
| 1000-1099 | 133 | 2.4 | 37 | 2.5 | 57 | 2.0 | 24 | 1.4 | 33 | 2.8 | 227 | 2.3 |
| 1100-1199 | 87 | 1.6 | 16 | 1.1 | 29 | 1.0 | 17 | 1.0 | 12 | 1.0 | 132 | 1.3 |
| 1200-1499 | 118 | 2.1 | 32 | 2.1 | 39 | 1.3 | 8 | 0.5 | 31 | 2.6 | 189 | 1.9 |
| 1500+ | 47 | 0.8 | 6 | 0.4 | 15 | 0.5 | 3 | 0.2 | 12 | 1.0 | 68 | 0.7 |
| Total/Avg | 5,604 | 100 | 1,500 | 100 | 2,917 | 100 | 1,737 | 100 | 1,180 | 100 | 10,021 | 100 |

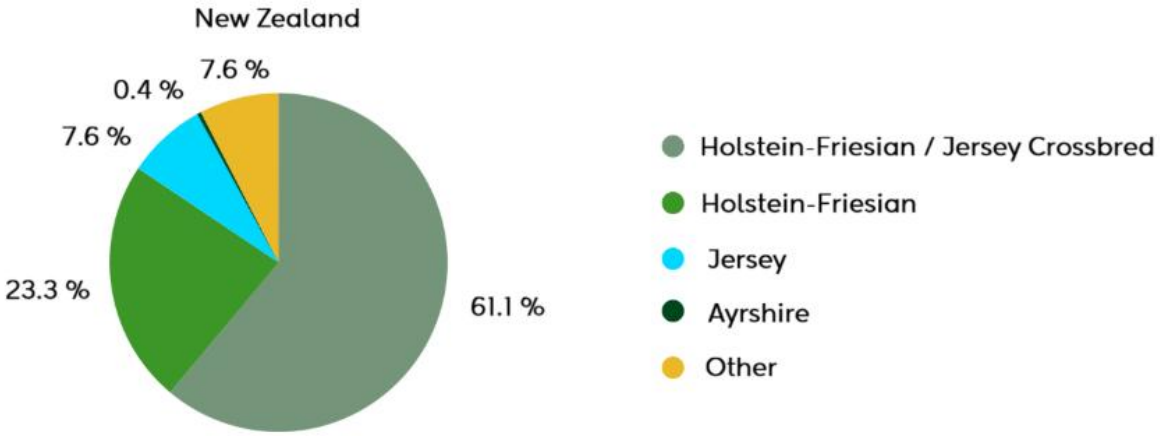
# 3.4. Breed breakdown

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.

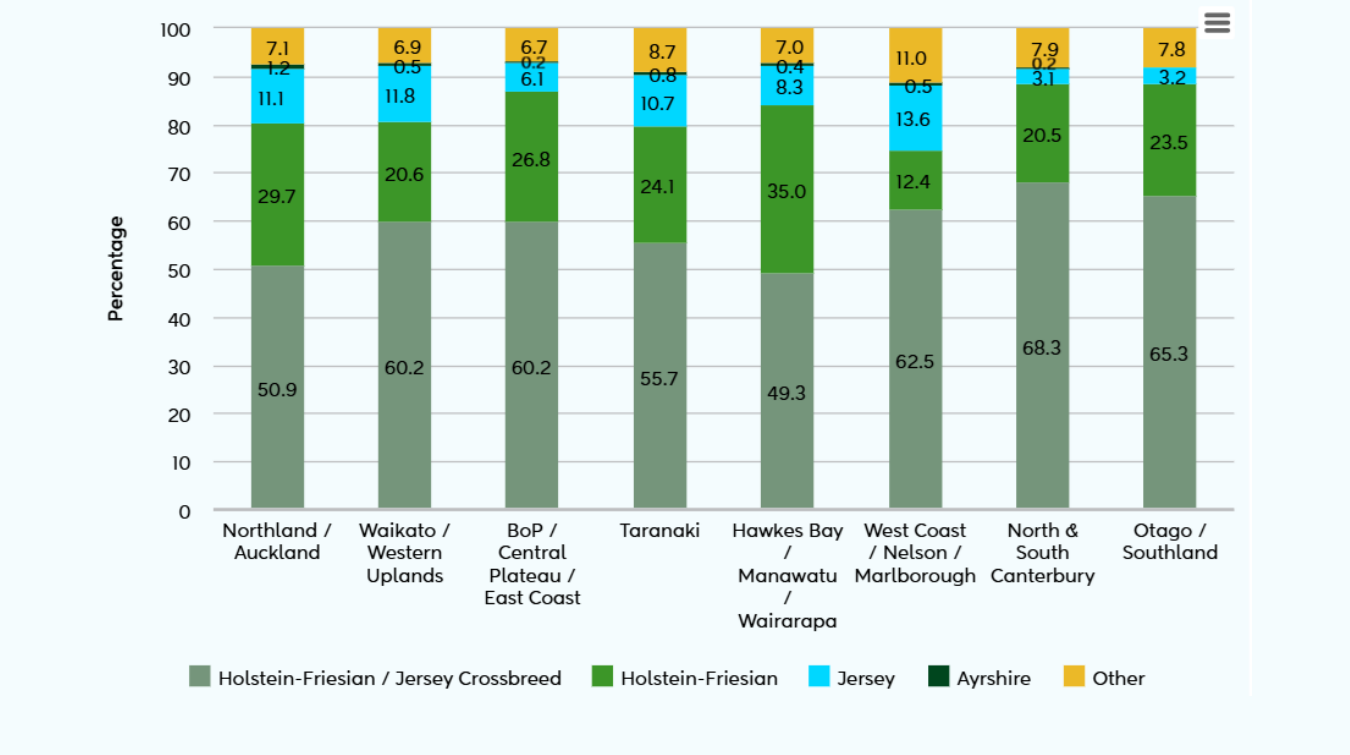
Graphs 3.2 and 3.3 display the percentages of the main dairy breed categories for New Zealand and each region. Percentages are given for Holstein-Friesian, Jersey, Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed and Ayrshire cows, with the remaining breeds and crossbreeds grouped into the "Other" category. Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed is the most common breed category in New Zealand, accounting for 61.1% of the national herd and ranging between 49.3% and 68.5% across all regions.

Graph 3.2: Breed category percentages of cows for New Zealand in 2025/26



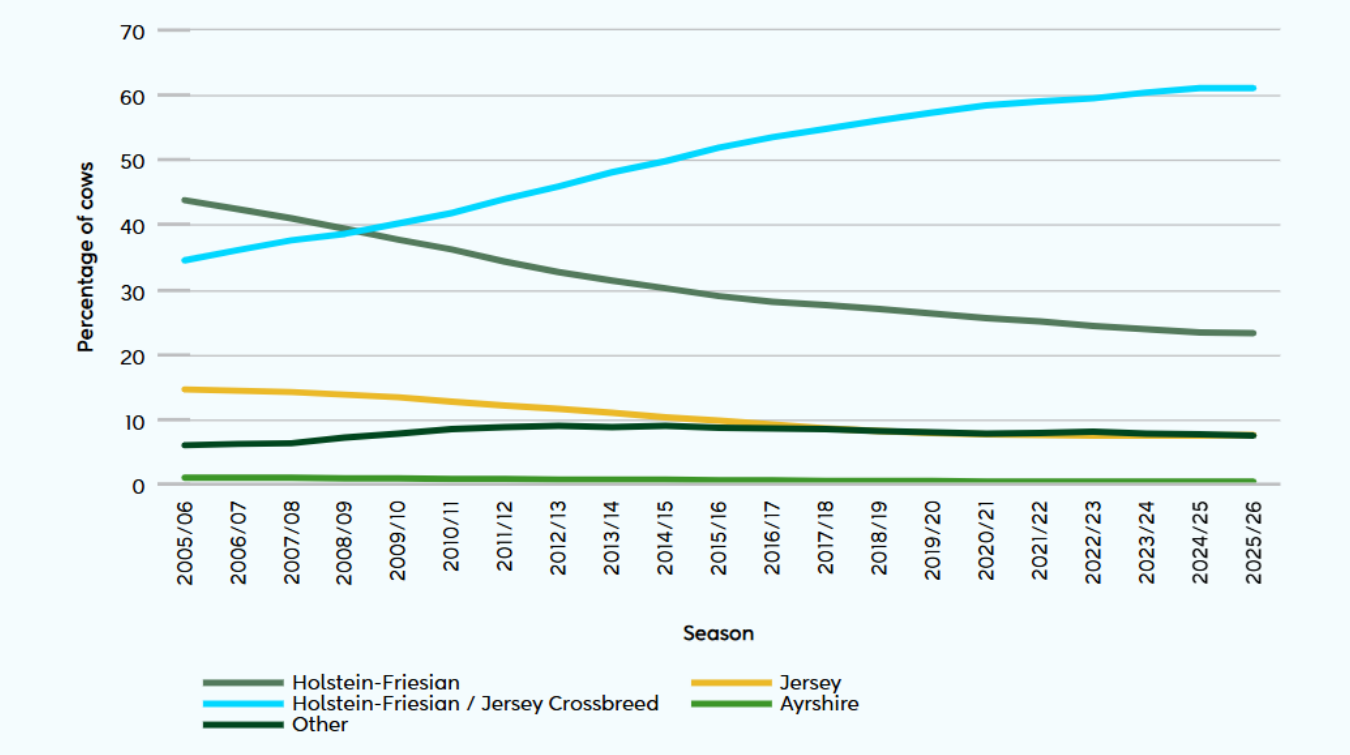

Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed cows make up more than 60% of the herd in the South Island, reaching their highest concentration in North & South Canterbury (68.5%). Holstein-Friesians are more prevalent in northern regions, such as Hawke's Bay/ Manawatu/ Wairarapa (35.2%) and Northland/ Auckland (29.9%). Although Jerseys are less common overall, they have a stronger presence in West Coast/ Nelson/ Marlborough (13.8%), Waikato/ Western Uplands (11.8%), and Northland/ Auckland (11.6%).

Graph 3.3: Breed category percentages of cows by region in 2025/26



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 2025/26, 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. 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.

- 83% of cows were herd-tested in 2025/26.

In 2025/26, 78.7% of herds were herd-tested, up from 77.2% in the previous season and the highest proportion since the early 2000s (Table 4.1).

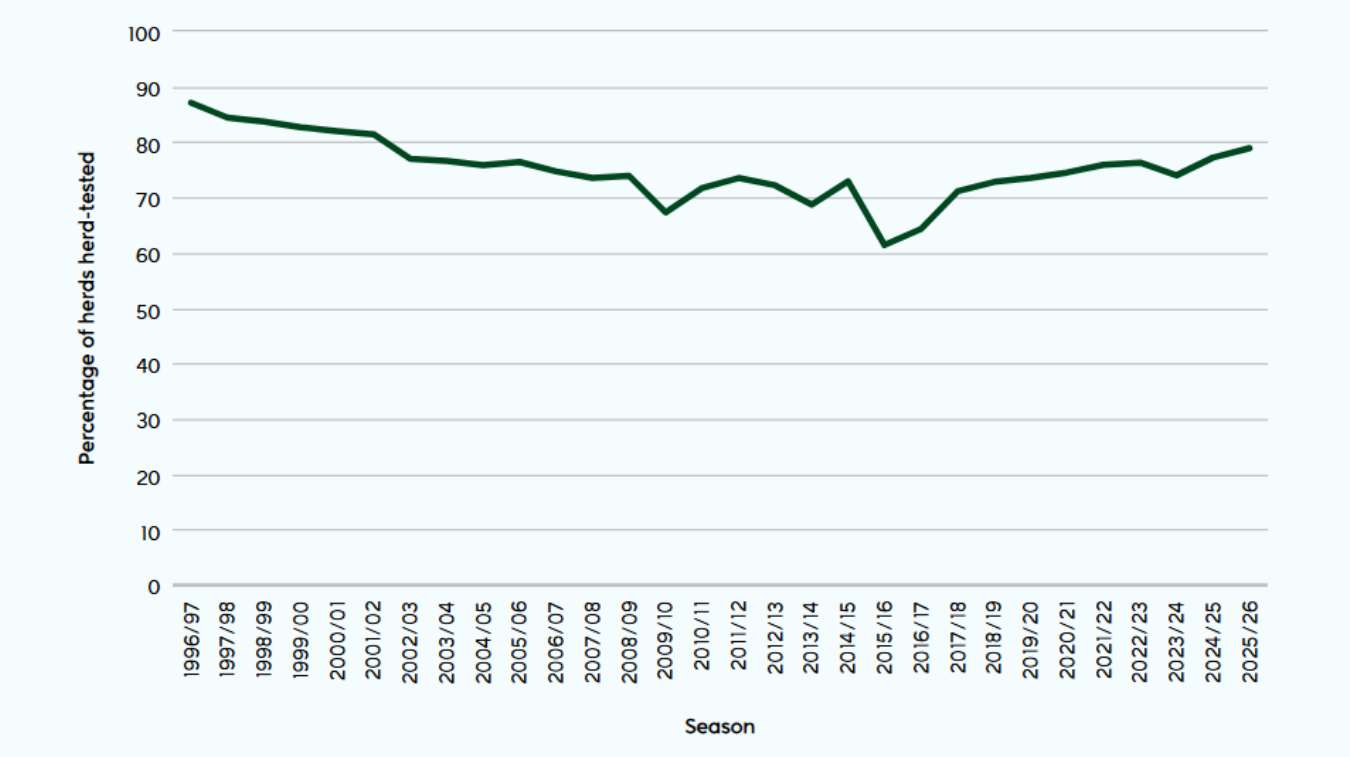
Table 4.1: Trend in the use of herd testing services

| 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 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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 |
| 2025/26 | 8,083 | 10,268 | 78.7 | 3,938 | 4,724 | 83.3 |

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

Apart from a decline in 2023/24, herd-testing rates have generally increased since 2015/16 and have remained above 70% since 2017/18 (Graph 4.1).

Graph 4.1: Trend in the percentage of herds testing




Regional uptake of herd-testing services in 2025/26 is summarised in Table 4.2. The number of cows tested includes all cows tested at least once during the season. Herd testing rates varied across regions, the East Coast had the lowest percentages of herds tested (50.0%). The highest proportions of herds tested were in the Otago region (86.5%), followed by the North Canterbury region (85.4%), and the Taranaki (85.0%) region. North Canterbury recorded the highest proportion of cows tested, at 89.6%.

Table 4.2: Use of herd testing by region in 2025/26

| 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 | 472 | 650 | 72.6 | 177,872 | 224,505 | 79.2 | 377 | 345 |
| Auckland | 197 | 278 | 70.9 | 66,818 | 81,920 | 81.6 | 339 | 295 |
| Waikato | 2,266 | 2,969 | 76.3 | 868,598 | 1,080,423 | 80.4 | 383 | 364 |
| Bay of Plenty | 314 | 432 | 72.7 | 121,082 | 161,581 | 74.9 | 386 | 374 |
| Central Plateau | 334 | 453 | 73.7 | 198,817 | 254,766 | 78.0 | 595 | 562 |
| Western Uplands | 58 | 78 | 74.4 | 29,676 | 42,413 | 70.0 | 512 | 544 |
| East Coast | 3 | 6 | 50.0 | 1,810 | 3,811 | 47.5 | 603 | 635 |
| Hawkes Bay | 49 | 65 | 75.4 | 36,502 | 43,739 | 83.5 | 745 | 673 |
| Taranaki | 1,191 | 1,402 | 85.0 | 383,327 | 443,133 | 86.5 | 322 | 316 |
| Manawatu | 325 | 461 | 70.5 | 157,176 | 200,148 | 78.5 | 484 | 434 |
| Wairarapa | 290 | 354 | 81.9 | 119,055 | 142,218 | 83.7 | 411 | 402 |
| Nelson / Marlborough | 148 | 179 | 82.7 | 58,639 | 69,032 | 84.9 | 396 | 386 |
| West Coast | 252 | 343 | 73.5 | 105,134 | 136,089 | 77.3 | 417 | 397 |
| North Canterbury | 746 | 874 | 85.4 | 635,185 | 708,839 | 89.6 | 851 | 811 |
| South Canterbury | 259 | 313 | 82.7 | 217,090 | 251,866 | 86.2 | 838 | 805 |
| Otago | 371 | 429 | 86.5 | 240,028 | 270,383 | 88.8 | 647 | 630 |
| Southland | 808 | 982 | 82.3 | 520,952 | 609,632 | 85.5 | 645 | 621 |
| New Zealand | 8,083 | 10,268 | 78.7 | 3,937,761 | 4,724,498 | 83.3 | 487 | 460 |

# 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, protein and milksolids production per cow.
- Manawatu and Southland had the longest production period.
- West Coast had the highest milkfat, protein and milksolids percentages.

Average per-cow statistics by region are summarised in Table 4.3. Based on herds tested, Southland recorded the highest milk volume (5,583 litres), milkfat (279 kg), protein (228 kg) and milksolids (507 kg) production. West Coast recorded the highest milkfat (5.36%), protein (4.18%) and milksolids (9.55%) percentages. North Canterbury had the lowest average somatic cell count, at 125,000 cells/mL.

Table 4.3: Season herd test averages per cow by region in 2025/26

| 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 | 3,909 | 200 | 5.20 | 155 | 3.99 | 355 | 9.19 | 238 | 273 | 193 |
| Auckland | 4,482 | 221 | 4.99 | 174 | 3.90 | 394 | 8.89 | 234 | 283 | 168 |
| Waikato | 4,828 | 243 | 5.12 | 190 | 3.97 | 433 | 9.08 | 248 | 283 | 153 |
| Bay of Plenty | 4,540 | 226 | 5.04 | 178 | 3.96 | 404 | 9.00 | 240 | 274 | 169 |
| Central Plateau | 4,823 | 239 | 5.02 | 189 | 3.95 | 428 | 8.96 | 240 | 277 | 152 |
| Western Uplands | 3,985 | 203 | 5.18 | 159 | 4.02 | 362 | 9.20 | 240 | 273 | 144 |
| East Coast | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| Hawkes Bay | 4,565 | 226 | 5.00 | 179 | 3.94 | 405 | 8.94 | 241 | 269 | 182 |
| Taranaki | 4,857 | 250 | 5.22 | 196 | 4.06 | 446 | 9.28 | 243 | 273 | 154 |
| Manawatu | 5,034 | 249 | 5.01 | 198 | 3.97 | 447 | 8.98 | 239 | 291 | 173 |
| Wairarapa | 4,708 | 241 | 5.19 | 189 | 4.05 | 430 | 9.24 | 245 | 276 | 185 |
| Nelson / Marlborough | 4,578 | 237 | 5.25 | 186 | 4.08 | 423 | 9.33 | 244 | 274 | 147 |
| West Coast | 4,168 | 220 | 5.36 | 173 | 4.18 | 392 | 9.55 | 234 | 270 | 176 |
| North Canterbury | 5,439 | 272 | 5.06 | 221 | 4.08 | 493 | 9.14 | 242 | 285 | 125 |
| South Canterbury | 5,249 | 267 | 5.14 | 215 | 4.13 | 482 | 9.26 | 246 | 277 | 134 |
| Otago | 5,335 | 268 | 5.08 | 219 | 4.13 | 487 | 9.22 | 247 | 274 | 134 |
| Southland | 5,583 | 279 | 5.06 | 228 | 4.11 | 507 | 9.17 | 245 | 287 | 132 |
| New Zealand | 4,999 | 252 | 5.11 | 201 | 4.04 | 452 | 9.15 | 244 | 280 | 149 |

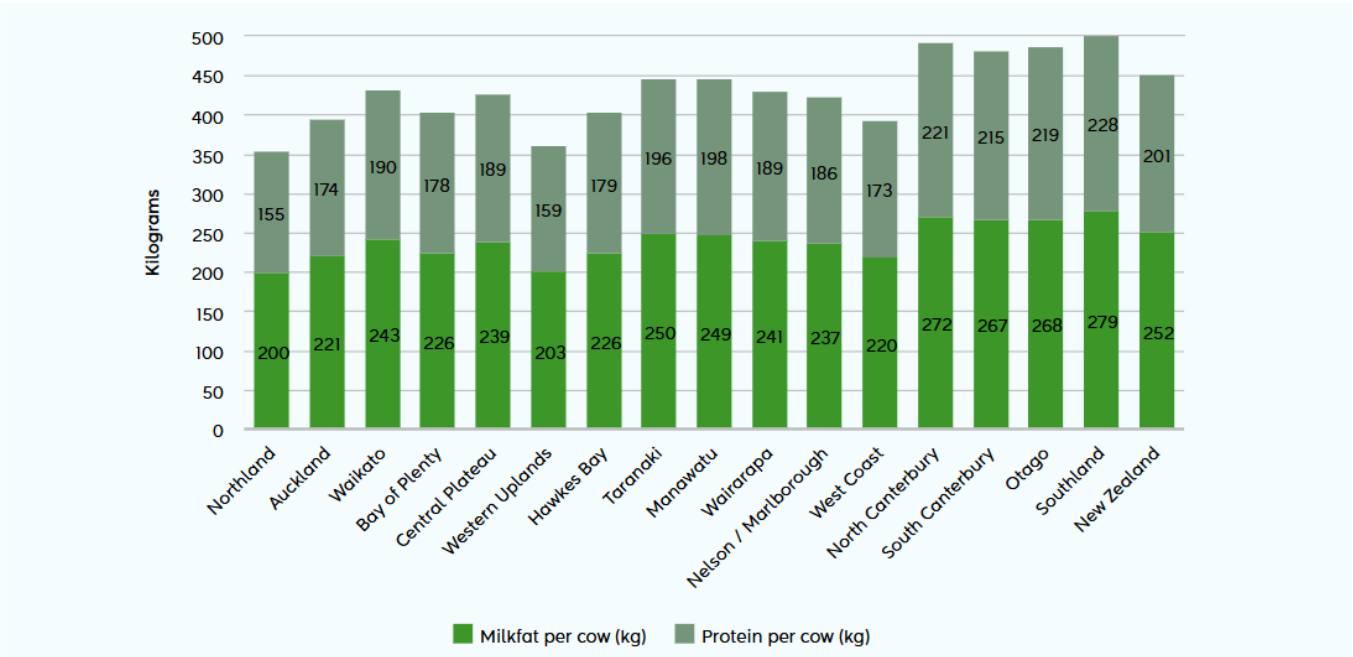
Note:

– No data for the East Coast region was reported as this region had fewer than 5 herds contributing data.

Southland, North Canterbury and Otago recorded the highest milkfat production per cow (279, 272 and 268 kg, respectively). Southland also recorded the highest protein production (228 kg), followed by North Canterbury (221 kg) and Otago (219 kg). Northland recorded the lowest milkfat, protein and milksolids yields (200, 155 and 355 kg per cow, respectively). The East Coast results were not reported because fewer than five herds contributed data.

In 2025/26, lactation regional averages for herd-tested cows ranged from 200 to 279 kg of milkfat per cow and from 155 to 228 kg of protein per cow (Graph 4.2).

Graph 4.2: Average milkfat and protein production per cow by region in 2025/26



- Herd-test averages for milk, milkfat, protein and milksolids reached record levels.
- The average somatic cell count was the lowest recorded.

Milk production per cow increased from 4,854 litres in 2024/25 to a record 4,999 litres in 2025/26 (Table 4.4). Milkfat, protein and milksolids yields also reached record levels of 252, 201 and 452 kg per cow, respectively, and their corresponding concentrations increased to 5.11%, 4.04% and 9.15%, also the highest recorded. The average somatic cell count decreased from 157,000 in 2024/25 to a record low of 149,000 cells/mL in 2025/26. Average days in milk (production) increased to 280 days, the longest recorded.

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) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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 |
| 2025/26 | 4,999 | 252 | 5.11 | 201 | 4.04 | 452 | 9.15 | 244 | 280 | 149 |

## 4.2.2. Monthly averages

- Daily milk, milkfat and protein production per cow were highest in September and October.
- The national average somatic cell count was lowest in 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 instance, 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 few herds (generally winter milk herds) are tested during this period. Differences in climate between regions (which in turn can affect the mating period), available feed, and cow condition are reflected in differing months of peak production.

All cows herd-tested in a given month were included, provided they were tested at least once during the season (Table 4.5). Average daily production generally peaked in September or October, with the national averages for milk, milkfat and protein highest in October.

Table 4.5: Monthly herd test averages by region in 2025/26

**Average litres of milk per cow per day**

| Region | 2025 Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | 2026 Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Season average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Northland | 17.19 | 17.28 | 19.09 | 19.43 | 18.77 | 17.08 | 15.35 | 13.34 | 11.74 | 10.38 | 10.27 | 15.42 | 15.44 |
| Auckland | 18.26 | 18.50 | 19.34 | 20.90 | 20.40 | 18.84 | 16.83 | 14.61 | 12.73 | 11.33 | 11.35 | 16.60 | 16.64 |
| Waikato | 19.37 | 19.60 | 21.60 | 22.59 | 21.84 | 19.70 | 17.94 | 15.58 | 13.57 | 11.65 | 11.28 | 15.23 | 17.50 |
| Bay of Plenty | 17.39 | 17.06 | 22.00 | 22.43 | 21.78 | 19.91 | 18.15 | 15.41 | 14.00 | 11.32 | 10.67 | 12.71 | 16.90 |
| Central Plateau | 17.71 | 19.30 | 21.33 | 23.61 | 24.11 | 21.53 | 20.13 | 17.39 | 15.27 | 13.36 | 12.19 | 13.94 | 18.32 |
| Western Uplands | 10.52 | 10.39 | 21.27 | 20.45 | 20.57 | 18.49 | 16.90 | 14.43 | 12.81 | 10.66 | 9.56 | 9.23 | 14.61 |
| East Coast | 15.94 | 14.08 | 15.78 | 18.61 | 21.05 | 17.86 | 17.40 | 13.20 | 14.17 | 10.35 | 9.94 | 20.38 | 15.73 |
| Hawkes Bay | 18.53 | 18.23 | 21.31 | 22.24 | 23.23 | 20.04 | 19.00 | 15.99 | 14.97 | 12.52 | 12.28 | 14.09 | 17.70 |
| Taranaki | 19.08 | 19.97 | 21.42 | 22.81 | 22.36 | 20.21 | 18.40 | 16.55 | 14.88 | 12.64 | 11.56 | 14.39 | 17.86 |
| Manawatu | 17.96 | 18.46 | 21.21 | 23.75 | 23.66 | 21.79 | 20.37 | 17.46 | 16.09 | 14.12 | 12.74 | 14.65 | 18.52 |
| Wairarapa | 16.01 | 17.13 | 19.82 | 22.17 | 22.16 | 20.56 | 18.63 | 16.35 | 14.93 | 12.85 | 11.40 | 12.22 | 17.02 |
| Nelson / Marlborough | 16.88 | 15.23 | 18.54 | 22.64 | 22.61 | 20.91 | 18.54 | 17.03 | 14.96 | 12.89 | 11.30 | 10.86 | 16.87 |
| West Coast | 18.17 | 13.07 | 18.75 | 21.81 | 21.93 | 20.07 | 18.11 | 15.70 | 14.58 | 12.52 | 10.93 | 9.84 | 16.29 |
| North Canterbury | 18.84 | 19.99 | 20.54 | 25.08 | 25.75 | 23.99 | 22.54 | 20.35 | 18.82 | 16.55 | 14.57 | 13.52 | 20.04 |
| South Canterbury | 19.65 | 21.16 | 22.35 | 24.70 | 25.72 | 23.63 | 21.88 | 19.93 | 18.20 | 16.04 | 14.02 | 12.92 | 20.02 |
| Otago | 16.58 | 17.96 | 20.95 | 24.84 | 24.77 | 23.40 | 21.07 | 19.04 | 17.53 | 15.45 | 12.98 | 12.49 | 18.92 |
| Southland | 15.31 | 17.76 | 20.48 | 25.21 | 25.50 | 23.80 | 21.97 | 19.74 | 18.44 | 16.27 | 14.14 | 13.25 | 19.32 |
| **New Zealand** | 18.15 | 18.76 | 20.95 | 22.97 | 23.44 | 21.01 | 19.61 | 17.15 | 15.68 | 13.56 | 12.54 | 13.70 | 18.13 |

**Average kg of milkfat per cow per day**

| Region | 2025 Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | 2026 Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Season average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Northland | 0.79 | 0.81 | 0.88 | 0.90 | 0.86 | 0.81 | 0.72 | 0.66 | 0.61 | 0.58 | 0.57 | 0.75 | 0.74 |
| Auckland | 0.82 | 0.83 | 0.87 | 0.94 | 0.92 | 0.86 | 0.79 | 0.71 | 0.64 | 0.61 | 0.62 | 0.82 | 0.79 |
| Waikato | 0.91 | 0.91 | 1.01 | 1.04 | 1.00 | 0.92 | 0.85 | 0.77 | 0.71 | 0.65 | 0.65 | 0.80 | 0.85 |
| Bay of Plenty | 0.82 | 0.81 | 1.01 | 1.01 | 0.98 | 0.91 | 0.84 | 0.74 | 0.71 | 0.62 | 0.60 | 0.70 | 0.81 |
| Central Plateau | 0.85 | 0.88 | 0.99 | 1.08 | 1.08 | 0.98 | 0.93 | 0.84 | 0.77 | 0.73 | 0.69 | 0.75 | 0.88 |
| Western Uplands | 0.62 | 0.65 | 1.05 | 0.97 | 0.95 | 0.87 | 0.80 | 0.73 | 0.67 | 0.60 | 0.57 | 0.55 | 0.75 |
| East Coast | 0.75 | 0.63 | 0.68 | 0.81 | 0.90 | 0.81 | 0.75 | 0.64 | 0.66 | 0.55 | 0.55 | 0.92 | 0.72 |
| Hawkes Bay | 0.89 | 0.86 | 0.95 | 1.00 | 1.02 | 0.92 | 0.87 | 0.76 | 0.74 | 0.66 | 0.67 | 0.71 | 0.84 |
| Taranaki | 0.93 | 0.96 | 1.02 | 1.08 | 1.05 | 0.98 | 0.91 | 0.86 | 0.80 | 0.73 | 0.69 | 0.80 | 0.90 |
| Manawatu | 0.85 | 0.86 | 0.96 | 1.06 | 1.05 | 0.98 | 0.93 | 0.83 | 0.79 | 0.74 | 0.70 | 0.77 | 0.88 |
| Wairarapa | 0.78 | 0.83 | 0.95 | 1.02 | 1.02 | 0.97 | 0.89 | 0.81 | 0.77 | 0.71 | 0.66 | 0.68 | 0.84 |
| Nelson / Marlborough | 0.80 | 0.73 | 0.90 | 1.04 | 1.04 | 0.97 | 0.89 | 0.84 | 0.77 | 0.71 | 0.66 | 0.63 | 0.83 |
| West Coast | 1.03 | 0.78 | 0.89 | 1.03 | 1.02 | 0.96 | 0.88 | 0.80 | 0.78 | 0.71 | 0.66 | 0.62 | 0.85 |
| North Canterbury | 0.90 | 0.93 | 0.94 | 1.11 | 1.14 | 1.07 | 1.03 | 0.95 | 0.92 | 0.87 | 0.80 | 0.76 | 0.95 |
| South Canterbury | 0.91 | 0.91 | 1.02 | 1.11 | 1.12 | 1.06 | 1.00 | 0.94 | 0.90 | 0.84 | 0.79 | 0.73 | 0.94 |
| Otago | 0.85 | 0.90 | 0.99 | 1.12 | 1.09 | 1.05 | 0.97 | 0.90 | 0.87 | 0.81 | 0.73 | 0.73 | 0.92 |
| Southland | 0.82 | 0.91 | 0.99 | 1.14 | 1.14 | 1.07 | 1.01 | 0.94 | 0.92 | 0.86 | 0.80 | 0.76 | 0.95 |
| **New Zealand** | 0.85 | 0.88 | 0.97 | 1.05 | 1.06 | 0.97 | 0.92 | 0.84 | 0.80 | 0.74 | 0.71 | 0.75 | 0.88 |

**Average kg of protein per cow per day**

| Region | 2025 Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | 2026 Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Season average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Northland | 0.63 | 0.65 | 0.71 | 0.72 | 0.70 | 0.64 | 0.57 | 0.51 | 0.46 | 0.43 | 0.44 | 0.60 | 0.59 |
| Auckland | 0.66 | 0.67 | 0.70 | 0.77 | 0.75 | 0.70 | 0.63 | 0.55 | 0.49 | 0.46 | 0.48 | 0.65 | 0.63 |
| Waikato | 0.74 | 0.76 | 0.81 | 0.85 | 0.81 | 0.74 | 0.67 | 0.59 | 0.53 | 0.49 | 0.50 | 0.63 | 0.68 |
| Bay of Plenty | 0.69 | 0.66 | 0.81 | 0.83 | 0.80 | 0.74 | 0.67 | 0.57 | 0.54 | 0.47 | 0.47 | 0.55 | 0.65 |
| Central Plateau | 0.69 | 0.74 | 0.82 | 0.88 | 0.89 | 0.80 | 0.75 | 0.65 | 0.59 | 0.56 | 0.54 | 0.60 | 0.71 |
| Western Uplands | 0.48 | 0.50 | 0.83 | 0.78 | 0.77 | 0.70 | 0.64 | 0.56 | 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 | 0.73 | 0.71 | 0.82 | 0.84 | 0.87 | 0.75 | 0.71 | 0.60 | 0.58 | 0.52 | 0.53 | 0.58 | 0.69 |
| Taranaki | 0.73 | 0.78 | 0.81 | 0.87 | 0.85 | 0.79 | 0.72 | 0.66 | 0.60 | 0.54 | 0.52 | 0.62 | 0.71 |
| Manawatu | 0.68 | 0.70 | 0.78 | 0.88 | 0.87 | 0.81 | 0.76 | 0.66 | 0.62 | 0.57 | 0.54 | 0.61 | 0.71 |
| Wairarapa | 0.62 | 0.66 | 0.76 | 0.83 | 0.83 | 0.78 | 0.70 | 0.63 | 0.59 | 0.54 | 0.50 | 0.53 | 0.66 |
| Nelson / Marlborough | 0.61 | 0.57 | 0.70 | 0.85 | 0.85 | 0.78 | 0.70 | 0.65 | 0.59 | 0.55 | 0.51 | 0.50 | 0.65 |
| West Coast | 0.81 | 0.62 | 0.78 | 0.84 | 0.83 | 0.77 | 0.70 | 0.62 | 0.59 | 0.54 | 0.51 | 0.48 | 0.67 |
| North Canterbury | 0.72 | 0.75 | 0.75 | 0.94 | 0.97 | 0.91 | 0.86 | 0.79 | 0.76 | 0.71 | 0.66 | 0.62 | 0.79 |
| South Canterbury | 0.75 | 0.79 | 0.83 | 0.93 | 0.97 | 0.90 | 0.84 | 0.78 | 0.74 | 0.68 | 0.63 | 0.59 | 0.79 |
| Otago | 0.66 | 0.70 | 0.80 | 0.93 | 0.94 | 0.89 | 0.81 | 0.74 | 0.71 | 0.66 | 0.59 | 0.59 | 0.75 |
| Southland | 0.65 | 0.70 | 0.79 | 0.95 | 0.96 | 0.91 | 0.85 | 0.77 | 0.75 | 0.70 | 0.64 | 0.61 | 0.77 |
| **New Zealand** | 0.68 | 0.72 | 0.79 | 0.86 | 0.88 | 0.79 | 0.74 | 0.66 | 0.62 | 0.57 | 0.56 | 0.60 | 0.71 |

**Average somatic cell count (000 cells per millilitre)**

| Region | 2025 Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | 2026 Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Season average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Northland | 219 | 236 | 205 | 184 | 194 | 187 | 217 | 244 | 271 | 286 | 310 | 262 | 235 |
| Auckland | 222 | 203 | 190 | 187 | 185 | 177 | 200 | 221 | 256 | 265 | 282 | 223 | 218 |
| Waikato | 214 | 215 | 184 | 158 | 157 | 145 | 163 | 182 | 207 | 225 | 237 | 232 | 193 |
| Bay of Plenty | 279 | 251 | 215 | 184 | 179 | 169 | 184 | 209 | 228 | 247 | 266 | 275 | 224 |
| Central Plateau | 281 | 215 | 190 | 162 | 165 | 163 | 173 | 191 | 208 | 222 | 231 | 245 | 204 |
| Western Uplands | 328 | 134 | 198 | 161 | 168 | 158 | 174 | 187 | 212 | 240 | 251 | 258 | 206 |
| East Coast | 313 | 312 | 329 | 244 | 222 | 208 | 231 | 271 | 278 | 313 | 337 | 341 | 283 |
| Hawkes Bay | 275 | 277 | 227 | 228 | 203 | 208 | 213 | 242 | 244 | 276 | 277 | 298 | 247 |
| Taranaki | 275 | 229 | 215 | 165 | 163 | 160 | 166 | 181 | 202 | 219 | 237 | 234 | 204 |
| Manawatu | 275 | 251 | 247 | 201 | 204 | 196 | 204 | 230 | 241 | 251 | 267 | 262 | 236 |
| Wairarapa | 266 | 267 | 273 | 205 | 199 | 191 | 199 | 217 | 235 | 250 | 266 | 264 | 236 |
| Nelson / Marlborough | 260 | 248 | 282 | 163 | 160 | 161 | 163 | 186 | 200 | 217 | 231 | 262 | 211 |
| West Coast | 281 | 364 | 286 | 161 | 151 | 163 | 160 | 195 | 189 | 215 | 234 | 265 | 222 |
| North Canterbury | 241 | 233 | 245 | 168 | 159 | 160 | 152 | 164 | 161 | 165 | 181 | 207 | 186 |
| South Canterbury | 249 | 256 | 309 | 176 | 165 | 163 | 155 | 173 | 166 | 174 | 182 | 206 | 198 |
| Otago | 275 | 286 | 268 | 177 | 162 | 161 | 158 | 169 | 171 | 175 | 193 | 211 | 201 |
| Southland | 295 | 265 | 328 | 178 | 167 | 169 | 158 | 176 | 169 | 181 | 185 | 194 | 206 |
| **New Zealand** | 235 | 234 | 201 | 171 | 167 | 163 | 169 | 188 | 199 | 212 | 221 | 225 | 199 |

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

## 4.2.3. Breed category averages

- Holstein-Friesian cows had the highest milk volume, protein and milksolids production.
- Jersey cows had the highest milkfat, protein and milksolids percentages.
- Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbred cows had the highest milkfat production.

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, Holstein-Friesian cows had the highest milk volume (5,520 litres), protein (211.3 kg) and milksolids (466.6 kg) production.

Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed cows had the highest milkfat (255.7 kg) production. Jersey cows recorded the highest milkfat (5.80%), protein (4.30%) and milksolids (10.11%) percentages.

In 2025/26, five-year-old cows produced the most milksolids across all breeds.

Table 4.6: Herd test averages by breed category and cow age in 2025/26

**Holstein-Friesian**

| Age | Cows tested | Days in milk | Milk (litres) | Milkfat (kg) | Protein (kg) | Milksolids (kg) | Milkfat (%) | Protein (%) | Milksolids (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 58,821 | 252 | 4,418 | 212.3 | 171.6 | 383.9 | 4.86 | 3.90 | 8.76 |
| 3 | 56,983 | 247 | 5,323 | 251.0 | 206.7 | 457.6 | 4.77 | 3.90 | 8.67 |
| 4 | 47,647 | 245 | 5,827 | 271.1 | 225.0 | 496.1 | 4.70 | 3.88 | 8.58 |
| 5 | 39,678 | 244 | 6,113 | 280.8 | 233.7 | 514.5 | 4.64 | 3.84 | 8.48 |
| 6 | 32,072 | 241 | 6,137 | 280.3 | 232.7 | 513.0 | 4.61 | 3.80 | 8.41 |
| 7 | 25,928 | 238 | 6,047 | 270.9 | 228.0 | 498.9 | 4.52 | 3.78 | 8.30 |
| 8 | 19,063 | 236 | 5,933 | 265.1 | 222.1 | 487.2 | 4.51 | 3.76 | 8.26 |
| 9 | 11,289 | 231 | 5,625 | 250.4 | 209.8 | 460.2 | 4.48 | 3.74 | 8.22 |
| 10+ | 13,135 | 227 | 5,176 | 231.6 | 191.1 | 422.7 | 4.50 | 3.70 | 8.20 |
| **Total** | 304,616 | 244 | 5,520 | 255.4 | 211.3 | 466.6 | 4.68 | 3.85 | 8.53 |

**Jersey**

| Age | Cows tested | Days in milk | Milk (litres) | Milkfat (kg) | Protein (kg) | Milksolids (kg) | Milkfat (%) | Protein (%) | Milksolids (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 24,376 | 253 | 3,149 | 184.6 | 134.6 | 319.1 | 5.89 | 4.29 | 10.17 |
| 3 | 23,883 | 248 | 3,729 | 217.9 | 162.0 | 379.9 | 5.87 | 4.35 | 10.22 |
| 4 | 21,124 | 247 | 4,058 | 236.9 | 176.2 | 413.2 | 5.86 | 4.35 | 10.22 |
| 5 | 17,921 | 246 | 4,218 | 245.3 | 182.4 | 427.7 | 5.84 | 4.33 | 10.17 |
| 6 | 13,564 | 243 | 4,241 | 244.0 | 181.7 | 425.7 | 5.78 | 4.30 | 10.08 |
| 7 | 10,224 | 242 | 4,239 | 237.9 | 179.4 | 417.3 | 5.63 | 4.24 | 9.87 |
| 8 | 7,648 | 240 | 4,145 | 233.9 | 175.9 | 409.8 | 5.67 | 4.25 | 9.92 |
| 9 | 4,973 | 237 | 3,973 | 222.0 | 167.2 | 389.2 | 5.61 | 4.21 | 9.82 |
| 10+ | 5,882 | 230 | 3,695 | 205.1 | 153.6 | 358.6 | 5.57 | 4.16 | 9.73 |
| **Total** | 129,595 | 246 | 3,867 | 223.4 | 166.0 | 389.4 | 5.80 | 4.30 | 10.11 |

**Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed**

| Age | Cows tested | Days in milk | Milk (litres) | Milkfat (kg) | Protein (kg) | Milksolids (kg) | Milkfat (%) | Protein (%) | Milksolids (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 146,842 | 252 | 3,920 | 208.8 | 161.3 | 370.1 | 5.37 | 4.13 | 9.5 |
| 3 | 159,658 | 246 | 4,757 | 248.7 | 196.4 | 445.2 | 5.27 | 4.14 | 9.41 |
| 4 | 137,264 | 245 | 5,221 | 269.9 | 214.3 | 484.2 | 5.21 | 4.12 | 9.33 |
| 5 | 114,611 | 244 | 5,468 | 280.3 | 222.8 | 503.1 | 5.17 | 4.09 | 9.26 |
| 6 | 91,278 | 242 | 5,538 | 279.3 | 222.6 | 501.9 | 5.08 | 4.03 | 9.11 |
| 7 | 73,562 | 240 | 5,516 | 271.6 | 219.4 | 490.9 | 4.96 | 3.99 | 8.95 |
| 8 | 51,465 | 237 | 5,407 | 266.5 | 213.9 | 480.4 | 4.97 | 3.97 | 8.93 |
| 9 | 31,740 | 234 | 5,192 | 255.8 | 205 | 460.8 | 4.96 | 3.96 | 8.92 |
| 10+ | 36,280 | 228 | 4,772 | 237.3 | 187 | 424.3 | 5 | 3.93 | 8.93 |
| Total | 842,700 | 244 | 4,991 | 255.7 | 202.6 | 458.3 | 5.17 | 4.08 | 9.25 |

**Ayrshire**

| Age | Cows tested | Days in milk | Milk (litres) | Milkfat (kg) | Protein (kg) | Milksolids (kg) | Milkfat (%) | Protein (%) | Milksolids (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 1,649 | 262 | 4,054 | 185.8 | 147.1 | 332.9 | 4.60 | 3.63 | 8.23 |
| 3 | 1,589 | 254 | 4,752 | 215.2 | 174.0 | 389.2 | 4.53 | 3.66 | 8.19 |
| 4 | 1,300 | 253 | 5,285 | 233.2 | 192.2 | 425.3 | 4.43 | 3.64 | 8.07 |
| 5 | 1,185 | 253 | 5,486 | 240.3 | 198.3 | 438.6 | 4.40 | 3.62 | 8.02 |
| 6 | 952 | 250 | 5,478 | 239.9 | 198.0 | 438.0 | 4.40 | 3.62 | 8.01 |
| 7 | 709 | 248 | 5,342 | 231.4 | 191.7 | 423.2 | 4.35 | 3.59 | 7.94 |
| 8 | 530 | 248 | 5,302 | 230.3 | 190.3 | 420.6 | 4.36 | 3.59 | 7.96 |
| 9 | 332 | 245 | 5,214 | 228.1 | 187.0 | 415.1 | 4.38 | 3.58 | 7.97 |
| 10+ | 497 | 240 | 4,866 | 210.9 | 171.9 | 382.8 | 4.36 | 3.54 | 7.90 |
| Total | 8,743 | 253 | 4,983 | 220.9 | 180.3 | 401.2 | 4.46 | 3.62 | 8.08 |

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 records in the DIGAD.

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 had the highest average liveweight, while Jersey cows had the lowest.

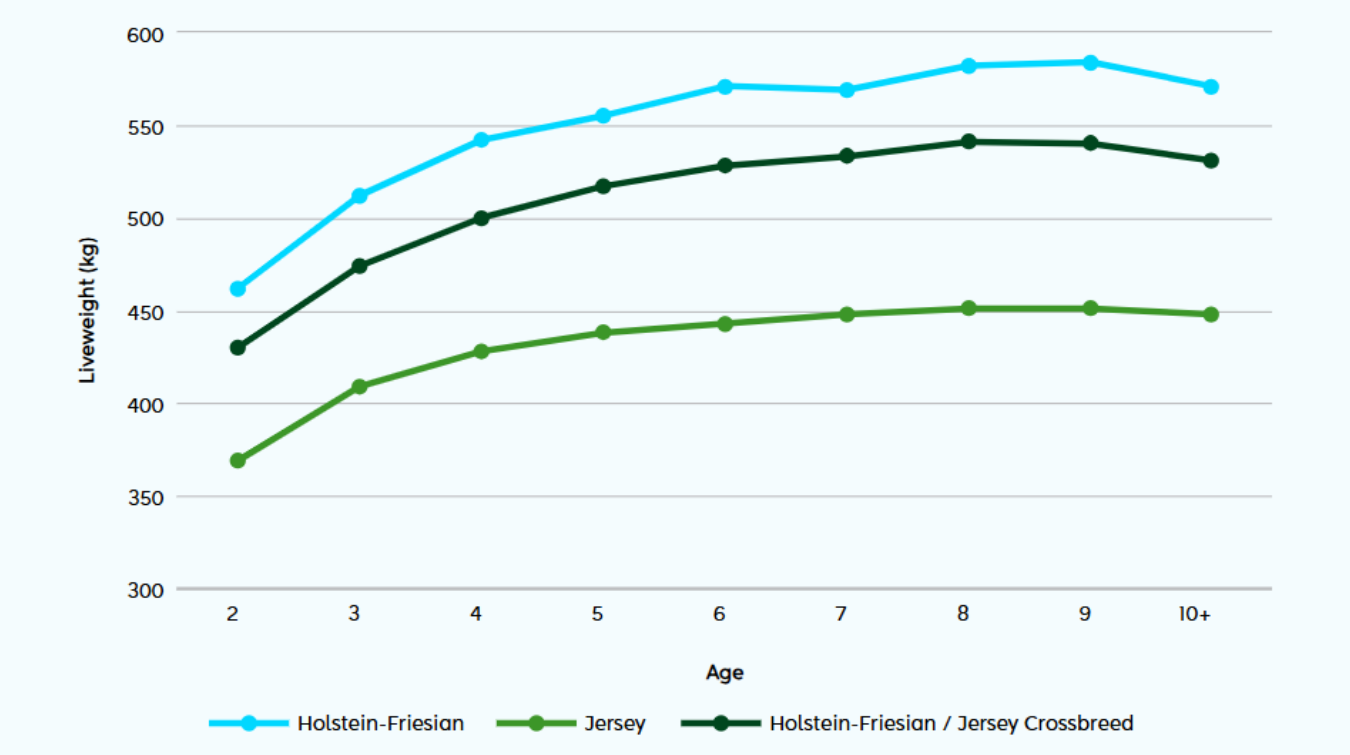
Table 4.7: Liveweight by age and by breed category of cow in 2025/26

| | 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 | 462 | 11,169 | 369 | 4,553 | 430 | 34,905 |
| 3 | 512 | 1,440 | 409 | 971 | 474 | 6,353 |
| 4 | 542 | 1,266 | 428 | 681 | 500 | 5,119 |
| 5 | 555 | 937 | 438 | 606 | 517 | 4,433 |
| 6 | 571 | 845 | 443 | 426 | 528 | 3,317 |
| 7 | 569 | 691 | 448 | 285 | 533 | 2,551 |
| 8 | 582 | 468 | 451 | 216 | 541 | 1,682 |
| 9 | 584 | 304 | 451 | 109 | 540 | 1,041 |
| 10+ | 571 | 370 | 448 | 138 | 531 | 1,080 |
| **Weighted Average** | 533 | | 421 | | 496 | |

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 2025/26



# 4.3. Artificial Breeding (AB) statistics

- 4.0 million cows were mated to AB.
- The percentage of cows mated to AB was the highest of the last three decades.

Historically, all artificial inseminations (AI) were recorded in the LIC's 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 more complete set of records from all AB service providers. For more information about this database visit https://www.dairynz.co.nz/animal/animal-evaluation/animal-database/.

Table 4.8 summarises cows and yearlings mated to AB over recent seasons. North Canterbury had the highest percentage of cows mated to AB in 2025/26 (94.7%), followed by Otago (91.4%) and South Canterbury (88.4%). The number of yearlings mated to AB increased from 218,572 in 2024/25 to 248,591 in 2025/26.

Table 4.8: Cows and yearlings to AB

**Cows to AB**

| Region | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Northland | 196,026 | 195,621 | 189,878 | 186,038 | 175,319 | 167,303 | 158,757 | 161,764 | 167,794 |
| Auckland | 70,380 | 69,861 | 71,851 | 70,120 | 65,816 | 63,909 | 60,863 | 61,669 | 63,099 |
| Waikato | 890,176 | 897,212 | 881,050 | 873,837 | 865,724 | 819,618 | 823,668 | 829,609 | 857,452 |
| Bay of Plenty | 145,504 | 146,087 | 142,938 | 139,795 | 133,432 | 125,843 | 120,890 | 123,584 | 130,978 |
| Central Plateau | 211,443 | 214,979 | 213,610 | 209,742 | 203,063 | 199,229 | 197,502 | 198,766 | 220,478 |
| Western Uplands | 31,396 | 33,127 | 32,906 | 31,736 | 30,690 | 29,532 | 30,786 | 29,133 | 29,831 |
| East Coast | 2,603 | 1,607 | 1,799 | 1,942 | 1,730 | 1,896 | 1,850 | 1,846 | 1,941 |
| Hawkes Bay | 41,707 | 41,646 | 39,906 | 37,593 | 36,851 | 36,020 | 31,160 | 34,939 | 37,691 |
| Taranaki | 398,339 | 400,927 | 397,993 | 392,771 | 391,354 | 374,485 | 376,223 | 368,741 | 379,940 |
| Manawatu | 166,464 | 168,730 | 164,735 | 164,549 | 162,565 | 154,356 | 155,621 | 156,710 | 159,407 |
| Wairarapa | 131,403 | 131,603 | 128,261 | 124,941 | 120,680 | 115,797 | 113,612 | 116,190 | 120,991 |
| Nelson / Marlborough | 67,212 | 66,560 | 63,194 | 61,325 | 56,842 | 57,050 | 57,467 | 54,112 | 57,084 |
| West Coast | 119,368 | 119,942 | 117,433 | 118,743 | 113,977 | 107,893 | 108,677 | 107,168 | 110,106 |
| North Canterbury | 624,347 | 641,371 | 640,339 | 645,071 | 642,531 | 629,175 | 641,540 | 642,348 | 671,366 |
| South Canterbury | 209,434 | 217,619 | 214,864 | 217,202 | 213,525 | 209,010 | 210,289 | 205,444 | 222,597 |
| Otago | 230,692 | 228,920 | 228,278 | 233,345 | 233,268 | 231,610 | 231,687 | 231,609 | 247,078 |
| Southland | 490,929 | 490,235 | 490,623 | 495,835 | 494,520 | 485,427 | 492,524 | 488,692 | 527,036 |
| **New Zealand** | 4,027,423 | 4,066,047 | 4,019,658 | 4,004,585 | 3,941,887 | 3,808,153 | 3,813,116 | 3,812,324 | 4,004,869 |

**Percentage of Cows to AB**

| Region | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Northland | 72.1 | 74.1 | 73.5 | 74.2 | 72.1 | 73.3 | 69.9 | 71.6 | 74.7 |
| Auckland | 66.7 | 70.3 | 75.0 | 74.0 | 70.3 | 75.1 | 69.0 | 74.2 | 77.0 |
| Waikato | 78.4 | 80.3 | 79.8 | 79.5 | 80.1 | 77.9 | 76.6 | 76.5 | 79.4 |
| Bay of Plenty | 74.3 | 76.9 | 77.1 | 76.2 | 74.7 | 74.0 | 72.1 | 75.1 | 81.1 |
| Central Plateau | 75.3 | 77.2 | 76.2 | 74.4 | 72.1 | 75.9 | 79.3 | 83.8 | 86.5 |
| Western Uplands | 65.2 | 68.8 | 70.1 | 65.3 | 64.6 | 65.3 | 70.7 | 69.1 | 70.3 |
| East Coast | 44.2 | 27.3 | 29.9 | 40.4 | 35.0 | 37.1 | 48.8 | 48.0 | 50.9 |
| Hawkes Bay | 86.1 | 87.2 | 87.7 | 85.1 | 83.5 | 85.3 | 72.1 | 81.5 | 86.2 |
| Taranaki | 83.5 | 85.9 | 85.1 | 84.3 | 85.0 | 84.1 | 83.9 | 83.3 | 85.7 |
| Manawatu | 75.5 | 78.0 | 76.9 | 76.3 | 77.3 | 77.2 | 78.9 | 79.1 | 79.6 |
| Wairarapa | 81.0 | 84.0 | 84.1 | 83.0 | 81.4 | 81.2 | 81.4 | 82.6 | 85.1 |
| Nelson / Marlborough | 80.8 | 80.9 | 79.0 | 82.3 | 77.2 | 80.5 | 83.3 | 78.7 | 82.7 |
| West Coast | 77.5 | 78.4 | 78.3 | 78.8 | 77.5 | 77.6 | 79.4 | 79.2 | 80.9 |
| North Canterbury | 89.0 | 90.6 | 89.0 | 89.2 | 89.2 | 89.5 | 91.6 | 92.0 | 94.7 |
| South Canterbury | 83.5 | 86.7 | 85.2 | 88.0 | 87.1 | 84.9 | 84.6 | 84.8 | 84.4 |
| Otago | 86.1 | 84.9 | 84.1 | 85.4 | 86.2 | 94.2 | 86.3 | 87.2 | 91.4 |
| Southland | 84.2 | 82.8 | 82.9 | 83.2 | 83.6 | 86.7 | 82.8 | 81.3 | 86.5 |
| **New Zealand** | 80.7 | 82.2 | 81.7 | 81.7 | 81.4 | 82.0 | 81.1 | 81.5 | 84.8 |

**Yearlings to AB**

| Region | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Northland | 11,258 | 12,070 | 10,708 | 9,648 | 9,722 | 10,373 | 9,153 | 9,801 | 9,338 |
| Auckland | 3,226 | 3,219 | 2,892 | 3,987 | 4,251 | 3,347 | 3,293 | 3,062 | 4,198 |
| Waikato | 22,840 | 22,551 | 20,717 | 20,347 | 20,923 | 19,960 | 16,736 | 19,137 | 21,268 |
| Bay of Plenty | 9,178 | 9,104 | 9,562 | 8,952 | 9,330 | 7,413 | 5,966 | 6,204 | 6,083 |
| Central Plateau | 5,374 | 7,244 | 7,398 | 6,060 | 7,759 | 6,434 | 7,113 | 10,452 | 11,044 |
| Western Uplands | 2,170 | 2,502 | 2,497 | 2,254 | 2,031 | 2,014 | 2,119 | 1,895 | 1,826 |
| East Coast | 152 | 169 | 151 | 160 | 409 | 713 | 775 | 657 | 586 |
| Hawkes Bay | 3,213 | 3,302 | 2,552 | 2,343 | 2,022 | 2,353 | 2,537 | 2,625 | 3,030 |
| Taranaki | 4,625 | 5,666 | 5,542 | 5,156 | 5,754 | 5,382 | 4,739 | 4,443 | 4,908 |
| Manawatu | 6,763 | 7,587 | 6,077 | 6,898 | 6,447 | 5,918 | 6,714 | 7,640 | 8,580 |
| Wairarapa | 4,626 | 5,130 | 4,728 | 4,895 | 4,514 | 4,548 | 3,495 | 4,124 | 4,906 |
| Nelson / Marlborough | 4,404 | 4,648 | 4,545 | 3,592 | 3,688 | 3,555 | 2,946 | 4,039 | 4,103 |
| West Coast | 5,569 | 6,101 | 6,702 | 8,647 | 8,451 | 7,679 | 7,449 | 7,334 | 8,000 |
| North Canterbury | 58,751 | 69,553 | 73,242 | 68,046 | 64,334 | 62,180 | 57,287 | 59,486 | 69,917 |
| South Canterbury | 24,033 | 25,647 | 24,764 | 23,969 | 25,921 | 21,490 | 21,732 | 21,492 | 24,532 |
| Otago | 23,992 | 28,119 | 28,332 | 25,911 | 26,052 | 23,274 | 20,101 | 22,900 | 27,370 |
| Southland | 39,970 | 46,107 | 42,047 | 38,941 | 37,679 | 36,893 | 31,120 | 33,281 | 38,902 |
| **New Zealand** | 230,144 | 258,719 | 252,456 | 239,806 | 239,287 | 223,526 | 203,275 | 218,572 | 248,591 |

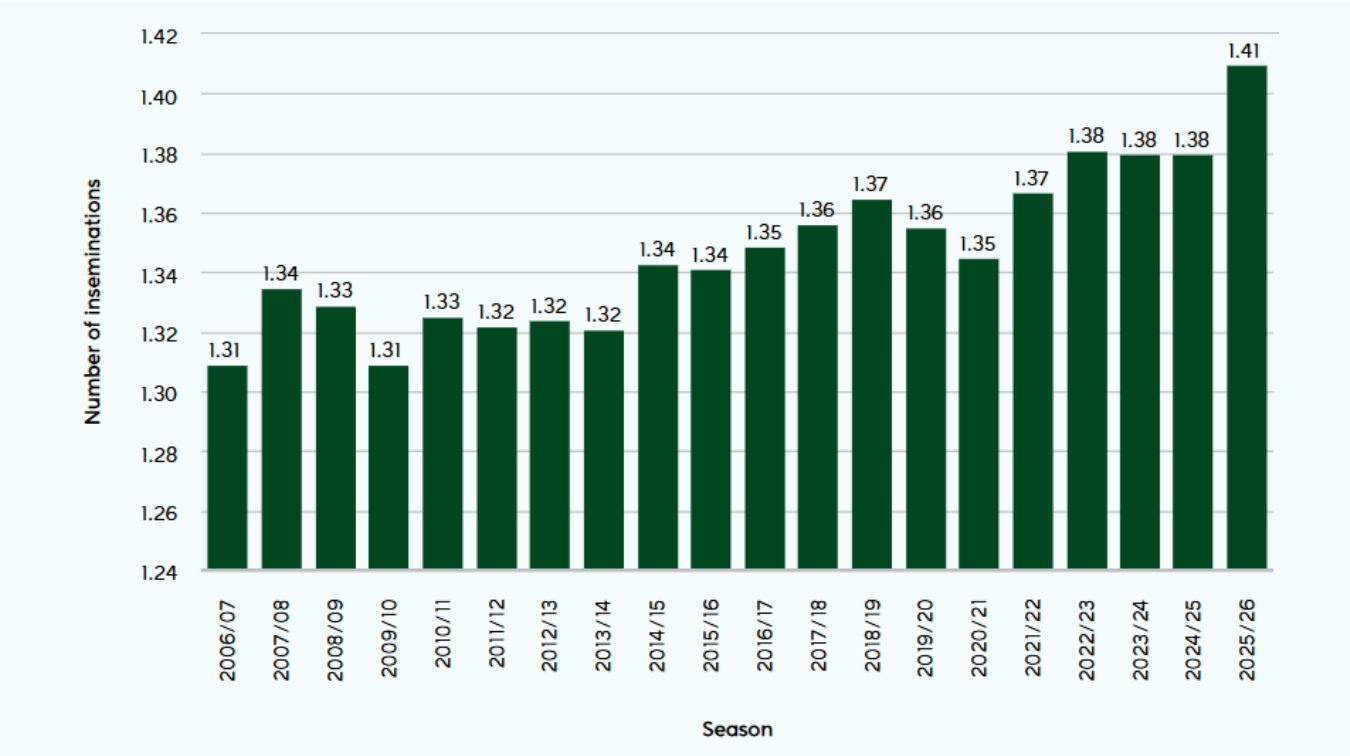
The percentage of cows mated through AB increased from 81.5% in 2024/25 to 84.8% in 2025/26, the highest proportion of the last thirty years (Graph 4.4).

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



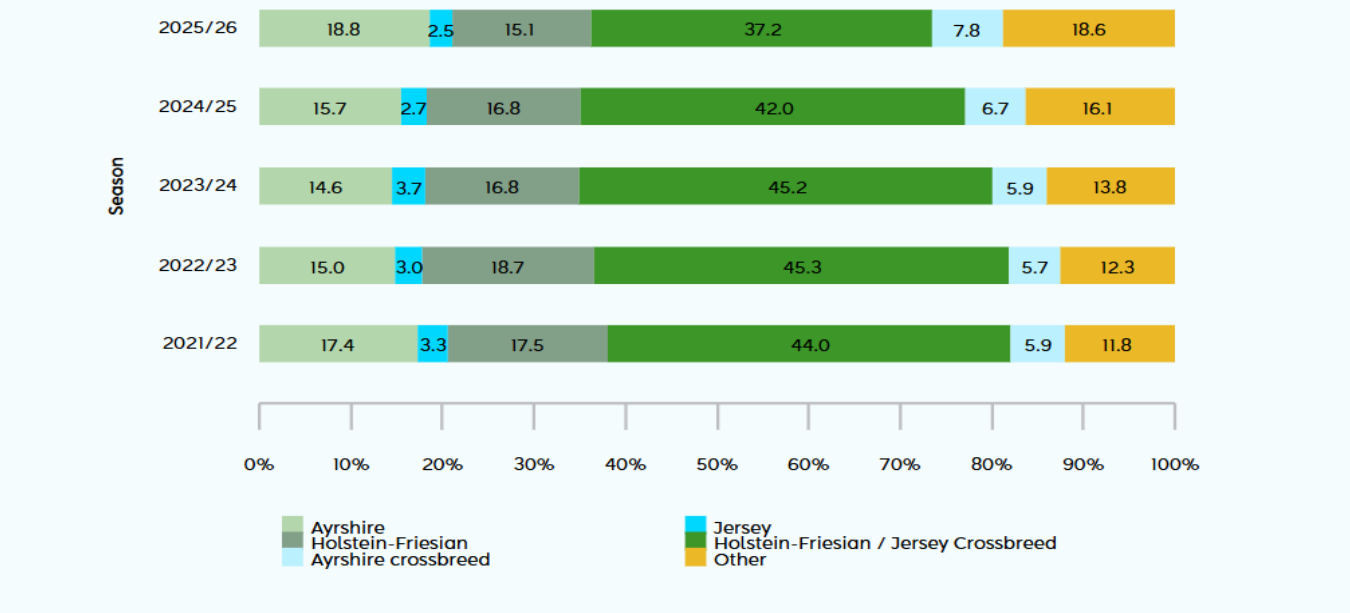

In 2025/26, the average number of inseminations per cow increased to 1.41, from 1.38 in each of the previous three seasons and the highest of the last two decades (Graph 4.5).

Graph 4.5: Average number of inseminations per cow

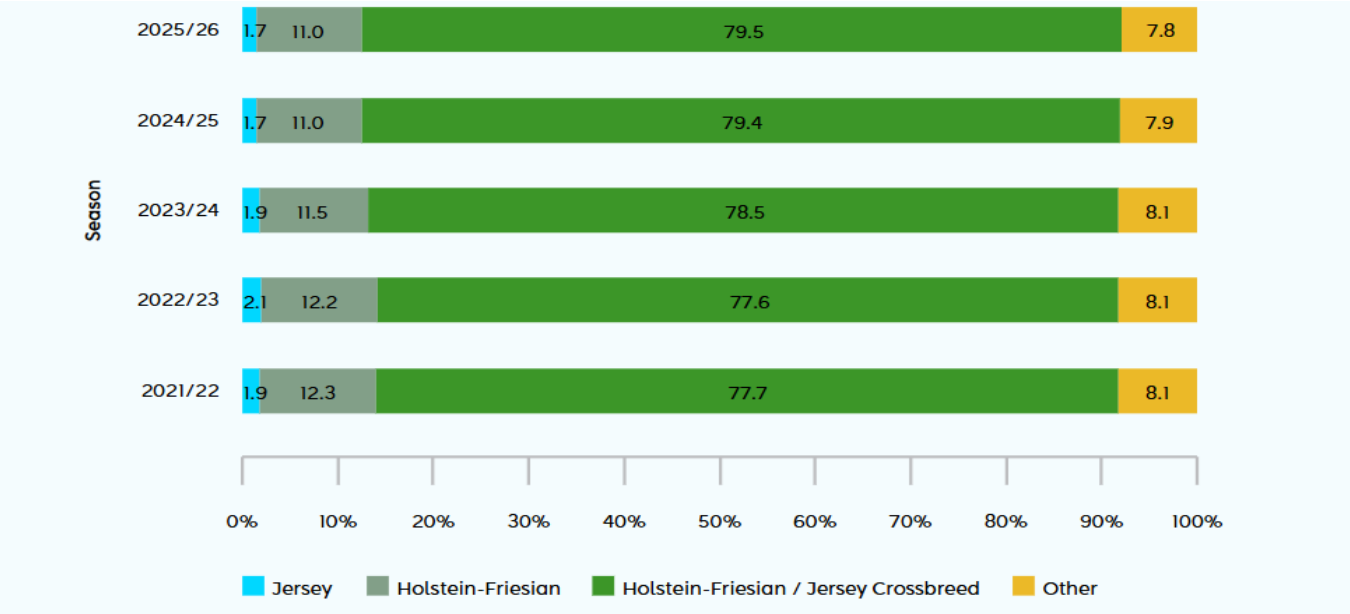


The use of Ayrshire, Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed, Jersey and Holstein-Friesian semen across cow breed categories over the past five seasons is shown in Graphs 4.6 to 4.9. In 2025/26, Ayrshire semen was used mainly over Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed (37.2%) and Ayrshire cows (18.8%). Holstein-Friesian/Jersery Crossbreed semen was used predominantly over Holstein-Friesian/Jersey crosses (79.5%). Jersey semen was used mainly over Jersey (44.4%), closely followed by use over Holstein-Friesian/Jersey crossbreed cows (42.0%), while Holstein-Friesian semen was used mainly over Holstein-Friesian/Jersey crossbreed (52.3%) and Holstein-Friesian cows (40.1%).

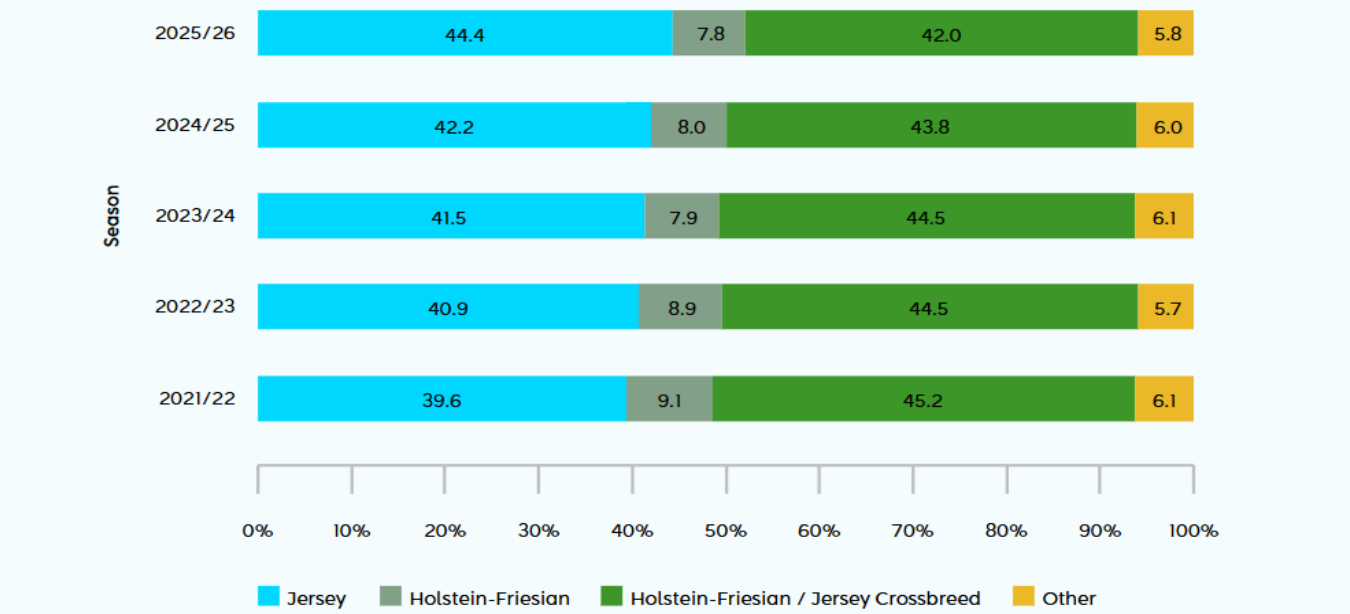
Graph 4.6: Ayrshire semen usage (%) over breed category




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



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



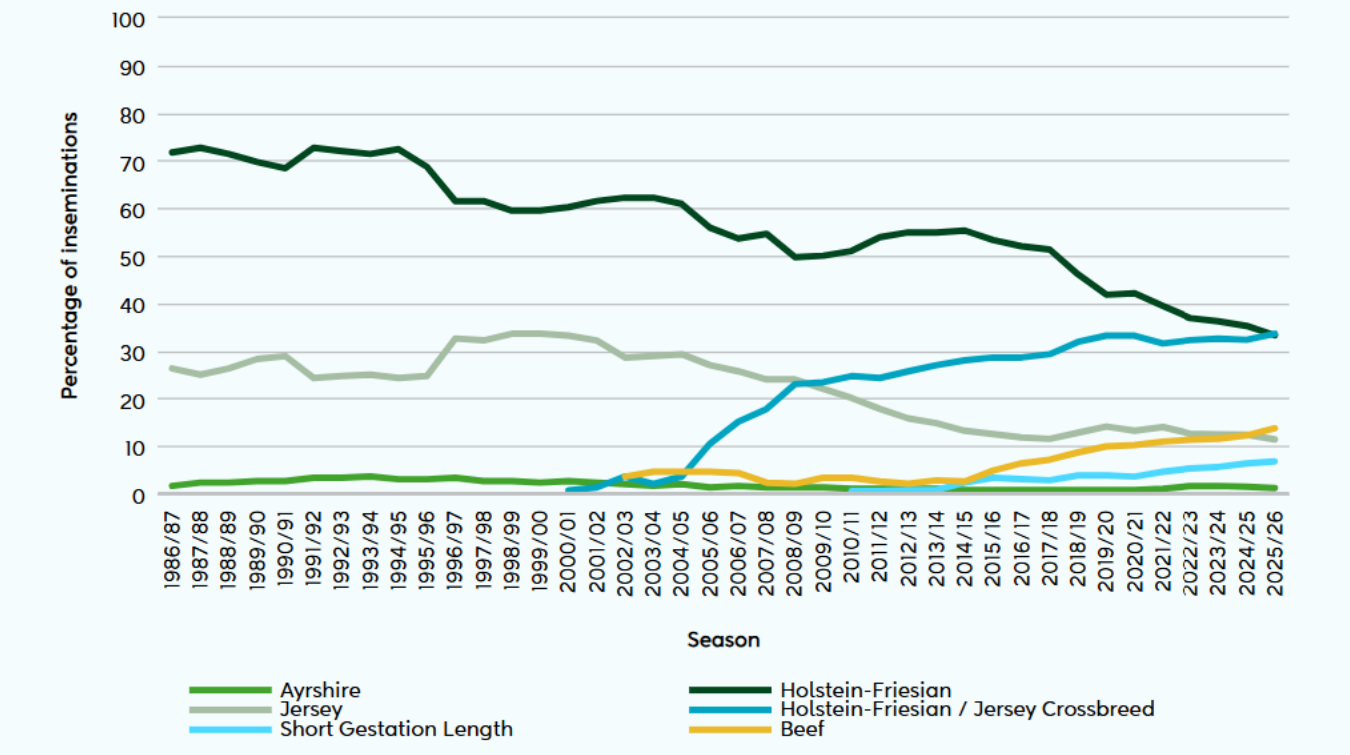

Graph 4.9: Holstein-Friesian semen usage (%) over breed category



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 2025/26, the percentage of inseminations for Jersey, Holstein-Friesian and Ayrshire cows decreased slightly, while the percentage of inseminations for SGL and beef increased. The percentage of inseminations for Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed increased and reached a similar level to Holstein-Friesian use (Graph 4.10).

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




# 4.4. Herd Reproduction

- The actual 6-week in-calf rate increased slightly in 2025/26.

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 farm productivity. The 6-week in-calf rate, estimated using data from both seasonal and split-calving herds, is a key measure of herd reproductive performance. It is used to compare reproductive performance across herds and monitor national trends.

The not-in-calf rate at the end of mating is important at a herd level but is not suitable 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.

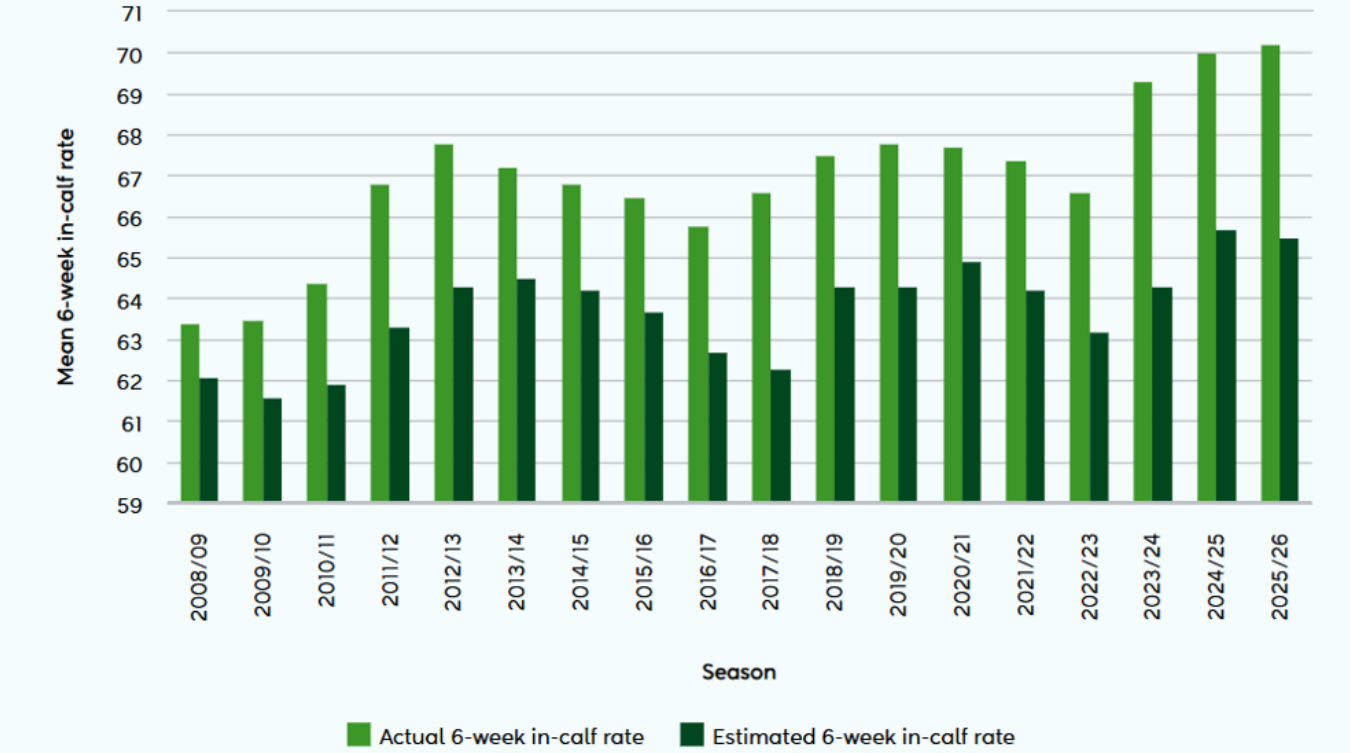
Since the DairyNZ In-Calf programme began in 2008/09, greater use of early-aged pregnancy testing has increased the number of actual results available from Detailed Fertility Focus Reports. The number of herds with detailed reports rose from 354 in 2008/09 to 4,897 in 2025/26 (Table 4.9). In 2025/26, the actual mean 6-week in-calf rate rose marginally to a record 70.2%, while the estimated rate changed marginally from 65.7% to 65.5% (Graph 4.11). The actual mean 3-week submission rate (81.2%) increased to record-high levels, and the mean conception rate was stable at 53.5% (Table 4.9).

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 (%) |
| 2008/09 | 354 | 63.4 | 78.5 | 50.1 | 4,872 | 62.1 | 72.7 |
| 2009/10 | 712 | 63.5 | 77.5 | 51.0 | 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 |
| 2025/26 | 4,897 | 70.2 | 81.2 | 53.5 | 2,635 | 65.5 | 77.6 |

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. These updated versions had improvements made to calculations and reflect more correctly what the national performance is.

Across regions, the actual mean 6-week in-calf rate in 2025/26 ranged from 67.1% in Hawkes Bay/ Manawatu/ Wairarapa to 72.0% in North and South Canterbury (Table 4.10). Rates increased in West Coast/ Nelson/ Marlborough, Canterbury and Otago/ Southland, but declined in the other regions.

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

| | Actual | | | | | | Estimated | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2023/24 | | 2024/25 | | 2025/26 | | 2023/24 | | 2024/25 | | 2025/26 | |
| 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 | 221 | 65.9 | 238 | 69.1 | 210 | 68.1 | 293 | 61.6 | 253 | 63.8 | 285 | 63.3 |
| Waikato / Western Uplands | 1,228 | 69.2 | 1,299 | 71.0 | 1,266 | 69.5 | 905 | 64.1 | 827 | 66.1 | 822 | 65.7 |
| BoP / Central Plateau / East Coast | 389 | 68.1 | 397 | 69.6 | 398 | 68.6 | 247 | 63.8 | 235 | 66.4 | 234 | 65.5 |
| Taranaki | 427 | 70.2 | 469 | 70.2 | 477 | 69.7 | 711 | 65.8 | 654 | 66.5 | 658 | 66.1 |
| Hawkes Bay / Manawatu / Wairarapa | 355 | 66.6 | 349 | 67.6 | 361 | 67.1 | 223 | 62.7 | 229 | 64.7 | 213 | 64.4 |
| West Coast / Nelson / Marlborough | 208 | 71.2 | 212 | 69.7 | 235 | 71.0 | 194 | 65.6 | 184 | 66.1 | 167 | 67.0 |
| North & South Canterbury | 908 | 70.2 | 927 | 70.4 | 942 | 72.0 | 105 | 64.8 | 92 | 64.8 | 94 | 65.7 |
| Otago / Southland | 964 | 70.1 | 993 | 69.7 | 1,008 | 71.7 | 176 | 65.3 | 158 | 64.5 | 163 | 66.5 |

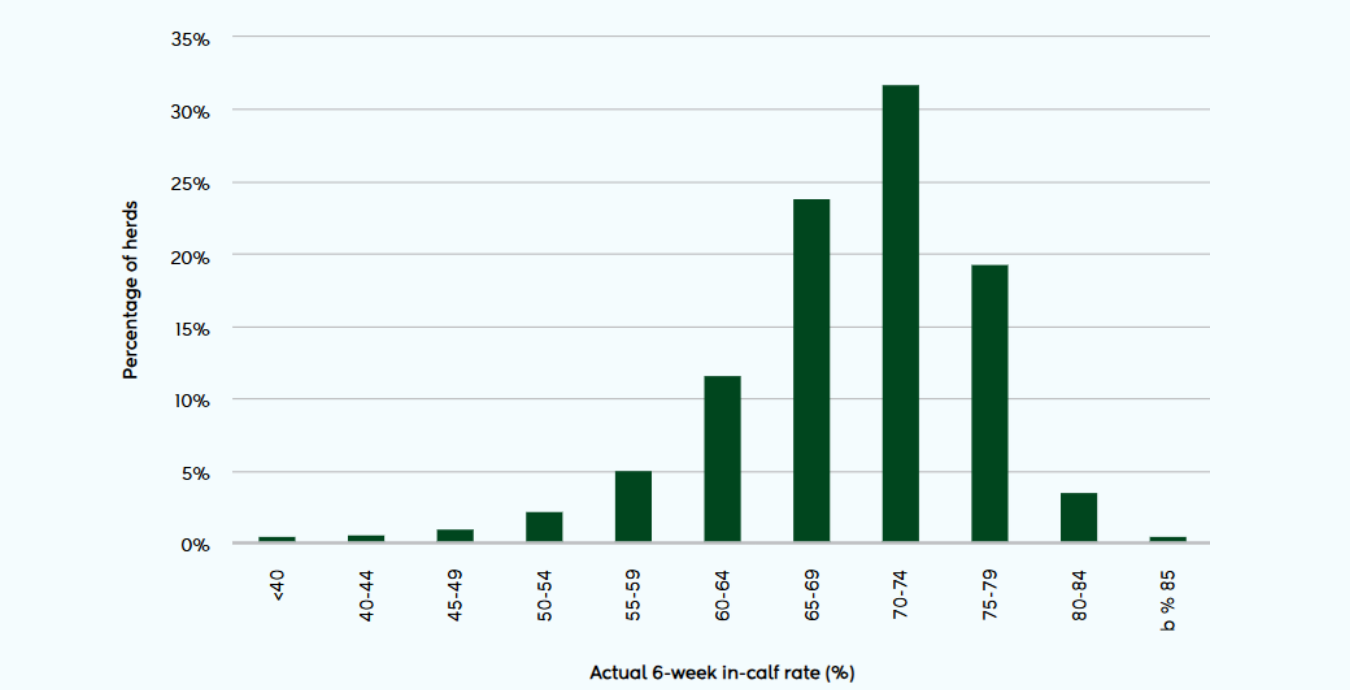
Note: Since 2020/21, the results reported in this table are from an improved version of the Fertility Focus Report software and will differ from earlier publications.

The distribution of actual 6-week in-calf rates is shown in Table 4.11 and Graph 4.12. In 2025/26, the median 6-week in-calf rate was 71%. Ten percent of herds exceeded 78%, while the bottom 10% were below 61%. About 92% of herds had actual 6-week in-calf rates between 55% and 79%.

Table 4.11: Percentile Distribution of Actual 6-week in-calf rate in 2025/26

| | Number of herds | Median | Top 10% | Top 25% | Bottom 25% | Bottom 10% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6-week in-calf rate | 4,897 | 71 | > 78 | > 75 | < 67 | < 61 |

Graph 4.12: Distribution of actual 6-week in-calf rate in 2025/26

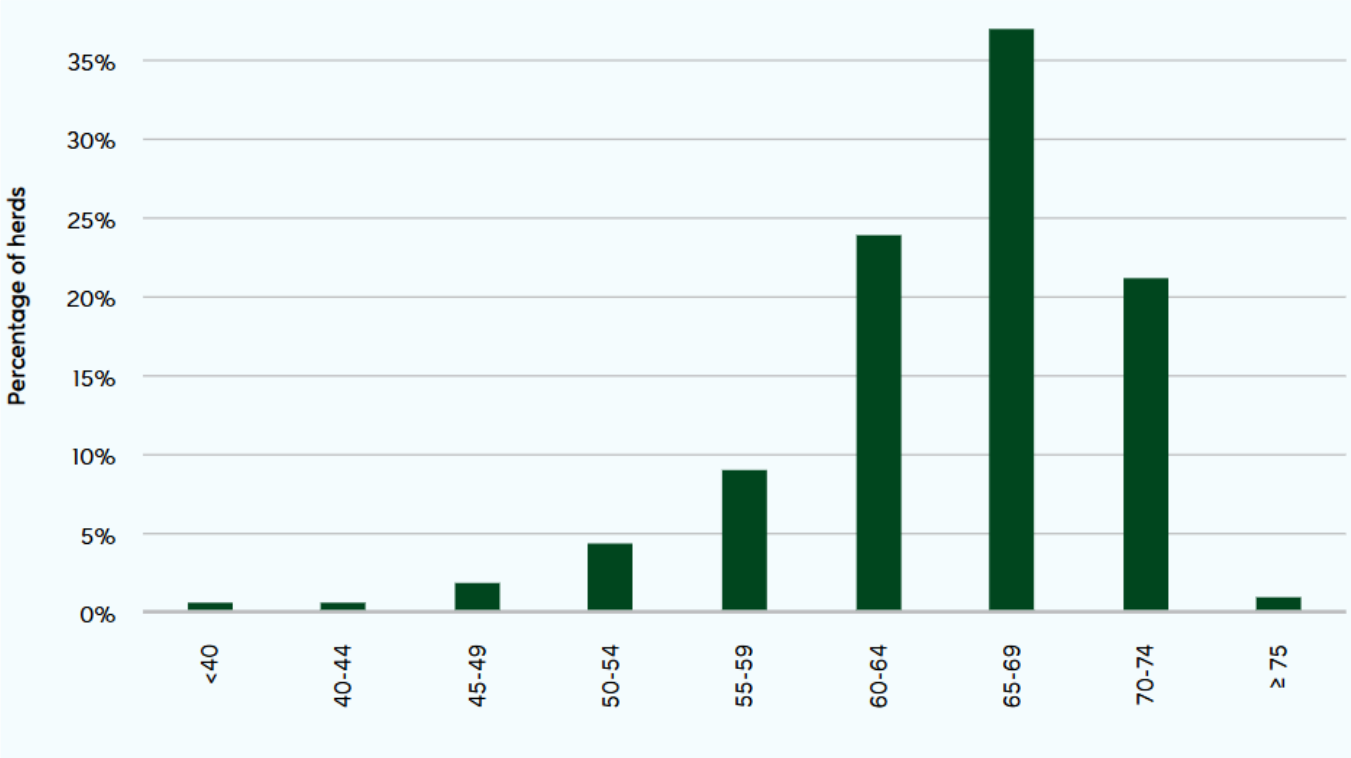


In 2025/26, the median estimated 6-week in-calf rate was 67%; ten percent of herds exceeded 72%, while the bottom 10% were below 58% (Table 4.12). About 92% of herds had rates between 55% and 74% (Graph 4.13).

Table 4.12: Percentile Distribution of Estimated 6-week in-calf rate in 2025/26

| | Number of herds | Median | Top 10% | Top 25% | Bottom 25% | Bottom 10% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6-week in-calf rate | 2,635 | 67 | > 72 | > 70 | < 63 | < 57 |

Graph 4.13: Distribution of estimated 6-week in-calf rate in 2025/26




# 4.5. Calving

## 4.5.1. Planned start of calving and median calving dates

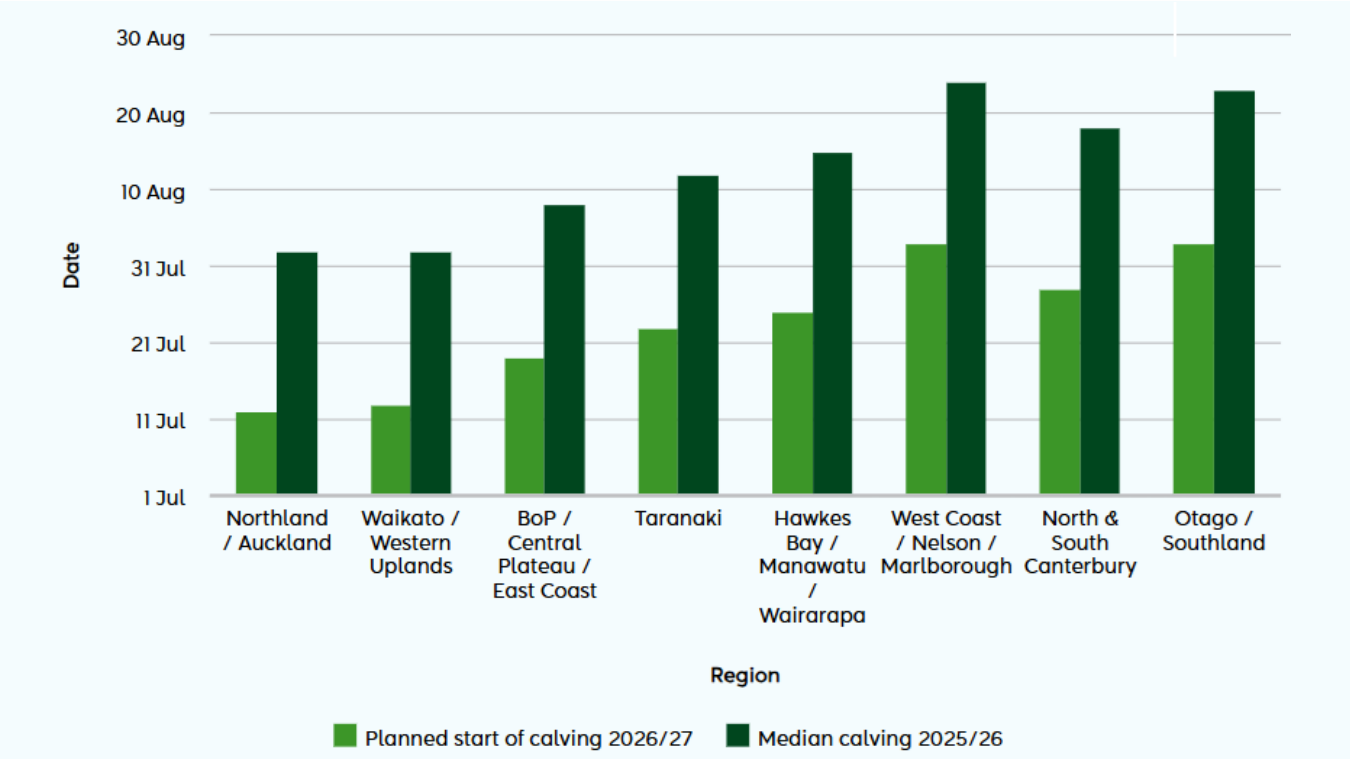
The trend in calving dates within and between regions is best shown by the "planned start of calving" date. The planned start of calving date is 279 days from the date that mating is started in the herd. A farmer has control over, and the ability to change, the start of mating.

Historically, the mating and calving information was sourced from the LIC Herd Improvement Database (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 is sourced from the Dairy Industry Good Animal Database (DIGAD).

The median calving date (the date that occupies the middle position after the dates are arranged in ascending order) is used as an indicator of actual calving spread.

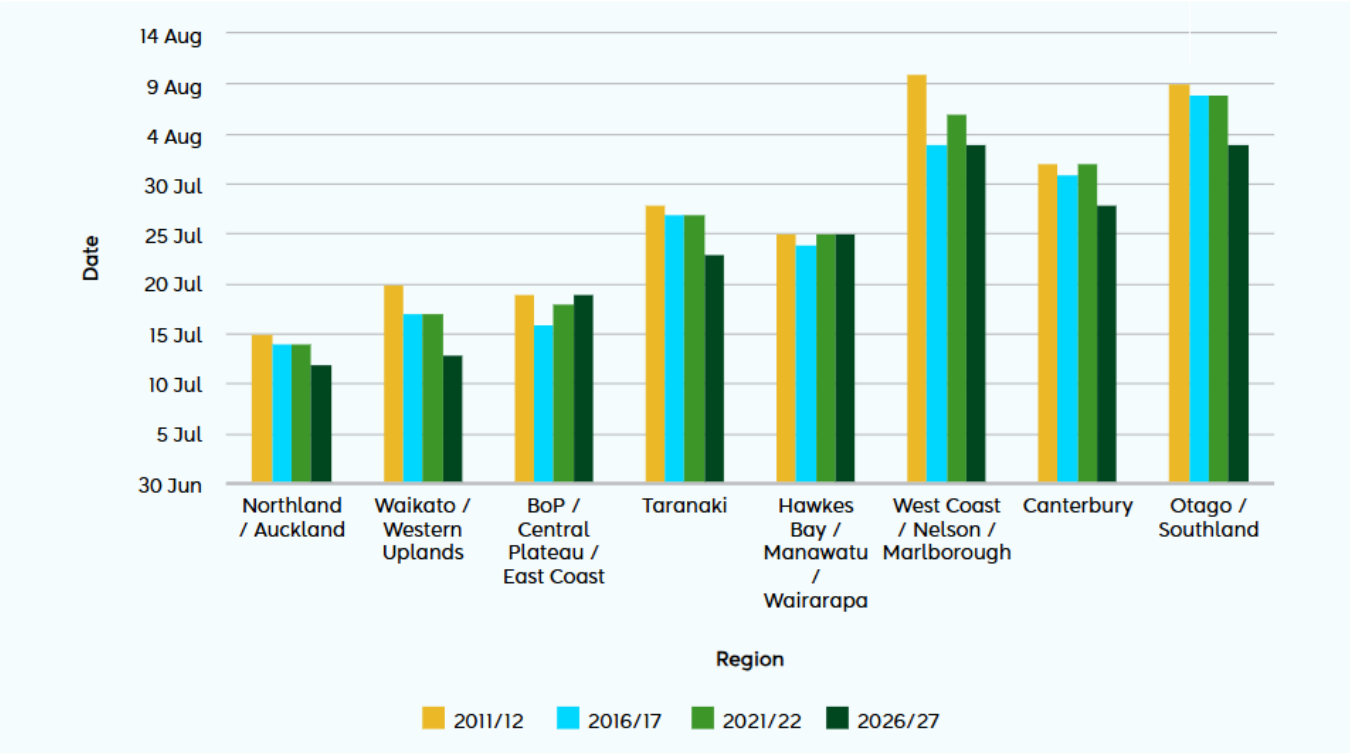
Graph 4.14 shows the planned start of calving for 2026/27 and the median calving dates for cows in 2025/26, excluding first calvers. Median calving dates ranged from 2 to 15 August in the North Island and from 18 to 24 August in the South Island.

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




The planned start-of-calving dates at five-year intervals are shown in Graph 4.15. Overall, the planned start-of-calving date has shifted earlier. In most regions, the planned start date for 2026/27 is earlier than five, ten and fifteen years previously (with the exceptions of the BOP/Central Plateau/East Coast and the Hawkes Bay/Manawatu/Wairarapa regions).

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



## 4.5.2. Calving interval

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 o days | Number of records | Average number of days | Number of records |
| 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 | 369.0 | 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 | 371.0 | 21,239 |
| 2008/09 | 370.1 | 2,359,392 | 371.0 | 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 | 368.0 | 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 | 370.0 | 1,002,362 | 368.5 | 327,521 | 369.4 | 1,515,761 | 370.0 | 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 | 369.0 | 3,085,761 | 369.3 | 753,923 | 368.3 | 247,196 | 369.0 | 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 | 369.0 | 227,480 | 369.2 | 1,850,683 | 370.1 | 11,238 |
| 2022/23 | 369.0 | 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 |
| 2024/25 | 369.2 | 3,009,905 | 369.4 | 647,038 | 368.4 | 225,652 | 369.3 | 1,896,503 | 369.0 | 10,741 |

# 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 consideration their 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, 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.

New Zealand Animal Evaluation provides a tool for ranking animals by expected profit per unit of feed consumed. The economic values used for the 2026 May run are presented in Table 4.14. The values are reviewed annually and may change from year to year. Since 2021/22, major updates have been aligned with the Interbull evaluation schedule.

Table 4.14: Economic values used from 22 May 2026

| 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 | 6.38 | 6.38 | -0.08 | -2.01 | -47.93 | 6.25 | -2.01 | 179 | [a] | 1.85 |
| Production Worth | 5.82 | 6.62 | -0.116 | -1.70 | -46.49 | - | - | - | - | - |

Note:

[a] Udder overall ($/unit) has a non-linear economic value: Udder overall EV = (64.56 x Udder Overall BV) + (-36.78 x Udder Overall $BV^2$). For Udder Overall BV above 0.878, the dollar contribution to Breeding Worth is fixed at $28.34.

The information for all Animal Evaluation statistics was sourced from cows and sires in DIGAD as of 22nd May 2026. 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: *https://www.dairynz.co.nz/animal/breeding-decisions/economic-values/* and http://www.lic.co.nz/about/animal-evaluation.

## 4.6.1. Sire Evaluations

The BV and BW by breed for all bulls born in 2021, which were first proven in the 2025/26 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.

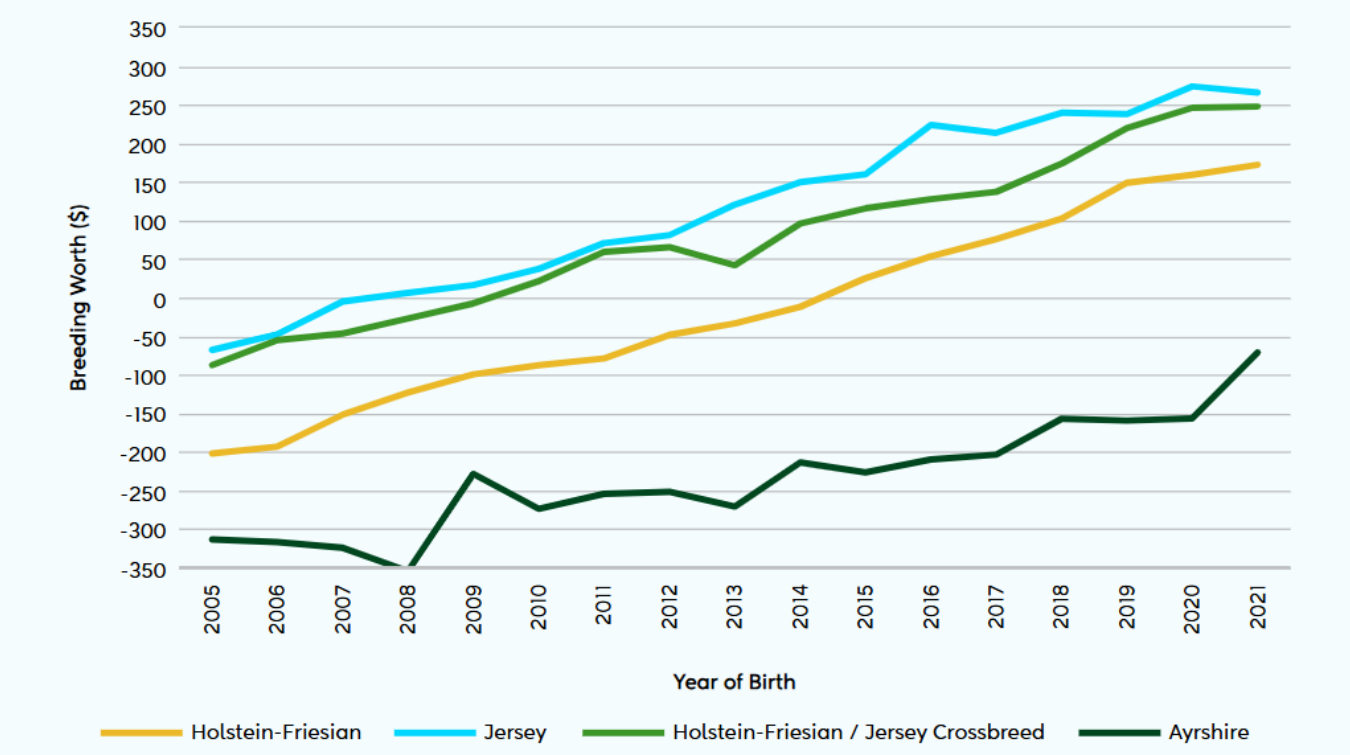
Table 4.15: Average Breeding Values and Breeding Worth of 2021 born bulls (BW reliability of 70% or greater)

| 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 | 27.4 | 20.2 | 532 | 49.8 | 0.16 | -0.2 | -2.096 | 0.01 | 1.0 | 0.392 | 172.3 | 119 |
| Jersey | 15.3 | -4.5 | -570.2 | -47.6 | -0.25 | 3.8 | -0.026 | 0.03 | 0.6 | 0.294 | 265.9 | 65 |
| Holstein-Friesian / Jersey Crossbreed | 21.8 | 7.8 | -149 | -1.5 | -0.02 | 3.1 | -0.946 | 0.03 | 1.2 | 0.381 | 247.7 | 94 |
| Ayrshire | 5.9 | -7.1 | 120.3 | 17.9 | -0.29 | -3.6 | 1.997 | -0.07 | 0.0 | 0.179 | -70.9 | 3 |

(Evaluation date: 22 May 2026)

The genetic trend for proven dairy bulls is shown in Graph 4.16. Breeding Worth has generally increased across birth years for Holstein-Friesian, Jersey and Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed sires.

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




(Evaluation date: 22 May 2026)

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.

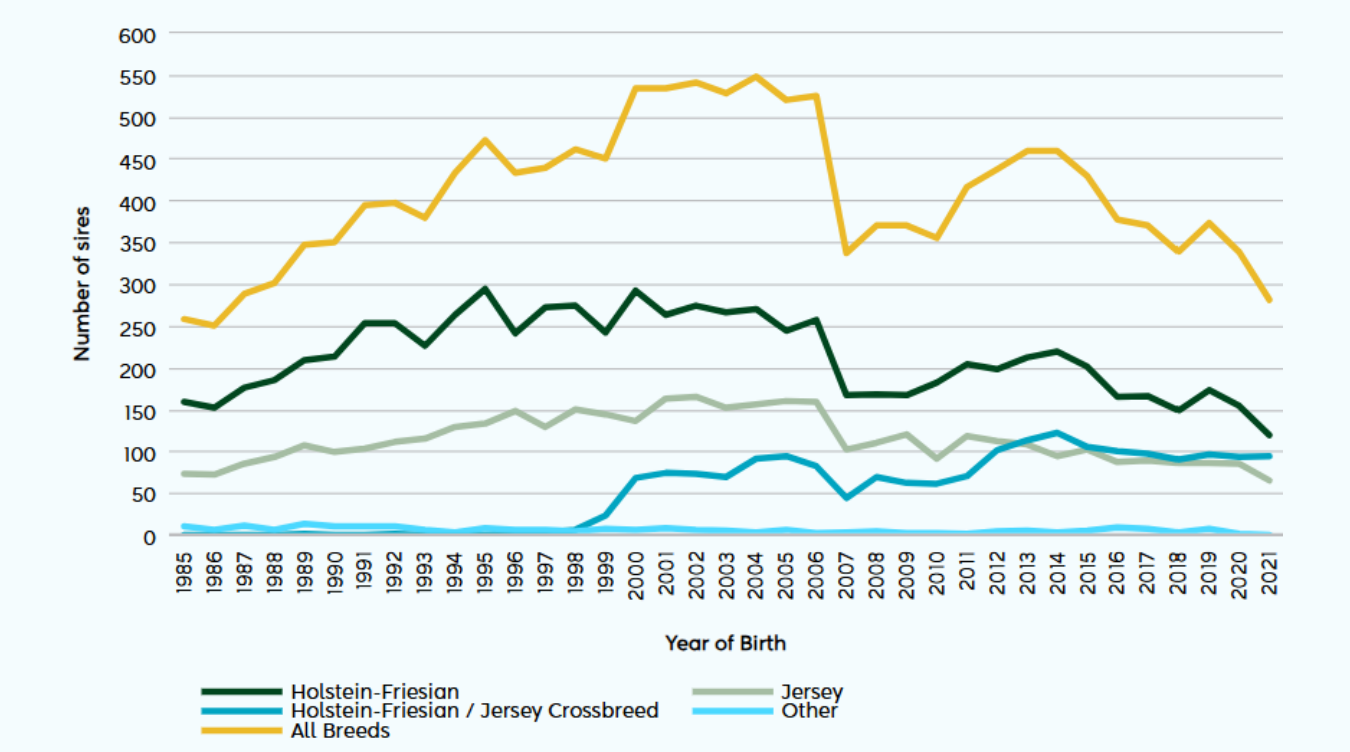
Table 4.16: Number of Sires by birth year and breed category (reliability of BW 70% or greater, includes overseas bulls)

| Year of Birth | Number of Sires | Holstein-Friesian | Jersey | Holstein-Friesian / Jersey Crossbreed | Ayrshire | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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 |
| 2021 | 281 | 119 | 65 | 94 | 3 | 0 |
| Total | 6,755 | 3,145 | 1,774 | 1,493 | 279 | 64 |

(Evaluation date: 22 May 2026)

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: 22 May 2026)

## 4.6.2. Cow Evaluations

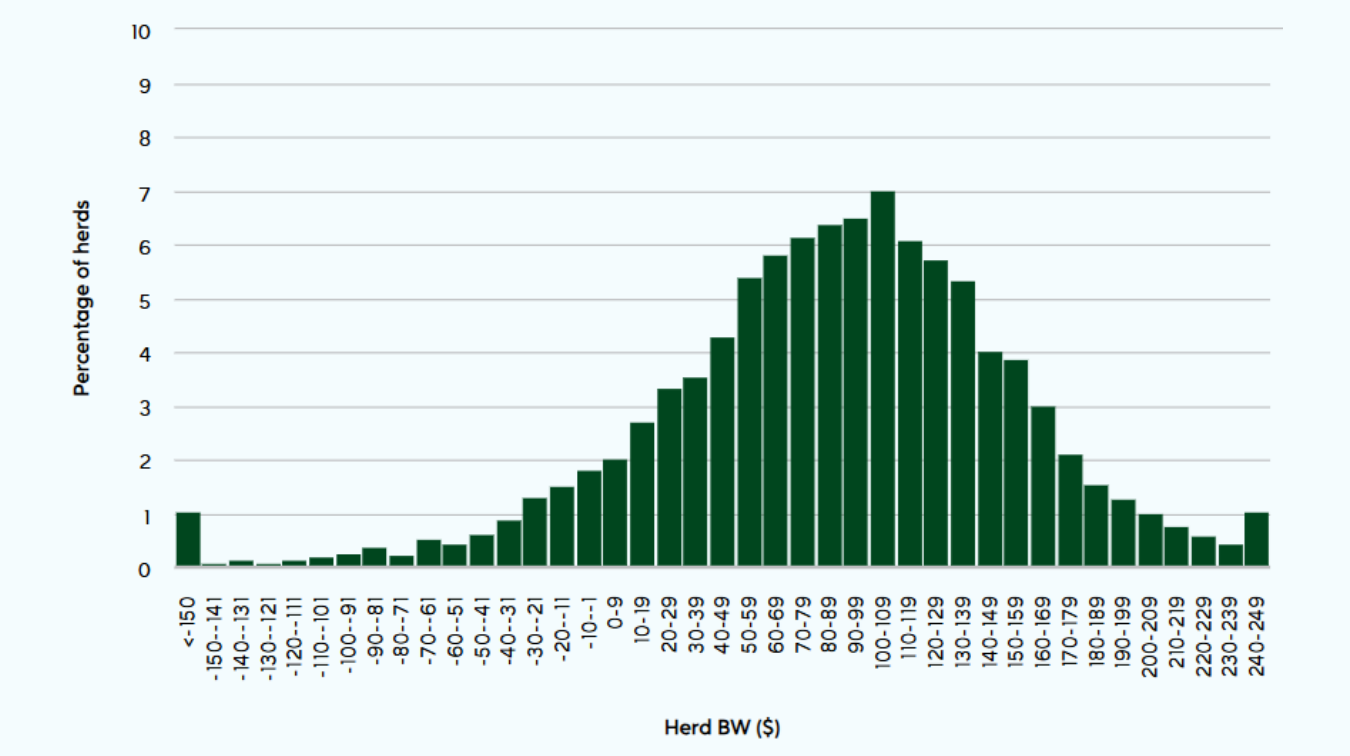
The herd Breeding Worth results in Table 4.17 and Graph 4.17 are based on herds that use herd-testing and have at least 80 cows in 2025/26. NZAEL updated the genetic Base Cow reference point in June 2025, changing the benchmark from 2005-born to 2015-born cows. As a result, BW values may appear lower than in previous years due to the new reference point. The median herd BW was $91, and the top 25% exceeded $130.

Table 4.17: Herd Breeding Worth in 2025/26

| | Median | Top 5% | Top 10% | Top 25% | Bottom 25% | Bottom 10% | Bottom 5% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Herd BW | 91 | >192 | >166 | >130 | <48 | <1 | <-32 |

(Evaluation date: 22 May 2026)

Graph 4.17: Distribution of Herd Breeding Worth in 2025/26




(Evaluation date: 22 May 2026)

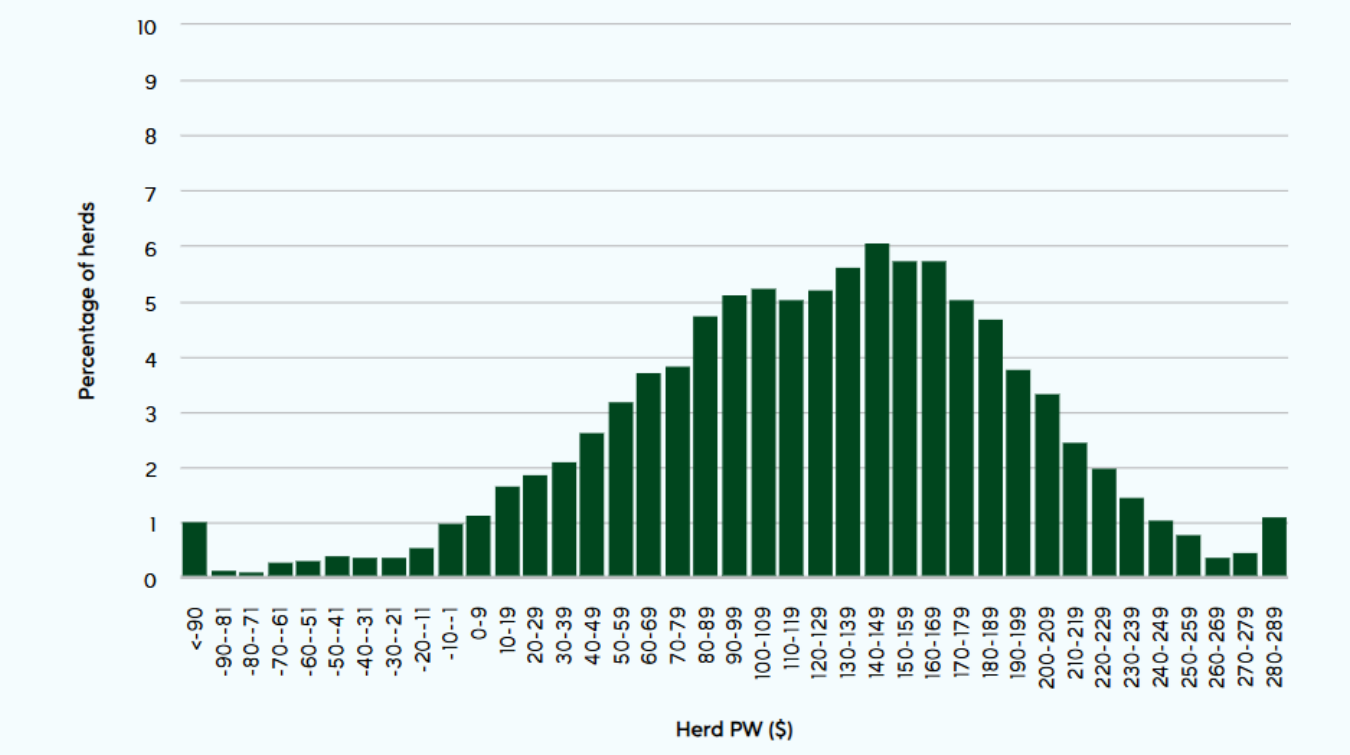
The herd Production Worth (PW) results in Table 4.18 and Graph 4.18 are based on herds that use herd-testing and have at least 80 cows in 2025/26. Similar to BW, PW values may also appear lower due to the change in the genetic Base Cow reference point in 2025. The median herd PW was $130, and the top 25% exceeded $174.

Table 4.18: Percentile Distribution of Herd Production Worth in 2025/26

| | Median | Top 5% | Top 10% | Top 25% | Bottom 25% | Bottom 10% | Bottom 5% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Herd PW | 130 | >231 | >209 | >174 | <80 | <34 | <4 |

(Evaluation date: 22 May 2026)

Graph 4.18: Distribution of Herd Production Worth in 2025/26




(Evaluation date: 22 May 2026)

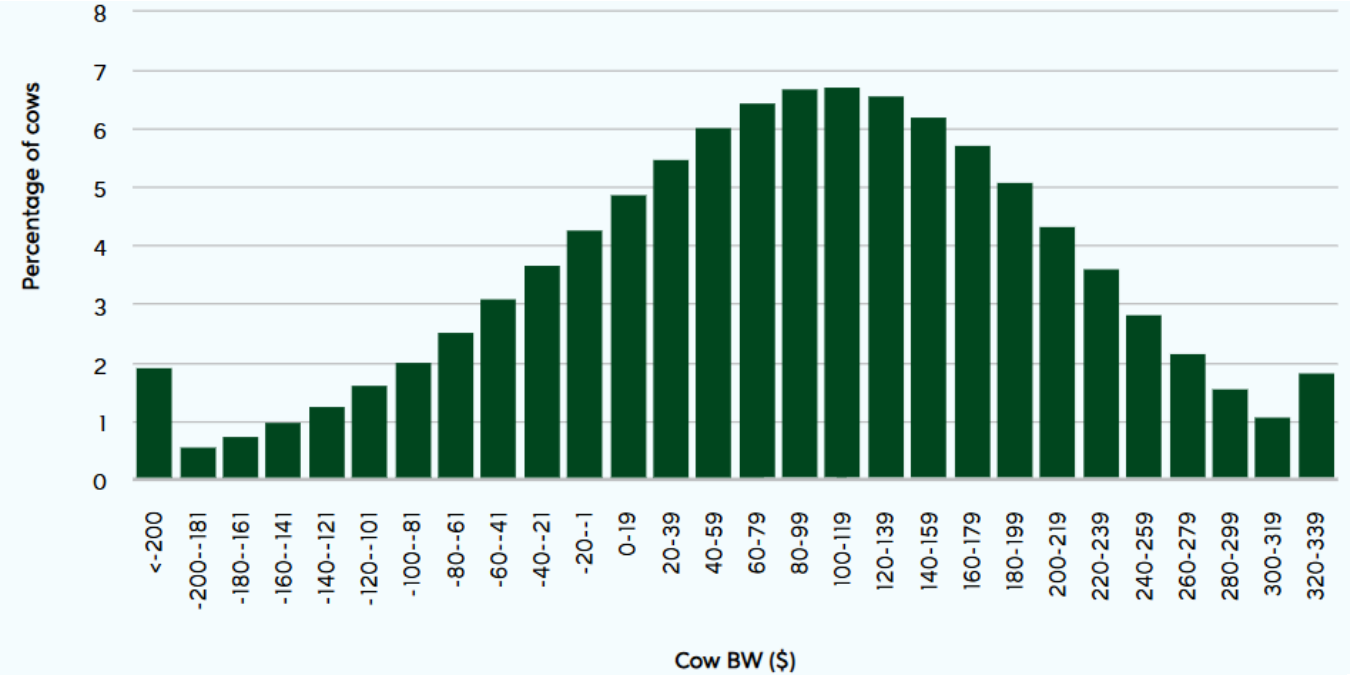
The BW for cows presented below (Table 4.19 and Graph 4.19) is based on all cows from herd-testing farms with at least 80 animals that participated in herd testing during the 2025/26. The median cow BW was $93, and the top 25% exceeded $171.

Table 4.19: Cow Breeding Worth in 2025/26

| | Median | Top 5% | Top 10% | Top 25% | Bottom 25% | Bottom 10% | Bottom 5% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cow BW | 93 | >275 | >237 | >171 | <10 | <-73 | <-128 |

(Evaluation date: 22 May 2026)

Graph 4.19: Percentile Distribution of cow Breeding Worth in 2025/26




(Evaluation date: 22 May 2026)

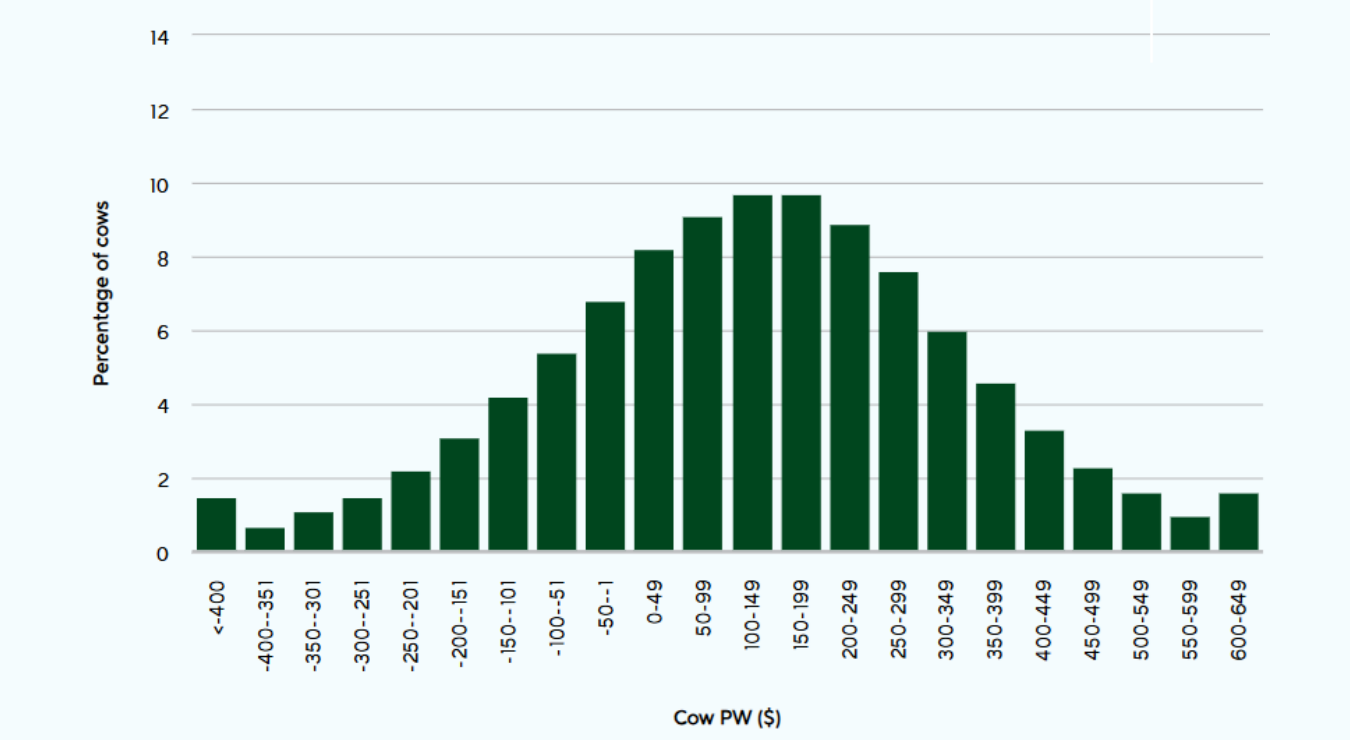
The PW for cows presented below (Table 4.20 and Graph 4.20) is based on all cows from herd-testing farms with at least 80 animals that participated in herd testing during the 2025/26. The median cow PW was $132, and the top 25% exceeded $268.

Table 4.20: Percentile Distribution of cow Production Worth in 2025/26

| | Median | Top 5% | Top 10% | Top 25% | Bottom 25% | Bottom 10% | Bottom 5% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cow PW | 132 | >479 | >397 | >268 | <-10 | <-152 | <-245 |

(Evaluation date: 22 May 2026)

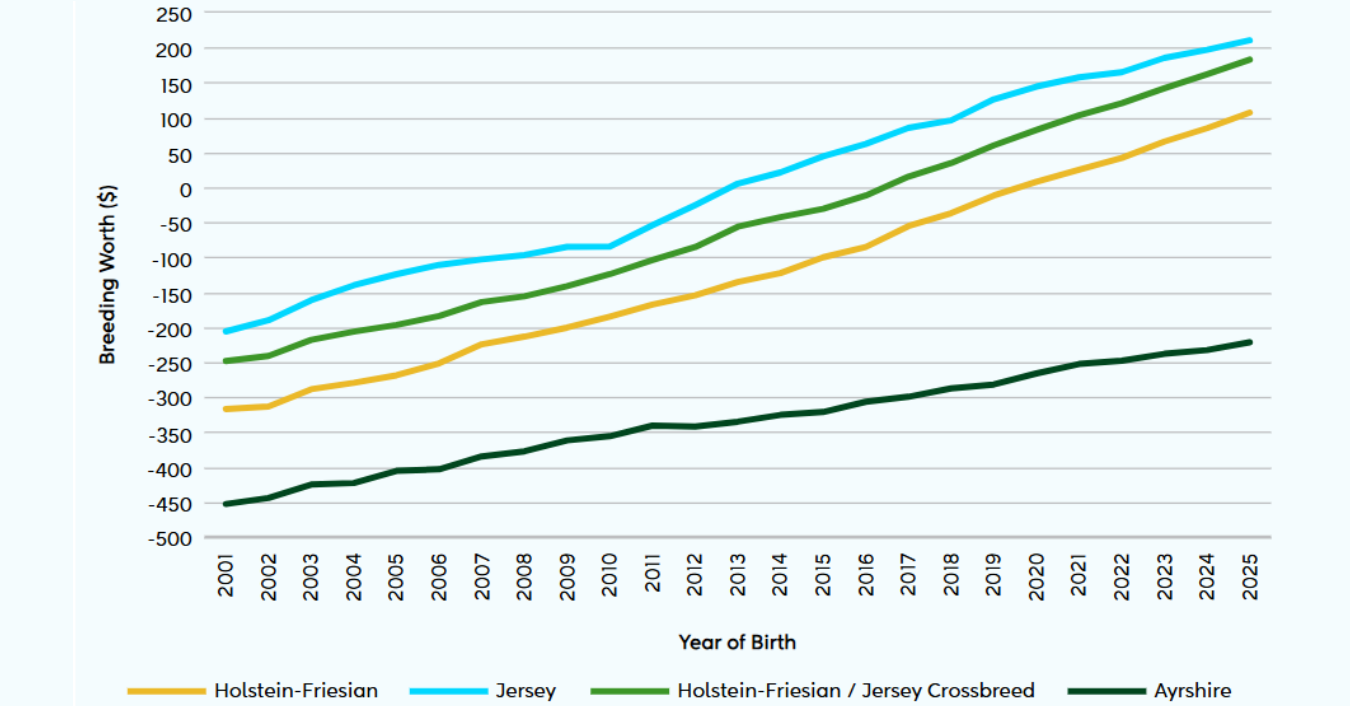
Graph 4.20: Distribution of Cow Production Worth in 2025/26




(Evaluation date: 22 May 2026)

The genetic trend for cows is based on all cows (alive or dead) recorded in DIGAD as of 22 May 2026. Also included are the estimated BW and PW for replacement stock (2024 and 2025 born animals). All evaluations can be compared across breeds. Jersey cows had the highest average BW followed by Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed cows (Graph 4.21). Consistent with previous years, BW continued to increase steadily across all breed categories.

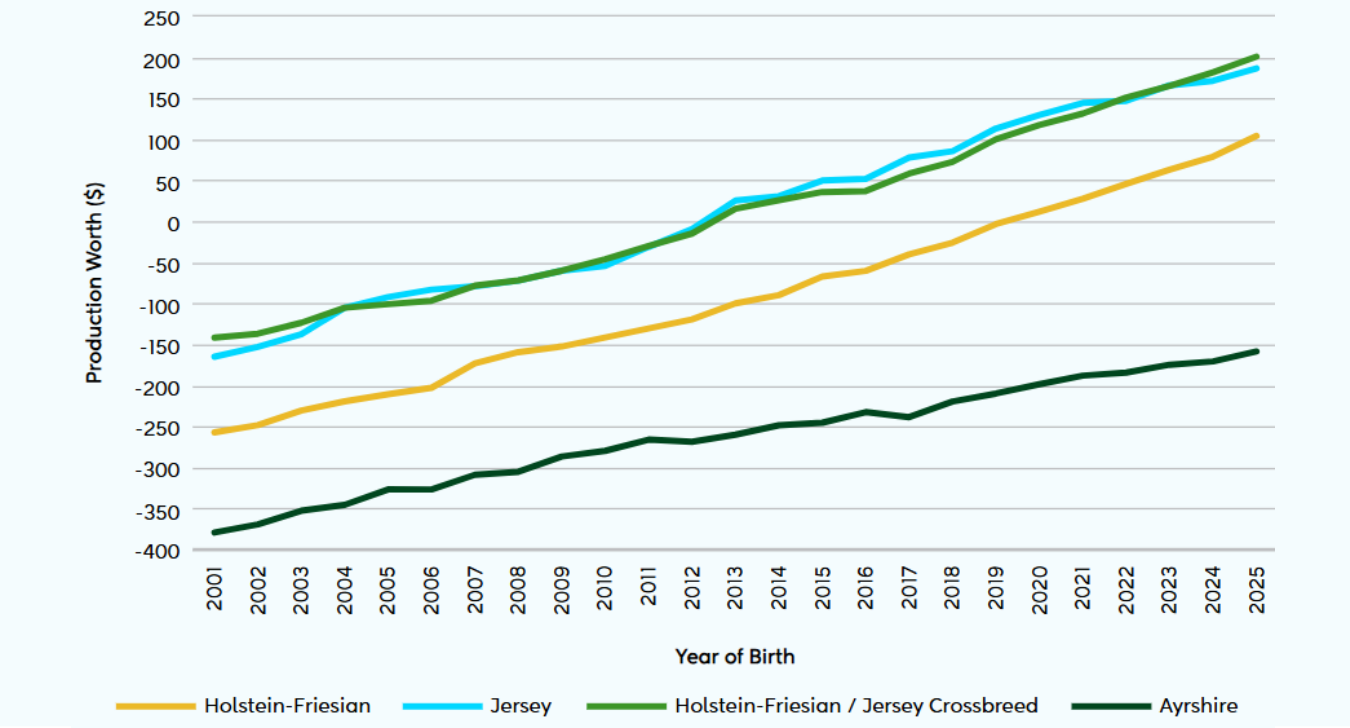
Graph 4.21: Trend in Breeding Worth for all cows




(Evaluation date: 22 May 2026)

The trend in PW by breed is presented in Graph 4.22. Among animals born in 2025, Holstein-Friesian/Jersey Crossbreed cows had the highest average PW. As for BW, PW has continued to increase steadily across all breed categories.

Graph 4.22: Trend in Production Worth for all cows




(Evaluation date: 22 May 2026)

Table 4.21 shows the average BVs and BW by breed category, of all current 2023 born cows. Jersey cows had the highest average BW ($189.7), while Holstein-Friesian cows had the highest milkfat, protein and milk-volume BVs.

Table 4.21: Average Breeding Worth and Breeding Values of all current cows born in 2023 by breed category

| Breed | BW $ | Milkfat BV (kg) | Protein BV (kg) | Milk Volume BV (l) | 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 | 70.6 | 14.0 | 12.6 | 405 | 41.0 | 0.00 | 0.3 | -0.9 | 0.00 | 0.8 | 0.321 | 215,186 |
| Jersey | 189.7 | 7.1 | -9.0 | -588 | -52.3 | -0.22 | 4.2 | 0.5 | -0.01 | 0.4 | 0.245 | 66,268 |
| Holstein-Friesian / Jersey Crossbreed | 146.1 | 12.8 | 5.2 | -22 | 2.0 | -0.07 | 2.4 | -1.2 | 0.01 | 0.8 | 0.200 | 552,454 |
| Ayrshire | -233.5 | -13.2 | -11.8 | 13 | 14.9 | -0.23 | -6.2 | 1.3 | -0.10 | -0.2 | 0.132 | 3,280 |
| Guernsey | -508.3 | -34.6 | -31.4 | -713 | 27.8 | 0.06 | -1.1 | 6.1 | -0.14 | -6.0 | -0.405 | 68 |
| Milking Shorthorn | -430.4 | -33.4 | -24.1 | -394 | 19.1 | -0.09 | -1.5 | 2.9 | -0.04 | -4.4 | -0.390 | 65 |
| Brown Swiss | -336.1 | -23.6 | -12.5 | -157 | 34.6 | -0.24 | -4.1 | 6.6 | -0.04 | -2.7 | -0.110 | 87 |
| Other | 47.2 | 5.3 | 1.8 | -27 | 8.2 | -0.11 | 0.9 | -0.4 | -0.01 | 0.2 | 0.141 | 68,428 |
| Weighted Average | 122.4 | 12.0 | 5.6 | 38 | 7.8 | -0.07 | 1.9 | -0.9 | 0.00 | 0.7 | 0.227 | 905,836 |

(Evaluation date: 22 May 2026)

Survivability is the percentage of cows with a recorded lactation in consecutive seasons. For example, the 2-3-year value is the proportion of cows milked as two-year-olds in 2024/25 that were also milked as three-year-olds in 2025/26.

In 2025/26, survivability increased marginally for all group ages, with the exception of the 5-6 age group. Cows aged 3-4 years had the highest survivability (86.8%), followed by those aged 4-5 years (85.7%) and 2-3 years (84.9%).

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 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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 |
| 2025/26 | 84.9 | 86.8 | 85.7 | 80.7 | 76.2 | 70.8 | 65.2 |

# 5. Prices received

## 5.1. Milk prices

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. Today, in addition to advance and final payments, farmers may also receive returns based on dairy company efficiency, product mix, and investment policies (dividends), collectively referred to as the total payout.

The introduction of the Dairy Industry Restructuring Act 2001 enabled 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. The Act also allowed smaller dairy companies, such as Tatua and Westland, to remain separate co-operatives. As of 2019/20, Tatua and Fonterra are the two remaining dairy co-operatives with established commercial arrangements for the 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, with some based solely on milk volume and others incorporating milkfat, protein, and volume components.

- The average dairy co-operative payout in 2025/26 was $10.44/kg of milksolids.

The weighted average dairy co-operative 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 presented in both nominal and inflation-adjusted dollars using the Consumers Price Index (CPI).

The nominal average dairy co-operative payout in 2025/26 was $10.44 per kg milksolids. Compared with the five-year average, the 2025/26 payout was $0.77 above the nominal average of $9.67 per kg milksolids. When adjusted for inflation, the 2025/26 payout was $0.05 above the five-year inflation-adjusted average of $10.39 per kg milksolids. These averages are based on the 2021/22 to 2025/26 period.

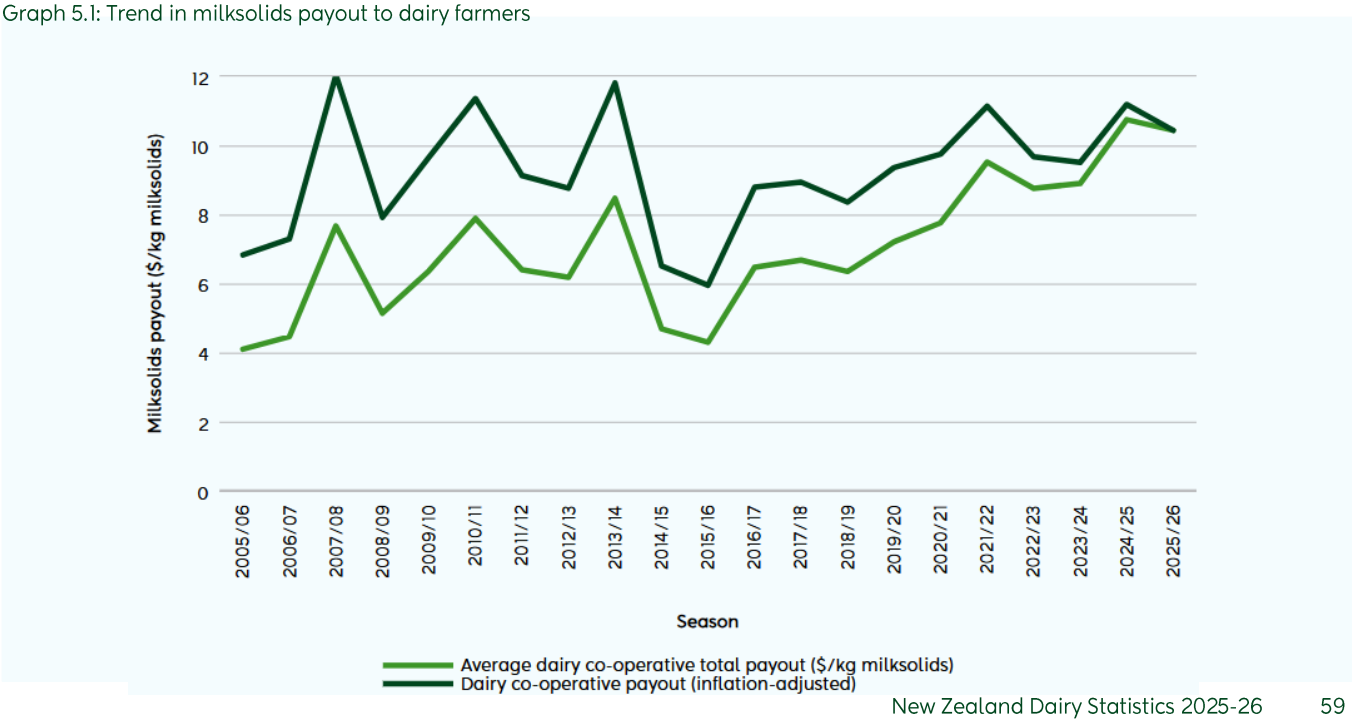
Table 5.1: Trend in prices received for milksolids

| Season | Average dairy co-operative total payout ($/kg milksolids) | Dairy co-operative payout (inflation-adjusted) |
|---|---|---|
| 2005/06 | 4.10 | 6.83 |
| 2006/07 | 4.46 | 7.29 |
| 2007/08 | 7.67 | 12.04 |
| 2008/09 | 5.14 | 7.92 |
| 2009/10 | 6.37 | 9.66 |
| 2010/11 | 7.89 | 11.36 |
| 2011/12 | 6.40 | 9.13 |
| 2012/13 | 6.18 | 8.76 |
| 2013/14 | 8.47 | 11.81 |
| 2014/15 | 4.69 | 6.51 |
| 2015/16 | 4.30 | 5.95 |
| 2016/17 | 6.47 | 8.79 |
| 2017/18 | 6.68 | 8.94 |
| 2018/19 | 6.35 | 8.36 |
| 2019/20 | 7.21 | 9.36 |
| 2020/21 | 7.76 | 9.75 |
| 2021/22 | 9.52 | 11.14 |
| 2022/23 | 8.76 | 9.67 |
| 2023/24 | 8.90 | 9.51 |
| 2024/25 | 10.75 | 11.19 |
| 2025/26 | 10.44 | 10.44 |

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 includes the additional payment from the divestment of Soprole. The Fonterra milksolids payout for the 2025/26 season includes the additional payment from the divestment of Mainland.

Graph 5.1: Trend in milksolids payout to dairy farmers



# 5.2. Dairy farm land prices

- The number of dairy farms sold in 2025/26 was the highest in the past decade.
- Dairy land price per hectare decreased in 2025/26 but remained higher than the decade average.

Dairy land sales are based on data provided by the Real Estate Institute of New Zealand (REINZ) on a seasonal basis. Until the 2019/20 season, raw data provided by REINZ was weighted by the number of farms in each region. Since the 2019/20 season, data is no longer weighted. The new method produces values that are consistent with observed trends and historical season figures. The farms sold are considered business entities.

The average size of farms sold in 2025/26 was 162 ha, equivalent to that of the previous season (163 ha). The average sale price of dairy farms decreased to $5.5 million in 2025/26, about $400,000 lower than the previous season in nominal terms (Table 5.2). The average dairy land sale price per hectare (nominal) decreased by 6%, from $36,231 in 2024/25 to $33,938 in 2025/26. After accounting for inflation, the average dairy land price per hectare also declined from the previous season and was the second lowest of the past decade (Graph 5.2).

Table 5.2: Trend in dairy land sale values

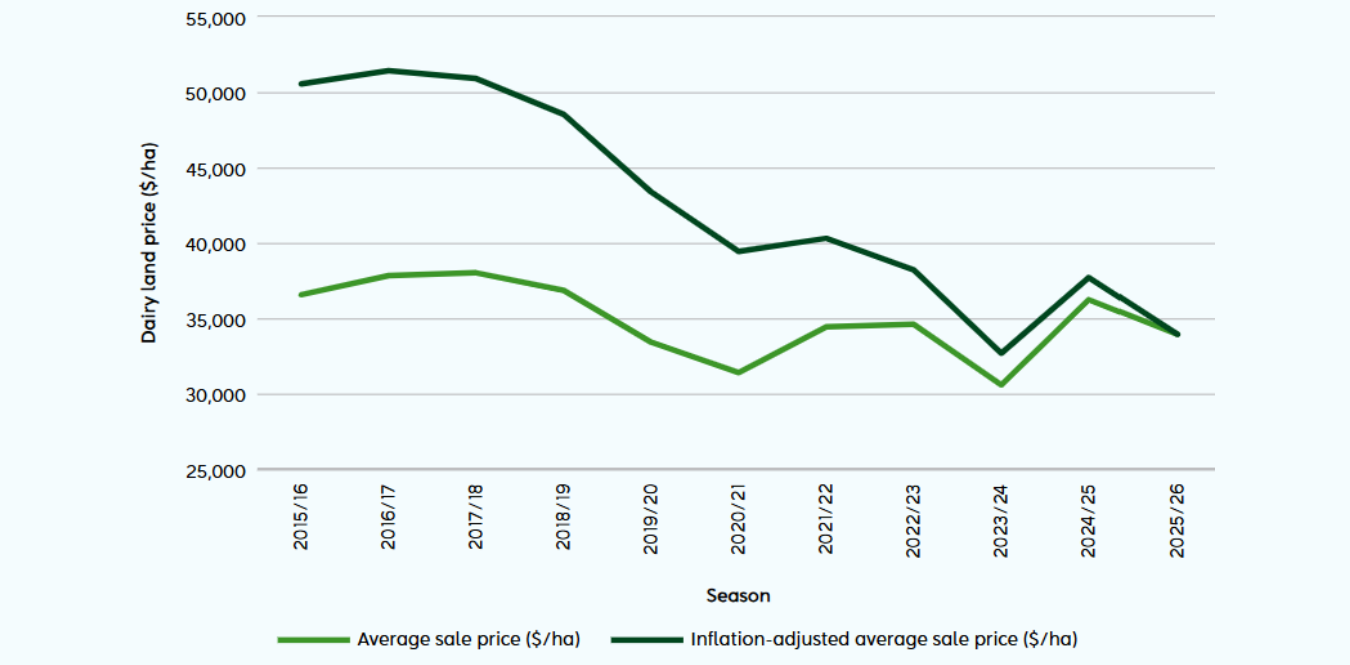
| Season | Number of dairy farms sold | Average sale price ($)* | Inflation adjusted average sale price ($) | Average land area (ha)* | Average sale price/ha ($)* | Inflation adjusted average sale price/ha ($) | Average sale price/KgMS ($)* | CPI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2015/16 | 192 | 5,381,697 | 7,440,210 | 169 | 36,557 | 50,540 | 39 | 983 |
| 2016/17 | 217 | 4,808,676 | 6,534,991 | 151 | 37,835 | 51,418 | 40 | 1,000 |
| 2017/18 | 226 | 4,935,487 | 6,608,204 | 130 | 38,015 | 50,899 | 40 | 1,015 |
| 2018/19 | 148 | 5,125,837 | 6,750,012 | 144 | 36,846 | 48,521 | 38 | 1,032 |
| 2019/20 | 113 | 4,451,927 | 5,778,576 | 133 | 33,410 | 43,366 | 37 | 1,047 |
| 2020/21 | 198 | 4,810,641 | 6,042,201 | 153 | 31,393 | 39,430 | 35 | 1,082 |
| 2021/22 | 200 | 4,800,278 | 5,618,930 | 139 | 34,427 | 40,298 | 35 | 1,161 |
| 2022/23 | 140 | 4,869,150 | 5,375,447 | 141 | 34,600 | 38,198 | 37 | 1,231 |
| 2023/24 | 117 | 5,004,578 | 5,346,872 | 164 | 30,584 | 32,676 | 36 | 1,272 |
| 2024/25 | 196 | 5,895,283 | 6,134,525 | 163 | 36,231 | 37,701 | 37 | 1,306 |
| 2025/26 | 320 | 5,484,072 | 5,484,072 | 162 | 33,938 | 33,938 | 39 | 1,359 |

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 are weighted by the number of dairy farms in each region. Since 2019/20, figures are unweighted.

Graph 5.2: Trend in dairy land sale price per hectare



# 6. Disease control

## 6.1. Tuberculosis (Tb) control

Control of Tuberculosis (TB) within the agricultural industry is overseen by TBfree New Zealand. The primary objective of TBfree is to reduce the number of infected herds and prevent vector-free areas from 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 regarded as potential sources of infection.

In 2025/26, eight dairy herds were infected with TB (Table 6.1), three more than the previous season. Seven of these herds were located in the North Island, compared with four in 2024/25. The South Island recorded one infected herd, in the West Coast region, unchanged from the previous season. Despite the increase in the number of infected herds, the number of tuberculous dairy cattle decreased from sixteen to eight in 2025/26.

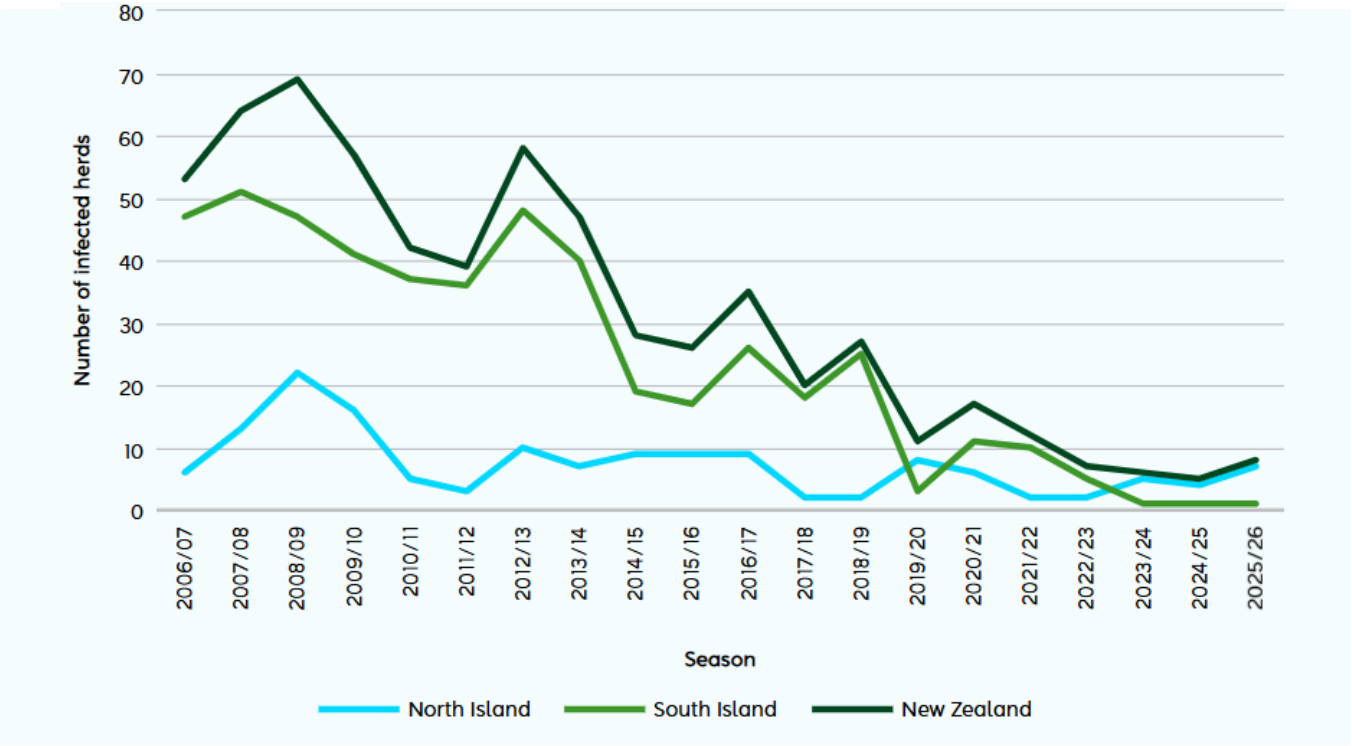
Table 6.1: Tuberculosis (Tb) testing and results in 2025/26

| 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 | 15,569 | 0 |
| Auckland | Free | 0 | 2,492 | 0 |
| Waikato | Free | 4 | 182,832 | 3 |
| | Risk | 0 | 26,955 | 0 |
| Bay of Plenty | Free | 0 | 19,237 | 0 |
| | Risk | 0 | 3,985 | 0 |
| Hawkes Bay | Free | 0 | 9,291 | 0 |
| | Risk | 2 | 29,705 | 3 |
| Taranaki | Free | 0 | 7,979 | 0 |
| Manawatu/Wanganui | Free | 1 | 23,685 | 1 |
| | Risk | 0 | 965 | 0 |
| Wellington | Free | 0 | 18,733 | 0 |
| | Risk | 0 | 11,802 | 0 |
| North Island | Free | 5 | 279,818 | 4 |
| | Risk | 2 | 73,412 | 3 |
| North Island | Total | 7 | 353,230 | 7 |
| Marlborough | Free | 0 | 1,147 | 0 |
| Tasman/Nelson | Free | 0 | 8,146 | 0 |
| West Coast | Free | 1 | 11,861 | 1 |
| | Risk | 0 | 109,145 | 0 |
| Canterbury | Free | 0 | 71,317 | 0 |
| | Risk | 0 | 15,778 | 0 |
| Otago | Free | 0 | 80,807 | 0 |
| | Risk | 0 | 54,441 | 0 |
| Southland | Free | 0 | 78,568 | 0 |
| South Island | Free | 1 | 251,846 | 1 |
| | Risk | 0 | 179,364 | 0 |
| South Island | Total | 1 | 431,210 | 1 |
| New Zealand | Free | 6 | 531,664 | 5 |
| | Risk | 2 | 252,776 | 3 |
| New Zealand | Total | 8 | 784,440 | 8 |

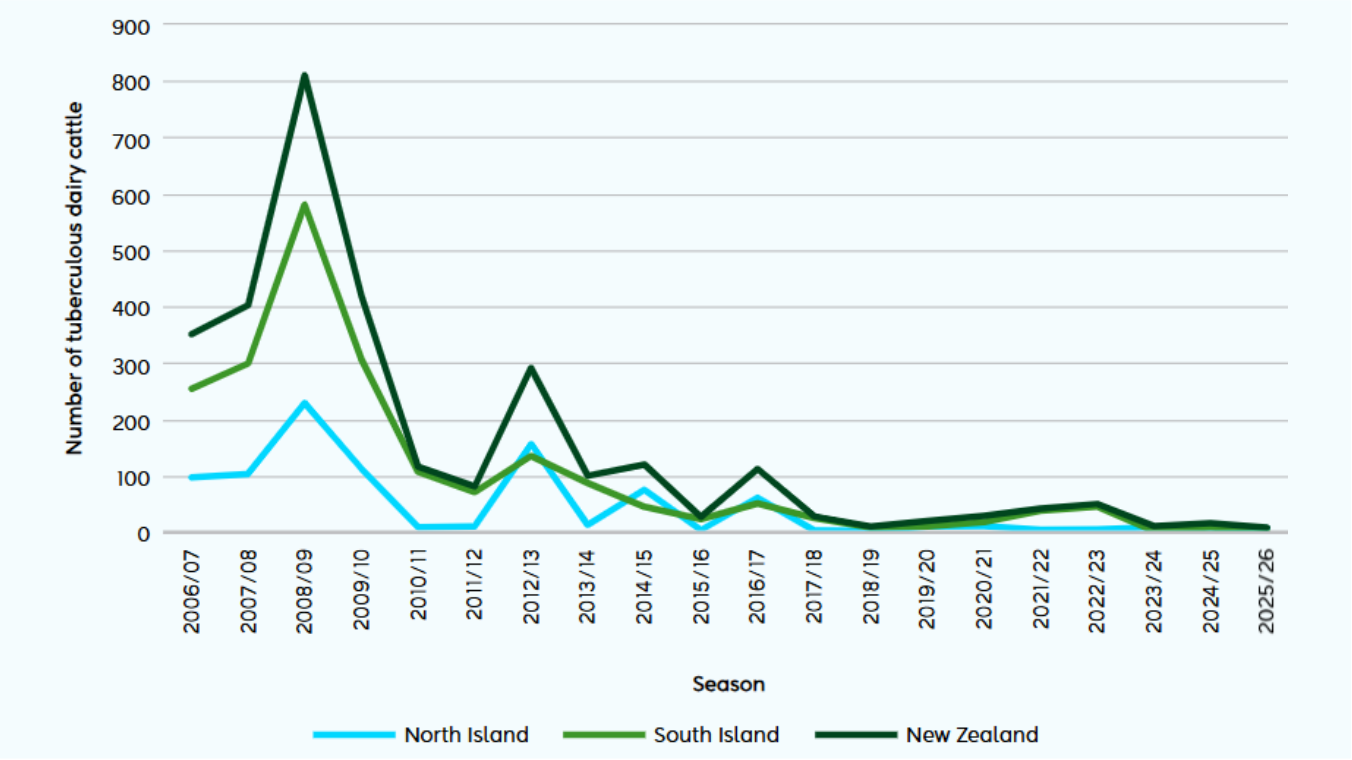
Note: Sourced from TBfree New Zealand. Tuberculous animals include lesioned reactor cattle and lesioned cull cattle.

Nationally, the number of infected dairy herds has declined by 85% over the past 20 seasons (Graph 6.1). Over the same period, the number of infected animals has decreased by approximately 98%, reaching its lowest level on record in 2025/26 (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

