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EGGS

Production

December table egg production totaled 661 million dozen, unchanged from December 2016. On January 1, the number of birds in the table egg flock was 321 million, up 1 percent compared to a year earlier. Egg-type hatching egg production was 80 million eggs, down 8 percent from a year ago. There were 1.06 billion broiler-type hatching eggs produced in December, up 1 percent from last year. The broiler-type laying flock on January 1 was 56.8 million hens, 5 percent above January 2017. Shell eggs broken totaled 189 million dozen during December 2017, down 3 percent from December a year ago but slightly above the 189 million broken in November. Pullets for all egg-types added to flocks in December were up 1 percent year-over-year.

Price

Prices for table eggs surged in January, and one dozen Grade A Large eggs on the New York wholesale market. Overall, prices rose 52 cents (41 percent) and reached 186 cents/dozen the first week of February after faltering early in the month. This price matches the highest value of 2017, which was reached during the fall baking season. Prices for breaking stock were mixed during January. Prices began the month at 78 cents/dozen and then fell, reaching 53 cents/dozen during the second week of the month. Breaking stock prices then reversed and reclaimed most of the lost ground by end of January, reaching 74 cents/dozen.

International Trade

The United States exported 12 million dozen shell eggs valued at $15.7 million in December. This was an increase of 29 percent in volume and 35 percent in value compared with November and an increase of 4 percent in volume and 33 percent in value compared with December 2016. Shell egg exports in 2017 were up 2 percent in volume and 5 percent in volume compared with 2016. Exports of egg products in December were valued at $12.9 million, 12 percent below November but 9 percent above last December. For the year, the value of egg exports was up 34 percent compared with 2016 totals. The top five destinations for exports of shell eggs and egg products in December were Mexico, Canada, Japan, Hong Kong, and Jamaica

TURKEY

Production

The United States produced 458 million pounds of turkey on a on a ready-to-cook basis in December. Daily turkey production was down 6 percent year-over-year. The number of birds slaughtered was down even more, by 13 percent, but dressed weights increased by 8 percent, mitigating the decline. Expect to see lower production in the coming months: eggs in incubators on January 1 were down 4 percent and poults placed in December were down 10 percent compared with year-earlier values. Total turkey stocks in cold storage on December 31 were 12 percent above levels at the end of December 2016. This year-over-year increase, however, is down from November, when stocks were 22 percent above their year-earlier levels. Whole frozen birds continue to be responsible for the increase. Whole toms are 85 percent above 2016 levels, while whole hens are up 16 percent. White meat stocks in cold storage were 2 percent above prior-year levels, while dark meat stocks were up 3 percent.

Price

Whole turkey prices struggled to post gains in January. Frozen whole hens rose a half-cent during the month to close at 80 cents/lb., whole frozen whole toms rose almost 3 percent and closed at 80 cents/lb. The price of boneless/skinless (B/S) breast meat was unchanged at 155 cents/lb., while B/S thigh prices rose 9 percent to 124 cents/lb. Tom drumsticks dropped 3 percent to end January at 63 cents/lb.

International Trade

Exports of turkey products in December totaled 23.9 thousand metric tons valued at $52.2 million. Exports were down 7 percent in volume and 8 percent in value compared with November and up 6 percent in volume and 1 percent in value compared with last December. Annual exports of turkey in 2017 were up 9 percent in volume and up 2 percent in value compared with 2016. In December, our five largest export destinations were Mexico, Japan, Hong Kong, Canada, and the Dominican Republic.

CHICKEN

Production

Total U.S. chicken production in December was 3.32 billion pounds on a on a ready-to-cook basis. December's daily production was up 2 percent compared to November and up nearly 5 percent compared with December 2016. Average dressed weights in December were unchanged from November but up 1 percent from last December. Production should be up modestly in the weeks ahead. For the four weeks ending January 27, both eggs set in incubators and chicks placed were up 2 percent year-over-year. Holdings of chicken in cold storage on December 31 were 1 percent below November, but 10 percent above December of 2016. The year-over-year increase was driven primarily in a large increase in the category of "other" chicken products; holdings of broiler products fell 4 percent.

Whole broiler stocks were down 27 percent on the month and 22 percent on the year. Breast meat supplies were up 2 percent from November but down 1 percent from last December. Dark meat holdings were down 3 percent month-over-month and 4 percent year-over-year. Leg quarter stocks were down 8 percent from November and 18 percent from 2016 levels. Wing inventories were down 3 percent on the month and down 5 percent on the year.

Price

Whole broiler prices ended January higher than the end of December but put in monthly highs early in the month. Weekly prices peaked at 96 cents/lb. the week ending January 12 but had fallen to 91 cents/lb. by month's end. Parts prices were mostly up through the month. The price of boneless/skinless (B/S) breast meat rose a little more than 1 percent to close at 107 cents/lb. The last week of January marked the first time that B/S breast meat averaged more than B/S thigh meat since mid-September. B/S thigh meat 3 percent during the month to 104 cents/lb. Leg quarter prices rose 4 percent in January and reached 32 cents/lb. for the first time since October. Drumsticks were up 5 percent to close at 44 cents/lb. and wings rose 7 percent to close the month at 178 cents/lb.

International Trade

Total U.S. exports of chicken products in December were 259 thousand metric tons with a value of $261 million. Compared with November, exports were down 1 percent in volume and 4 percent in value; compared with December 2016, exports were down 5 percent in volume but up 8 percent in value. For the year, exports were up 2 percent In volume and 10 percent in value compared with 2016 totals. Mexico, Canada, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Angola were the five largest importers of U.S. chicken products in December

BEEF/VEAL

Production

December commercial beef production, at 2.15 billion pounds, was 1 percent below 2016, with one less production day, and was down 6 percent compared to November. Cattle slaughter totaled 2.58 million head, falling 1 percent from last December and 7 percent below the month before. The average live weight was down 2 pounds from the previous year, at 1,379 pounds. January to December 2017 commercial beef production increased 4 percent from last year. Veal production was down 3 percent from last year, at 6.6 million pounds, but was 3 percent higher than the November output. Calf slaughter lost 5 percent compared to 2016, totaling 46,400 head, but was up 9 percent monthly. The average live weight was 245 pounds, 5 pounds more than last year. Total 2017 veal production declined 1 percent from 2016. Cold storage beef at the end of December was up 1 percent from November, but down 14 percent from December 2016. Boneless beef stocks increased 1 percent from the month before but fell 15 percent from last year. Beef cuts in freezers were higher than the previous month by 3 percent and were 2 percent lower yearly. Frozen veal stocks were 4 percent higher month over month, and 13 percent higher on a yearly basis.

Price

Live cattle prices (FOB, steers and heifers) fell briefly in mid-January, but ended up by about $3 to $126 per cwt, 4 percent higher than the January 2017 closing price. The beef cutout also initially lost some value but ended higher, by $8 per cwt to $210 per cwt, up 4 percent from the year before. The 90 percent lean boneless beef price saw a steady increase in January, rising $4 to $215 per cwt, 4 percent over 2017. The 50 percent lean trim prices jumped $35 per cwt to $93 per cwt, 43 percent above last year. Packer-owned veal carcasses fell $8 to $319 per cwt, while non-packer owned veal carcasses lost $9, ending at $321 per cwt, both down 2 percent from 2017. The veal cutout average continued to hold at $423 per cwt, down 9 percent from last year.

International Trade

Compared to December 2016, beef and veal exports (including variety meats) fell 3 percent to 113 thousand MT though the export value increased 9 percent to $673 million. The export volume and value were both up 1 percent from November. Total 2017 exports were 6 percent higher than in 2016, and the value rose by 14 percent. Hong Kong, Japan and South Korea were our largest export markets in December. Year-over-year beef import volumes were up 5 percent to 75 thousand MT and were up 15 percent in value to $408 million. Compared to November, beef import volume and value were both 3 percent lower. Total import volumes in 2017 were slightly higher in volume but down slightly in value from 2016. Australia, Canada and Mexico were the largest importers of beef to the U.S.

PORK

Production

December pork production was up 1 percent from 2016 to 2.23 billion pounds, a record high for the month of December, despite having one less slaughter day. December production was down slightly from November. Hog slaughter was steady with last year at 10.5 million head but lost less than 1 percent on a monthly basis. The average live weight added 3 pounds year-over-year, to 286 pounds. Total pork production for 2017 increased 3 percent from 2016. The total inventory of frozen pork was down 2 percent from the end of November, but up 3 percent from last year. Picnic supplies were 13 percent lower than the preceding month, and 28 percent below 2016. Total hams in cold storage fell 17 percent month over month but rose 18 percent yearly. Compared to November, total loin stocks were down 3 percent, rib stocks were 4 percent higher, and inventories of butts were 7 percent lower. On a year-over-year basis, loins and ribs were down 8 and 10 percent, respectively, while butts were up 33 percent. Pork trimmings in cold storage added 15 percent on a monthly basis, and 27 percent yearly. Stocks of pork bellies were 13 percent higher than last month and up 121 percent from last year.

Price

The negotiated carcass price for barrows and gilts jumped in the first half of January but stabilized through the remainder, ending up $12 to $70 per cwt, 10 percent above 2017. The pork cutout value regained December's loss of $6 closing back at $83 per cwt, 1 percent more than 2017. Trimmed, bone-in hams, 23-27 pounds shot up $16 in January to $72 per cwt, 18 percent above the 2017 price. In contrast, picnic meat combos, cushion out, fell $11 to $80 per cwt, but remained 11 percent higher than the year before. Pork trim, 72 percent lean added $12, closing the month at $72 per cwt, up 15 percent from 2017. Pork belly primal values had a strong start for the year, gaining $40 through the month to $149 per cwt, but remaining 2 percent below last year.

International Trade

Pork exports in December (including variety meats) were down 2 percent from 2016 to 213 thousand MT, but the value was 2 percent higher at $560 million. Pork export volume fell 2 percent from November, with value losing 5 percent. Cumulative 2017 export volume was up 6 percent and value up 8 percent from last year. The largest overseas markets for U.S. pork were Japan, Mexico and Canada. December pork imports were down slightly in volume to 42 thousand MT but added 7 percent in value to $141 million. Import volumes were 4 percent lower and value fell 5 percent from November. Total yearly pork imports were up 2 percent in volume and 7 percent in value from 2016. The countries of Canada, Poland and Italy imported the largest volumes of pork to the U.S

LAMB

Production

December lamb and mutton production was down 2 percent from 2016 but up 3 percent from November 2017 at 12.8 million pounds. Sheep slaughter totaled 188,100 head, 5 percent above last year and up very slightly from the previous month. The average live weight was 136 pounds, gaining 3 pounds from December 2016. Total commercial lamb production in 2017 fell 3 percent from 2016. Cold storage of lamb and mutton in December was down 8 percent from November but was up 2 percent from December 2016.

Price

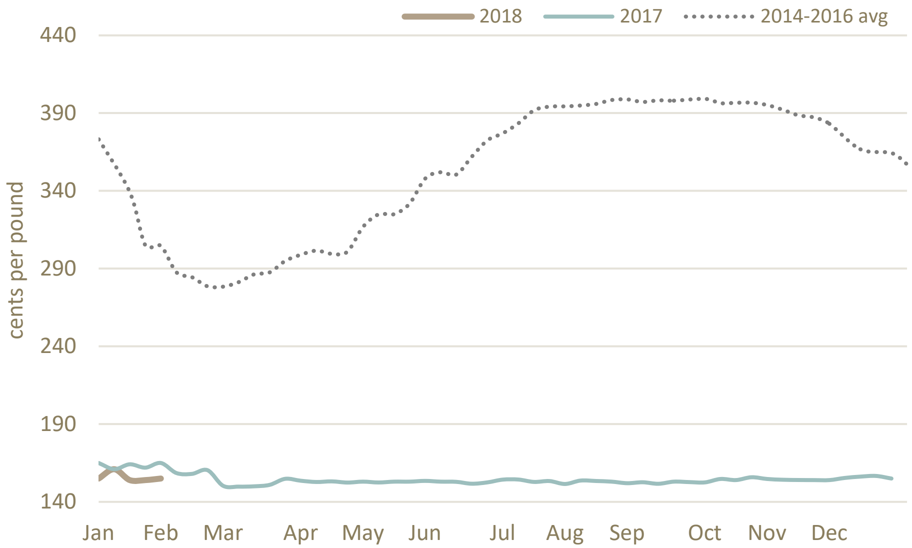
After some variation in January, negotiated live slaughter lamb prices regained $3 to $131 per cwt, 6 percent below 2017. The lamb cutout lost $16, ending at $363 cwt, but up 5 percent from 2017. Leg of lamb, trotter-off prices added $2 to close at $353 per cwt, 2 percent above the prior year's price. Boneless lamb shoulder prices dropped $36 per cwt, to $566, still up 1 percent from last year.

International Trade

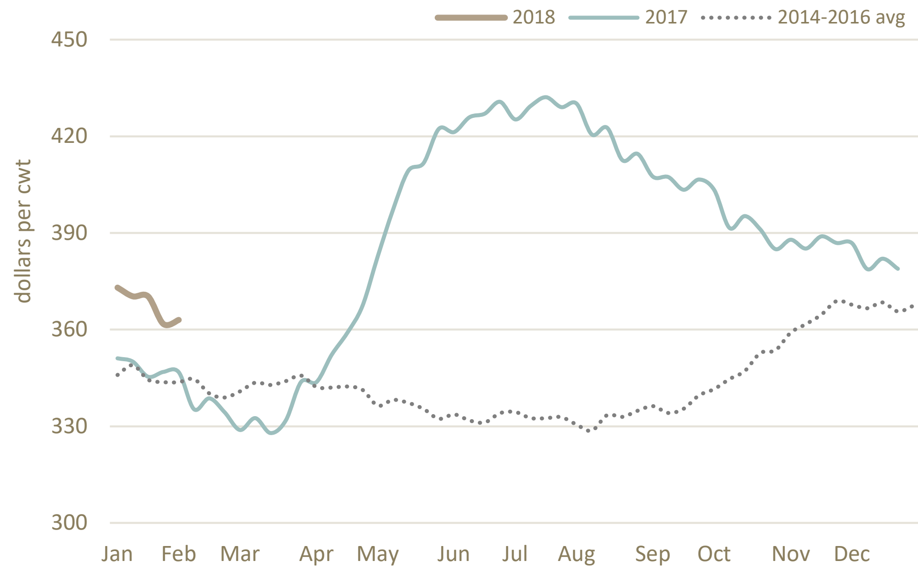
December lamb exports fell 7 percent from 2016 levels at 228 MT but increased 3 percent in value to $1.3 million. Compared to November, export volume lost 19 percent and the value lost 12 percent. Total 2017 exports were up 7 percent in volume and 15 percent in value compared to 2016. Netherlands Antilles, Australia and Taiwan were the largest export markets of U.S. lamb and mutton. Lamb imports in December were up 7 percent from 2016 at 8.1 thousand MT, and the value of imports was up 20 percent to $71 million. On a monthly basis, the import volume and value increased 10 percent. The total 2017 import volume was 18 percent higher than in 2016, and the value was up 23 percent. Australia, New Zealand and Uruguay were the largest sources of imports.

Questions, comments, or suggestions for articles? Contact Lawrence.Haller@ams.usda.gov or Sherry.Wise@ams.usda.gov.

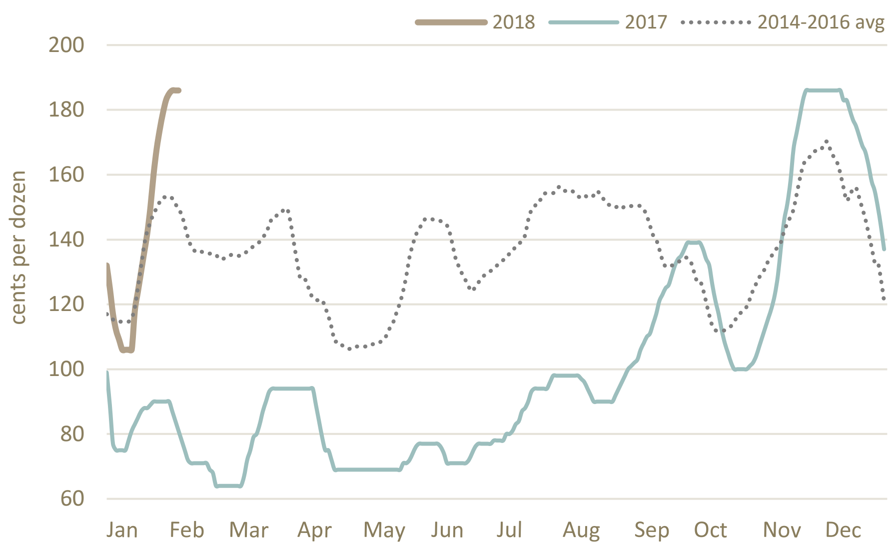
Tom Turkey Breast, Fresh Boneless/Skinless



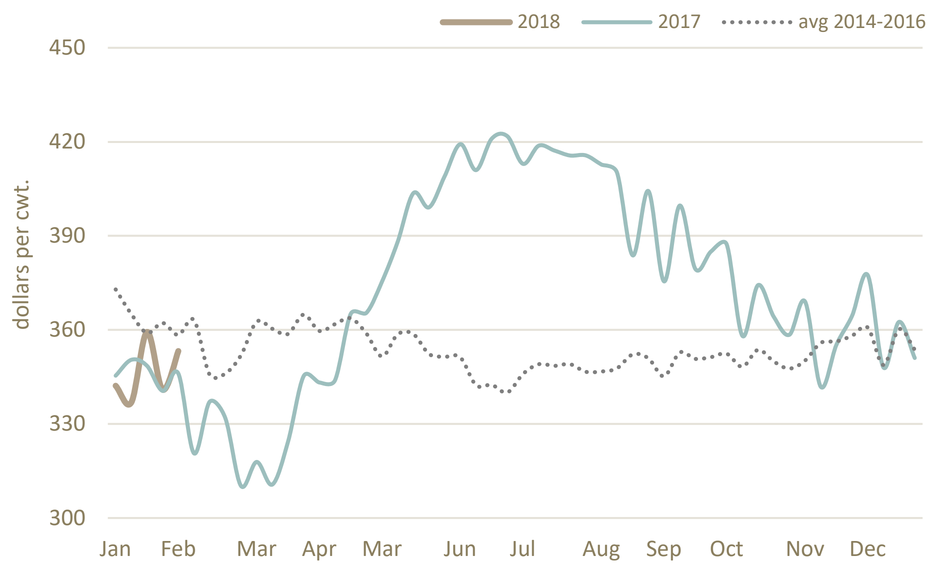
Weekly Lamb Cutout Value



New York Shell Egg (Grade A Large - wholesale)



Weekly Leg of Lamb, Trotter Off, Prices (233A)



Get Cracklin'

February 5th is National Pork Rind Day

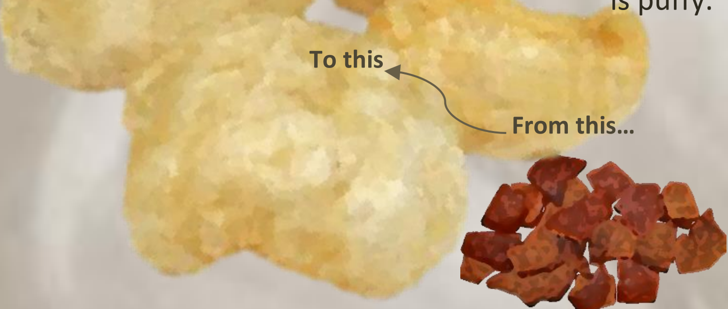
Lima, Ohio is known as the "Pork Rind Capital of the World"

Pork rinds are thought to have originated in the West Midlands of England during the Industrial Revolution in the 1800's

Sales of pork rinds boomed in 1989 when President George W. Bush said they were his favorite snack

Rinds

Made from defatted pork skin cut into "pellets" that are dried and rendered before being fried in oil where they expand. The finished product is puffy.



Cracklings

Made from pork skin with some fat left on. Processed like rinds but the finished product is denser and crunchy. Originally, a byproduct of rendering lard.

In 2017, the U.S. processed enough hogs to produce **690,000,000** pounds of pork skins. Over **280,000,000** pounds were turned into pork rinds. Skin from shoulders and ham are most commonly used.

Source: USDA AMS Agricultural Analytics; NASS