Number and density of dairy cattle in New Zealand

This factsheet presents an indicator of the number and density of dairy cattle in New Zealand. Livestock plays an important role in the New Zealand economy, but poorly managed livestock production can have a major impact on the environment.

Key facts

6.4M

There were 6.4 million dairy cattle in New Zealand in 2018.

The density of dairy cattle in 2018 was 24.1 animals per km^2.

Waikato and Taranaki were the regions with the highest dairy cattle density in 2018.

Matamata-Piako and Waipa districts were the territorial authorities (TA) with the highest dairy cattle density in 2017.

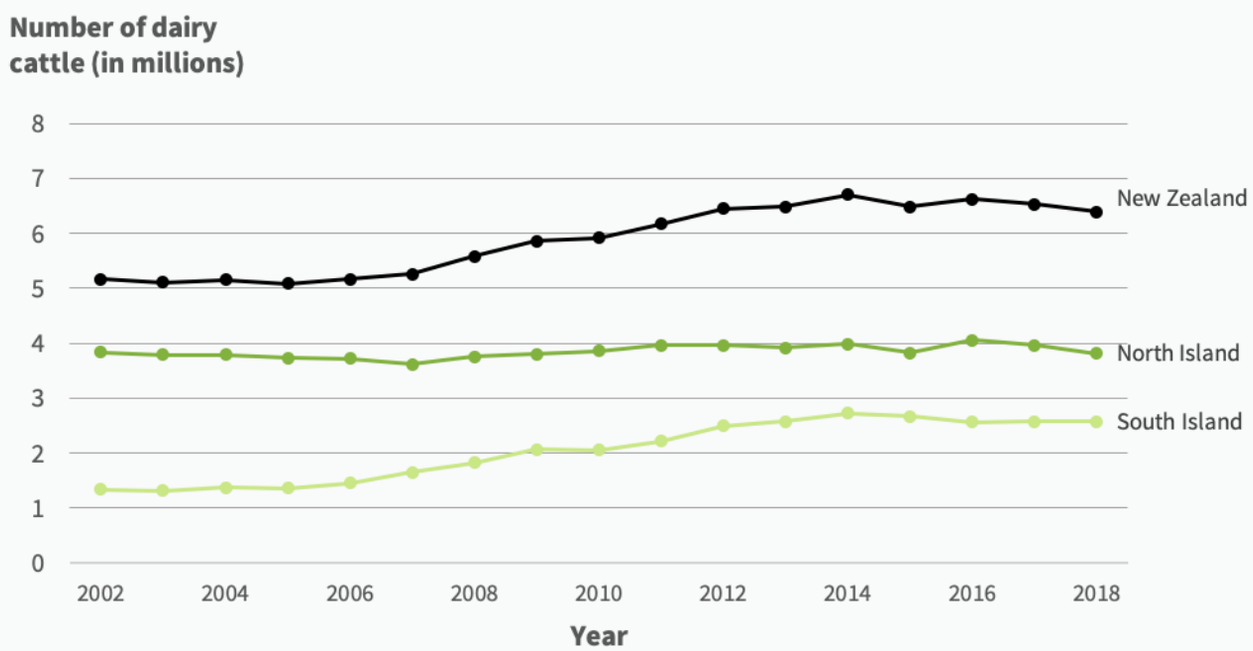
Agricultural use of the land has a major effect on the environment

Extensive irrigation is a necessity for New Zealand's intensive dairy farming industry. It is estimated that 420 litres of water per day per hectare is required (Morgan et al 2002). Dairy farming irrigation, and the nitrate run-off from fertilisers for the grass can affect our water supply.

In 2018, there were 6.4 million dairy cattle in New Zealand

In 2018, there were about 6.4 million dairy cattle in New Zealand (Figure 1). Between 2002 and 2018, dairy cattle numbers increased by almost a quarter, from 5.2 million to 6.4 million. In the South Island, dairy cattle numbers increased by over 90% between 2002 and 2018 from 1.3 million to 2.6 million. In the North Island, dairy cattle numbers have remained relatively unchanged between 2002 and 2018, sitting at approximately 3.8 million.

Figure 1: Number of dairy cattle, 2002—2018*

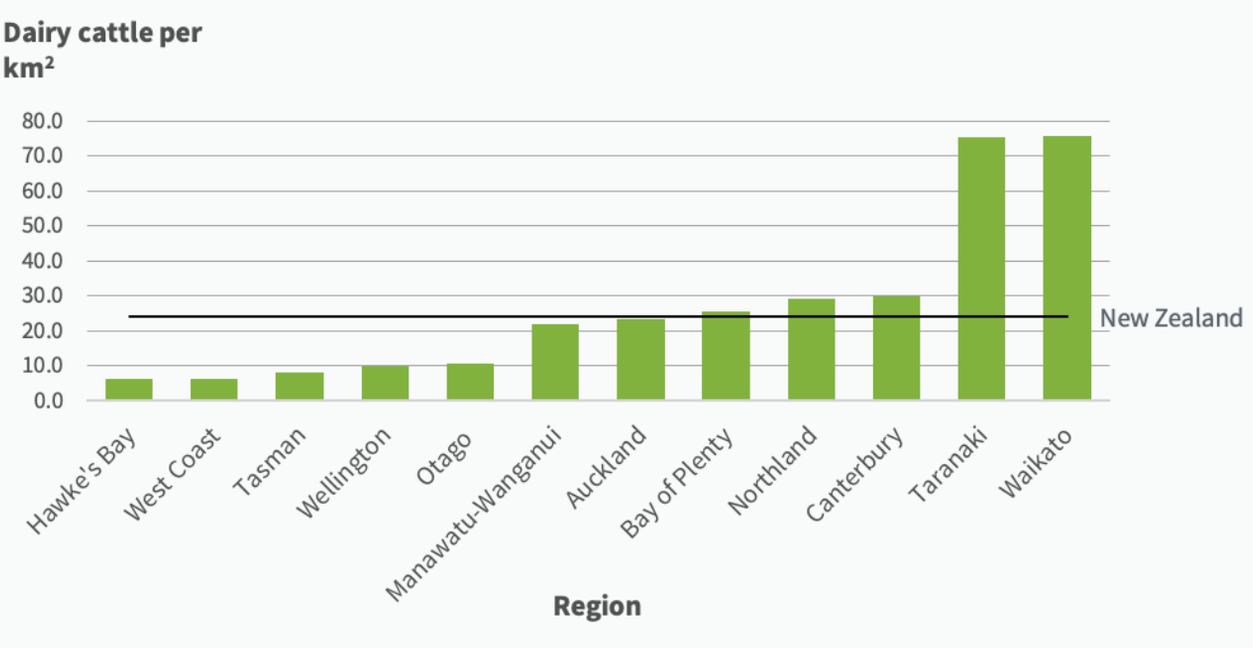


*Year to 30 June
Source: Statistics New Zealand 2019

The Waikato region had the highest density of dairy cattle in 2018

In 2018, New Zealand had an overall dairy cattle density of 24.1 animals per km^2 (Figure 2). The Waikato region had the highest density of dairy cattle in 2018 (75.9 animals per km^2) followed by the Taranaki region (75.5 animals per km^2).

Figure 2: Dairy cattle density, by region, 2018*(number per km^2)

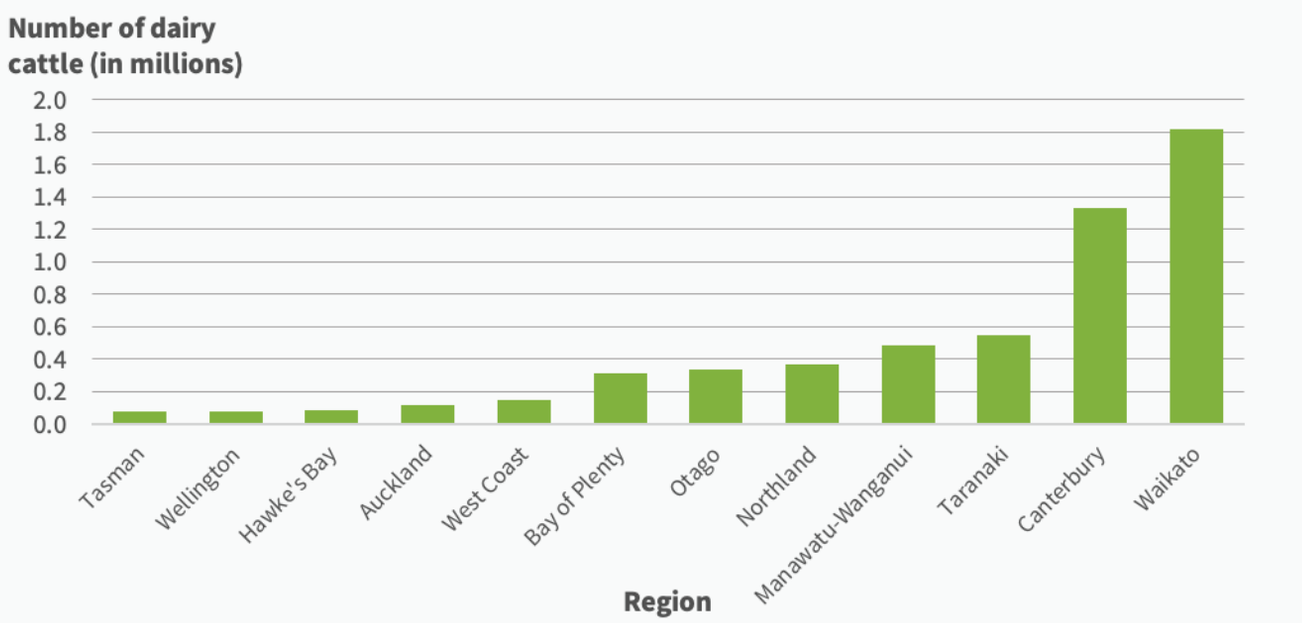


*Year to 30 June
Note: The following regions had dairy cattle data that was reported as confidential or suppressed by Statistics New Zealand: Marlborough, Nelson, Southland, and Gisborne.
Source: Statistics New Zealand 2019

The Waikato region also had the highest total number of dairy cattle in New Zealand in 2018

The Waikato region had the highest number of dairy cattle in New Zealand (about 1.8 million) followed by the Canterbury region at about 1.3 million (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Number of dairy cattle, by region, 2018*



*Year to 30 June
Note: The following regions had dairy cattle data that was reported as confidential or suppressed by Statistics New Zealand: Marlborough, Nelson, Southland, and Gisborne.
Source: Statistics New Zealand 2019

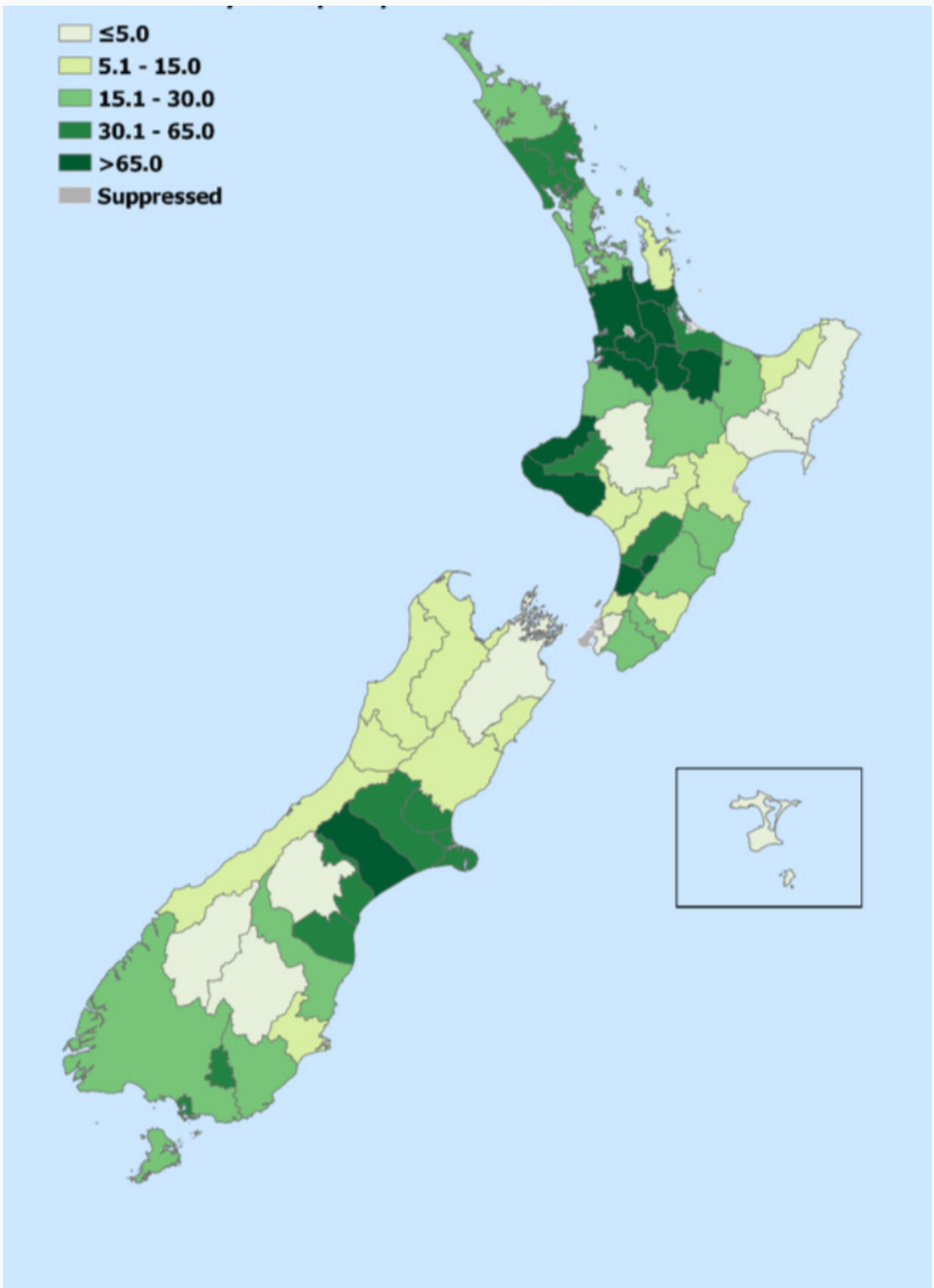
Dairy cattle density by territorial authority (TA)

The North Island had a greater percentage of TAs with a high density of dairy cattle than the South Island (Figure 4).

In the North Island, Matamata-Piako District (211.1 animals per km^2) and Waipa District (183.4 animals per km^2) had the highest dairy cattle density.

In the South Island, Ashburton District (73.0 animals per km^2) and Gore (65.0 animals per km^2) had the highest dairy cattle density.

Figure 4: Dairy cattle density, by Territorial Authority, 2017* (number per km^2)



*Year to 30 June

Notes: The following territorial authorities had dairy cattle data that was reported as confidential or suppressed by Statistics New Zealand: Hamilton City, Tauranga City, Napier City, Porirua City, and Wellington City.

Source: Statistics New Zealand 2018

Data for this indicator

Data comes from Statistics New Zealand's Agricultural Production Statistics which contain the results of the Agricultural Production Censuses and Agricultural Production Surveys conducted from the years 2002 onwards. For additional information, see the metadata link below.

References

Morgan M, Bidwell V, Bright J, et al. 2002. Canterbury *Strategic Water Study*. Christchurch: Lincoln Environmental.

Statistics New Zealand. 2019. *Agricultural production statistics*: June 2018 (final). Data available from **https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/agricultural-production-statistics-june-2018-final (accessed June 2019).**

Other recreational water topics include:

- **Livestock**
- **Suitability for swimming**
- **Water-borne diseases related to recreational water**

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Further information

For descriptive information about the data **Metadata Sheet**

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