

Spotlight Shoot Benchmarking 2014/15 Season

December 2015



INTRODUCTION

We are delighted to introduce the headline results of our 5th shoot benchmarking survey.

This time, covering the 2014/15 season, 110 shoots took part in what is widely regarded as an industry-leading survey and the only one of its kind. The overriding aim of the exercise is to act as a financial management tool and identify areas of strength and weakness in a shoot's performance, against the benchmark so corrective action can be taken as appropriate.

For each shoot which submits figures, we produce (for free!) a detailed report analysing their data against others, and highlighting above or below average performance. They receive more detailed information than in this flyer.

All data is held entirely confidentially.

Many shoots have fared better this season due to improved returns and a reduction in both variable and fixed costs compared with the 2013/14 season; the main savings have been on feed costs, as global grain and protein prices have reduced. Consequently profit margins have improved but still remain under pressure and only those who focus hard on cost control will see a profit at the end of the season. The good news however is that general optimism remains high about future prospects, and bookings are up relative to last season.

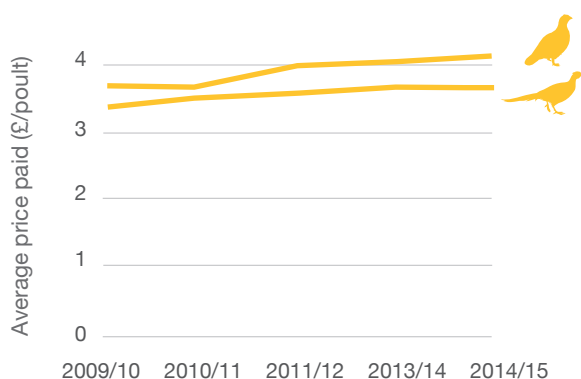
The feedback we get from those participating in benchmarking is generally very positive. However, the survey's overall success depends on as many shoots as possible (large and small) taking part. The more that do, the more credible, and hence more beneficial, to all are the results. We thank those who have taken part, particularly those who have done so each year, and we encourage others to follow their lead, please contact us to register your interest in the next survey.

SHOOT PERFORMANCE

Poult prices and charges per bird increase

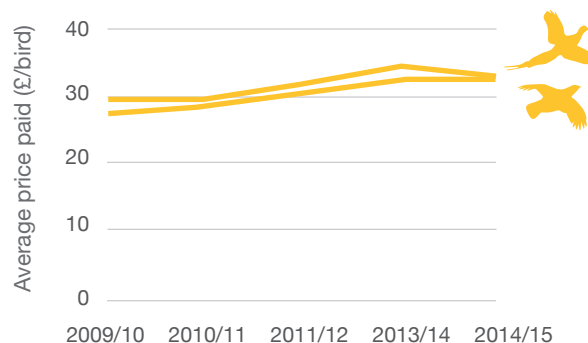
Price paid per poult (£)

The cost of a pheasant or partridge poult has risen over the last five years. Shoots have managed to control their variable costs by rearing, so bird costs per bird put down have actually fallen (-8% over five years or -2% pa). However, they remain one of the top two costs.



Price charged per bird (excluding VAT)

Shoots have increased their charges per bird over the five years (by 10% for pheasants and 18% for partridges), and by more than their costs have risen.

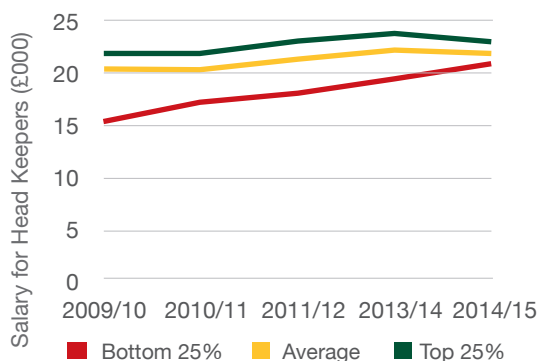


STAFF SALARIES

Average salaries continue to rise

Head Keepers salaries have increased over the last five years, by 2% per year, to an average of just under £22,000. This is a similar rate of increase as farm and estate workers. The wage gap between the top paid and bottom paid keepers has got much smaller. There has been little change in the benefits provided to Head Keepers over the five years other than more of them receiving a pension (up from 28% in 2011/12 to 55% in 2014/15).

We also collect data on Beat Keeper and Single Handed Keeper salaries and benefits.



Beaters and pickers up pay

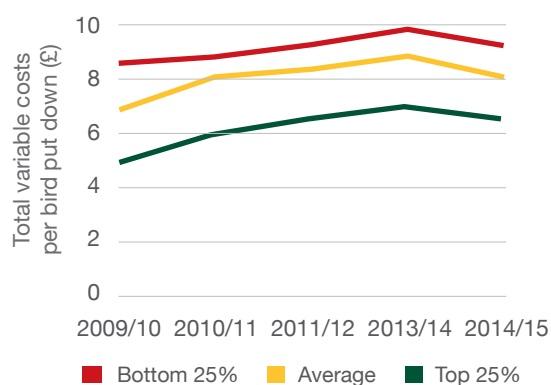
Beaters and pickers up pay is the fourth biggest cost for shoots. The majority of shoots pay beaters £25 - 30 per day and pickers up £30 - 35. Day rates tend to increase in £5 increments, but this cost has risen by 3-4% per year over the last five years.

COSTS

Variable costs rising and fixed costs falling over the past five years

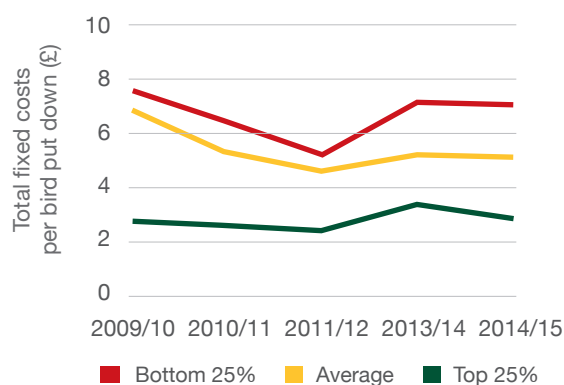
Total variable costs per bird put down

Total variable costs are rising for average and the top and bottom 25% of shoots. Variable costs for the bottom 25% remain £2.20 - 2.50 (or 25-30%) higher than for the top 25% of shoots. Variable costs have risen by 9% or 2% pa over the five years. This is mainly due to feed costs rising by 21% (or 5% pa) and beaters / pickers up costs by 1% pa; bird costs have fallen by -2% pa.



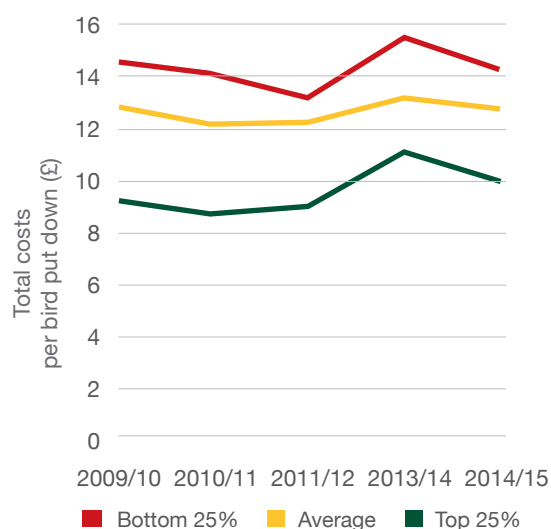
Total fixed costs per bird put down

Total fixed costs have fallen over the five years (-17% or -4% pa). They have fallen slightly more for top 25% than bottom 25% shoots. Fixed costs for the bottom 25% remain £3.00 - 4.00 (or 50-60%) higher than for the top 25% of shoots.



Total costs per bird put down*

Total costs fell by 6% compared with 2013/14 while charges per bird have risen by 1%. This has led to fewer shoots making a loss (37%), compared with 59% in 2013/14.



* This only includes shoots which provided variable and fixed cost data and so is not the sum of total variable costs plus total fixed costs as those calculations included shoots that only provided one set of costs.

PROFITABILITY

Marginal gains make shoots profitable

The key to profitable performance is the aggregation of marginal gains. The difference in performance between profitable and loss-making shoots is in fixed costs, especially those relating to staff. But the difference in staff costs is not a race to the bottom as the salaries of full-time Head Keepers are similar – the difference is that on profit-making shoots they look after more birds. There is also a difference in shoot performance. Profitable shoots put down more birds, have more let days, larger bag sizes, have higher returns and generally charge more per bird. All of the above translates into massive differences in the income each let day generates, of £1,034 profit per let day compared with a -£1,452 loss for the loss-making shoots.

HABITAT CREATION AND MANAGEMENT

Shooting encourages environmental management which benefits habitats and wildlife

75% of shoots shot over land that is in a paid agri-environment habitat improvement scheme.

18% shot over land that is in a voluntary habitat improvement scheme, like Campaign for the Farmed Environment.

43% pay for habitat improvement themselves, to benefit the shoot.

85% have established buffer strips and / or field corners.

66% have planted woodland in the last 10 years (15 acres per shoot average).

97% feed game birds voluntarily after the shooting season.

51% feed songbirds voluntarily.

SHOOT BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENTS

Shoots, like other land-based activities, face increasing pressure to demonstrate sustainability and measureable biodiversity gain arising from their activities. To meet this, the GWCT's experienced team of advisors offers bespoke Shoot Biodiversity Assessments, which provide an independent expert report on best practice and biodiversity gain on individual shoots, covering release sites, feeding, game and habitat management, and predation control. Contact advisory@gwct.org.uk.



Please contact us for more information

Please contact us if you would like to take part in future shoot benchmarking surveys and receive a free detailed report analysing your shoot against the benchmark.

We are also pleased to arrange free seminars on shoot management and benchmarking for groups of 10 or more shoots.

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