

The Australian goat industry

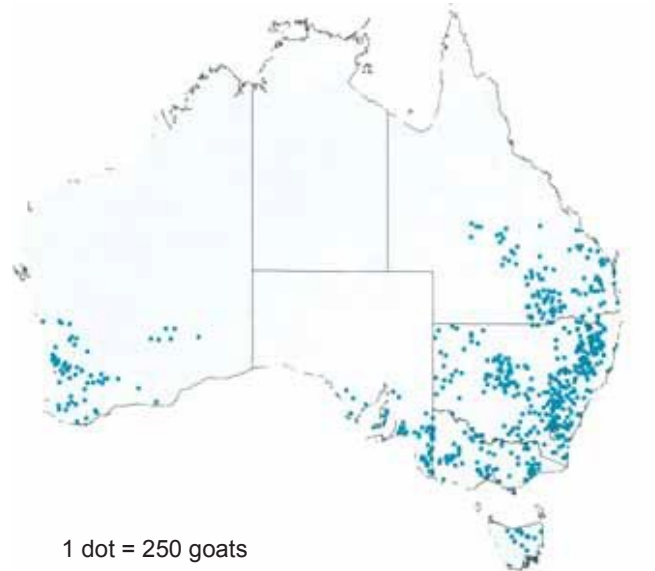
Goats arrived in Australia with the First Fleet in 1788 and have played a small but fascinating role in the development of the Australian pastoral industry.

While of historically minor importance, the goat industry is now growing rapidly with increased demand, both domestically and internationally, for goat meat, milk and fibre.

Australia's original goats were a varied and hardy bunch capable of utilising the poor native pastures to produce milk and meat. Some escaped into the wild, and have subsequently evolved into the unique Australian rangeland goat.

Predominantly fibre based stock, these goats have been used in upgrading programs to develop the modern Australian Cashmere and Angora breeds.

With returns from wool production at cyclical lows, many graziers have embraced goats



as a potential alternative income stream, and this has seen a rapid increase in farmed goats and improvement in the quality of goat flocks in Australia.

Meat goats in Australia

Until recently limited genetic development of meat goats in Australia and the limited potential to market product has meant the age, quality and weight of live animals and carcasses has varied considerably. The importation of the Boer goat to Australia in the mid 1990s and increased demand for goat meat has resulted in the development of a dedicated goat meat industry sector. Importantly, this sector is committed to the production of high quality goat meat and



has embraced a Quality Assurance culture. The expansion of this segment will mean a growing ability to produce high quality goat carcasses for both the Australian and export markets.

Fibre goats in Australia

Australia has mohair and cashmere fibre production industries.

Angora goats produce Mohair and are shorn twice a year. The mohair industry has been in decline in recent years with production falling from 1million kgs in the late 1980's to 250,000 kgs in 2005. The 2005 clip was sold for over \$2 million. The number of Angora goats being run for mohair production and weed management is increasing with cast for age animals entering the meat supply chain.

Cashmere goats produce a finer fibre of 11 – 20 microns. The industry is small and price sensitive with current levels of domestic production at around 10 – 12 tonne (hair-in) per year. Global demand for cashmere generally exceeds supply and should present opportunities for the Australian industry to develop in the future.

Cull and cast for age Cashmere goats contribute to goat meat supply.

Australian goat exports

Australia is the largest exporter of goat meat and live goats in the world, exporting around 19,000 tonnes per annum to approximately 25 countries, and around 50,000 live goats to 15 countries. The major markets have been the US, Taiwan and Malaysia.

The US has developed from being a relatively small importer to become Australia's largest export market accounting for over half of total production. This market is expected to continue to grow in the medium term. Malaysia is the largest importer of Australian live goats, both for slaughter and for breeding, while other South East Asian countries such as Brunei and Singapore also import goats for immediate slaughter. Central America, the Philippines and Indonesia predominantly import milking goats for breeding purposes.

Dairy goats in Australia

The dairy goat is also well represented in Australia with increasing interest from the

general public and strong demand from consumers allergic to cow's milk. Although relatively small in volume, the dairy goat industry is geographically widely spread, predominantly around the rural edges of the major cities. The dairy goat flock is made up of four major breeds; Saanen, Toggenburg, British Alpine and the Anglo Nubian. They contribute to limited, but increasingly high quality, stud dairy goat export activity. Most kids are born in August and September and the best months to export dairy goat kids are March, April and May.

A typical lactation lasts for 300 days and herd averages range from 2 to 3 litres per doe per day. At the peak of lactation, average production may reach 3.5 to 4 litres per day, with individual does producing much more than this.

Industry development

The Goat Industry Strategic Plan was prepared by the industry through the Goat

Industry Council of Australia (GICA) and Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA). One of the plan's major objectives is to increase Australia's goat meat supply capability by encouraging more farmers to enter the goat farming industry.

Imperatives of the Goat Industry Strategic Plan also include:

- producer education
- expansion and development of domestic and export marketing
- targeted industry research
- development and implementation of quality assurance programs
- addressing food safety the ongoing development and support of the Going into goats: Profitable Producers' Best Practice Guide.

An integral feature of the Goat Industry Strategic Plan is that it embraces all segments of the industry, including breeders of dairy, fibre and meat goats.



Goat Breeds in Tasmania

Australian rangeland



Boer goat



Saanen



British Alpine



Anglo Nubian



Angora



Cashmere



Toggenburg

