



GOAT INDUSTRY

June 2005

AN OVERVIEW

MEAT & WOOL

NEW ZEALAND

Goats can be profitably incorporated into existing livestock farming systems, providing benefits of:

- increased revenue and profitability from the sale of meat and fibre
- improved productivity from the livestock presently farmed
- improved pasture quality, and lower-cost weed control
- a non-chemical alternative for weed control

These benefits are not limited to certain farming systems; rather they are available to all enterprises in which sheep, beef and dairy cattle, and deer are farmed.

Despite these benefits, not all farmers are willing to add goats to their current farming system (Greer 1996). When asked whether they would consider farming goats, many indicated that they would consider farming goats provided:

- they could manage to control their impact on sheep, and forestry and shelter plantings
- they could manage internal parasite problems and minimise the development of drench resistance in their sheep flock
- they could be better informed about breeds and breeding programmes, and shearing management
- they were aware of the market opportunities and risks of investing in goat farming

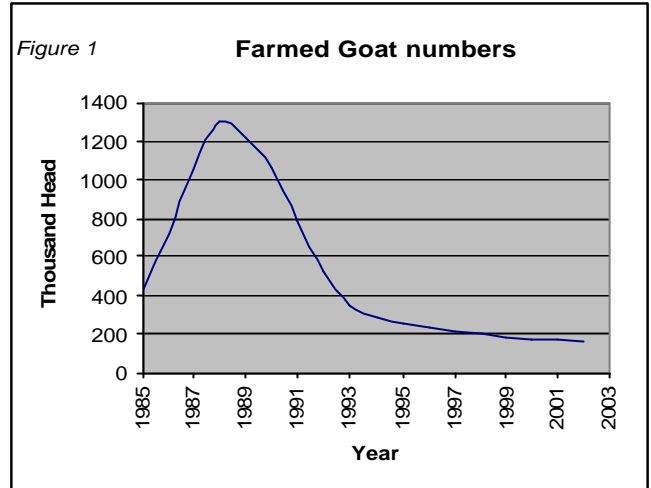
The New Zealand goat industry has had a volatile history, which has affected the perception that many farmers have towards the farming of goats.

That perception needs to be changed because:

- it precludes many from farming and enjoying the benefits that goats could contribute
- significant expansion of goat numbers will occur only when more sheep, sheep and beef, dairy and deer farmers begin to integrate goats into their livestock systems

Goats - Where are They?

It is estimated that in 2002, there were 153,084 goats in New Zealand, with 71% of these (108,373) farmed in the North Island. (Figure 1)



There have been large fluctuations in the number of goats farmed (Figure 1). These changes have been in response to the changing returns for fibre, live animals, and meat. (Table 1)

Table 1 Trends in Export Value of Goat Products

Seasonal Average Return (FOB Value)		
June Year	Goat Meat \$/kg	Fibre \$/kg
1985-1986	2.47	17.42
1986-1987	3.12	13.64
1987-1988	2.42	15.35
1988-1989	1.98	23.07
1989-1990	1.87	16.82
1990-1991	2.35	8.41
1991-1992	2.30	7.65
1992-1993	2.82	5.57
1993-1994	2.89	6.43
1994-1995	3.20	7.85
1995-1996	3.10	9.31
1996-1997	3.49	7.92
1997-1998	4.10	6.64
1998-1999	4.16	7.73
1999-2000	4.64	14.26
2000-2001	5.72	13.24
2001-2002	5.43	19.96
2002-2003	4.61	10.21
2003-2004	4.62	11.53

Source: Statistics New Zealand



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There are some important features associated with the periods of rapid expansion and reduction in the number of goats farmed that occurred, including:

- accessing a large feral population quickly expanded breeding flock numbers
- high livestock demand inflated livestock prices and provided a strong incentive for intensive breeding programmes
- low animal and product returns resulted in intensive culling and reduction of numbers through slaughter

In the future, the rate at which the industry will be able to expand production will be influenced by:

- increased supplies to profitable markets for increased goat meat returns.
- the expansion of profitable markets and returns for goat meat
- a limited number of potential female breeding stock
- the reproductive rate of the population. Although the average kidding rate is significantly below 100%, some flocks are consistently achieving in excess of 150%.
- competing demand for goats, either to meet the expanding needs of meat markets, or as breeding stock

Farmer Knowledge and Experience

There continues to be notable regional variation in the distribution of goats throughout New Zealand (Table 2).

Regional
Table 2 Distribution of Goats (30 June 2002)

	No of Goats	Percentage
Northland	11,091	7
Auckland ¹	11,378	8
Waikato	32,713	21
Bay of Plenty	14,667	10
Gisborne	4,536	3
Hawkes Bay	13,975	9
Taranaki	6,359	4
Manawatu/Wan	10,984	7
Wellington	2,670	2
NORTH	108,373	71
Nelson	9,347	6
West Coast	685	0.5
Canterbury ²	21,320	14
Otago	8,782	5.5
Southland	4,577	3
SOUTH	44,711	29
NEW	153,084	100

¹ Including Great Barrier Island

² Including Chatham Islands

Source: Statistics New Zealand

This has implications for the availability of livestock, and access to local knowledge for farmers entering the industry.

As numbers have declined, goat farming has tended to become the practice of farmers with good skills and experience who are able to achieve good benefits. The outcome is that throughout New Zealand there is an effective network of farmers with significant skill and expertise in successfully farming goats.

Goat Breeds

Dairy Goats

There are approximately 40,000 dairy goats in New Zealand. The breeds milked are predominantly Saanen (80%) with some Anglo Nubian, and British Alpine. Currently there is one major commercial dairy factory for goat milk in New Zealand, with around 21 suppliers milking 26,000 does.

There are a few farmers producing fresh milk for local supply or specialist cheese production.

In addition, dairy flocks are a potential source of cull does and kids for slaughter, and have potential for use with a terminal sire as the Boer.

Boer

The mature weight of females is in excess of 50 kg, with bucks weighing up to 100 kg. Considered a specialist meat breed, the Boer can produce a fine down undercoat equivalent to cashmere.

The Boer can be bred exclusively as a specialist meat breed flock. It is also suitable for use as a terminal sire over fibre producing goats, or as one breed in a composite dam breed.

Cashmere

Cashmere is the fine coat of down found beneath the coarse outer guard hair.

Fibre diameter can range from 8 - 19 microns, and is valued for its lightness, warmth and handle.

There is no cashmere breed. Between animals, fibre production is variable. Cashmere producing flocks are the result of intensive selection of feral origin goats for fibre production and ongoing selection and breeding programmes



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Cashgora

In New Zealand and Australia down fibre with a mean diameter of 19-23 microns, or lustrous cashmere has been given the name Cashgora.

Angora

Angora goats produce mohair fibre. Mohair is a relatively long lustrous fibre with a mean fibre diameter of 19 - 45 microns. Importation of Texan and South African Angora genetics has reduced kemp and medulation levels that were previously a problem in New Zealand Mohair, and marketly improved fleece weights.

Industry Contacts

Sources of Information

Cashmere Association of New Zealand

David Shaw
Clutha Downs, RD3
Balclutha
Ph 03 415 7016
Mob 027 228 7481
d.r.shaw@xtra.co.nz

Dairy Goat Co-Operative (NZ) Ltd

Chief Executive: DJ (Dave) Stanley
107 Gallagher Drive
PO Box 1398
Hamilton
Ph: 07 839 2919
Fax: 07 839 2920
enquiries@dgc.co.nz
www.dgc.co.nz

Mohair New Zealand

Board Chair: Dawn Pirani
RD 2
Katikati
Ph: 07 552 0827
Fax: 07 552 0829
i.d.pirani@xtra.co.nz
www.mohairnz.co.nz

New Zealand Cashgora Farmers (Inc)

President: Allan Billington
23 Sheffield Street
Palmerston North
Ph/Fx: 06 358 2300

New Zealand Dairy Goat Breeders' Association

Secretary: Lorraine Hayes
RD 2
Waihi
Ph: 07 863 8270

New Zealand Nubians Breed Club

President: Jan Schellingerout
Ph: 07 859 1477
Jan.schelling@xtra.co.nz

New Zealand Boer Goat Breeders Association (Inc) 1989

President: Duncan McFarlane
Secretary: Geoff Mugeridge
Ph: 07 871 8202

secretary@boergoatassn.co.nz

www.boergoatassn.co.nz

Goat Advisory Group:

Neil North (Farmer, Otago)
Susie Douglas (Farmer, Northland)
Ian Pirani (Farmer, Bay of Plenty)
Ray Thompson (Farmer, East Coast)
Campbell Story (Dairy Goat representative)
Roger Driver (Processor representative)
Keith Thompson (Veterinarian)
Tom Mandeno (M&WNZ director, Chairman)

Secretary: Christine Ford
Meat & Wool NZ
PO Box 121
Wellington 6015
christine.ford@meatandwoolnz.com

References and further reading

Industry Background

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News and Issues

Straight Furrow

Ph 09 523 5056 Fx 09 524 1170

www.straightfurrow.co.nz

NZ Farmer: Ph 0800 651 652

Goat News New Zealand

Ph 09 434 7719

m.j.brierley@actrix.co.nz

Simply Boers

Ph: 07 871 8202

sovereignridge@xtra.co.nz

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