

Sustainable use of undersized goats

Within the SA Rangelands region, feral goats continue to hamper both positive conservation and primary production outcomes. A new project aims to help landholders manage undersized goats not suited for loading or market, to protect native habitat, pasture and to assist in using the protein source.



Mustered feral goats unfit for market.

What does this project involve?

Control of feral goats is a requirement of all landowners. While they are a major environmental and agricultural pest, they also have some commercial value. Many land managers responsibly remove feral goats from their property through mustering for commercial sale.

With rapidly fluctuating markets, limited kill space, price points, transport costs and weight requirements, landholders can be left with large numbers of goats that are either unfit to load or have no commercial value.

Under the Landscape South Australia Act 2019, landowners have a legal and environmental requirement to ensure no mustered goats are re-released. Landholders are encouraged to contact their local Landscape Board for assistance with the destruction and potential use of these unsaleable animals.

SAAL Led Undersize Goat Project

SAAL, is partnering with other landscape boards, through a Landscape Priorities Fund grant to provide qualified field harvesters undertaking humane destruction of goats on property, ideally post mustering activities. **This program is open to all landholders mustering/managing feral rangeland goats.**

Through the project goat carcasses are processed on site, then transported to be used in feeding native and internationally important endangered carnivores residing with Zoos SA.

Depending on the size and number of goats available, meat may also be used for feral species baiting programs undertaken by the landscape boards, with baits also offered free of charge back to properties.

Despite this, a small percentage of goats may also be left on site, with destruction being undertaken by the contracted processors, which reduces or removes the stress of this time-consuming task from land holders.

What is the impact of re-release after mustering?

Goats can repopulate rapidly, even when conditions are average to poor. Females can reproduce from six months of age and with a gestation period of only 150 days, they can reproduce twice .

Adult bucks and lactating females will seek up to 1kg of dry vegetation per day, which results in significant competition and impacts on pastoral production, native species and native plant recovery.

To ensure populations are managed, it is crucial to ensure no escapes or re-releases occur.



The full monetary impact of feral goats on the domestic sheep industry is unknown, with estimates placing it as high as \$17 million per year, through lost competition for feed (Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, 2023).



Grazed vs ungrazed Bullock Bush (Alectryon oleifolius) inside the fence is a perennial species targeted by feral goats.

What are your responsibilities?

Under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*, captured feral goats must be either destroyed on the property, sent for slaughter, or re-domesticated on land where domestic goats are permitted. These feral goats may be held on the property on which they are captured for a maximum of six weeks.

This gives landholders an opportunity to capture more and make transporting to an abattoir or depot more cost-efficient. At the conclusion of the six weeks, remaining goats **must** be removed or destroyed.

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