

Feral Goats

By Errol Corry

Goats arrived in Australia with the First Fleet in 1788. As they were small and hardy, ate a range of plants and provided milk and meat, they were convenient livestock for early European settlers. During the 19th century, sailors released goats onto islands and some areas of the mainland for emergency food. Certain breeds were imported for their hair.

More recently, goats have been used to keep plantation forests and inland pastoral land free of weeds. Feral herds developed as these domestic goats escaped, were abandoned, or were deliberately released. Feral goats now occur across 28 per cent of Australia. They can be found in all states and territories and on some offshore islands but are most common in the rocky or hilly semi-arid areas of western New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia, and Queensland. There are estimates of at least 2.6 million feral goats in Australia.



Where dingos and wild dogs are present, feral goats generally do poorly. However, they are often found in sheep-grazing areas, where dingos and wild dogs have been removed or heavily controlled by pastoralists. Feral goats live in herds and, although males and females live separately for much of the year, they share about one kilometre square under good conditions, but a larger area when food or water is scarce. The two groups only mix during the breeding season in autumn and winter, with females becoming sexually mature in their first year. Feral goats can breed twice a year, with twins and triplets being common. Feral goats have a varied diet — leaves, twigs, bark, flowers, fruit, and roots. They will eat most plant types in pastoral regions and often consume vegetation that is avoided by sheep or cattle.

A variety of calibres (anything from a .223 up to .308) can be used to hunt goats though shot placement is crucial. Goats are tough and will carry a misplaced shot a long way. See animation below recipes for basic goat anatomy. A head shot can be difficult with the heart/lung area offering the best chance of the one-shot kill, remember our goal is for an ethical, humane kill.

If you are wanting to hunt for meat, then look for young bucks before sexual maturity or nannies though a good spicy curry will obscure some of the more gamey flavours associated with more mature animals.

After the fat is removed, you can tone down the goat's flavour still further by soaking it at least briefly. One easy option is to dissolve some coarse salt in cold water, then soak the goat in it. The salt helps draw the flavour and odour from the meat, leaving it mild and veal-like.

It is best to ask the landowner on arrival at the property what their current policy on goats is before starting to hunt the area. Feral goats are either a pest or resource as many farmers will muster feral goats as an income.

Goats can be hunted during the day, morning will find goats sunning themselves on exposed rock faces in hilly country, so worth taking some time to scope out these areas early in the day. Quite often in scrub country you will hear goats long before seeing them, so it also pays to listen out for bleating and track the sound back to the source. Watering points are another good option to scout for goat sign.



Goat Curry – serves 6

Ingredients

Marinade:

1/2 cup soy sauce
1/4 cup curry powder – add or subtract to personal taste
1/4 cup chopped garlic
2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
2 pounds goat meat, cut into 2-inch chunks

Feral goats can be found on several of our Club properties. Most of our landowners are fine with you hunting them though check with them first, there will be a fee for any goats taken.

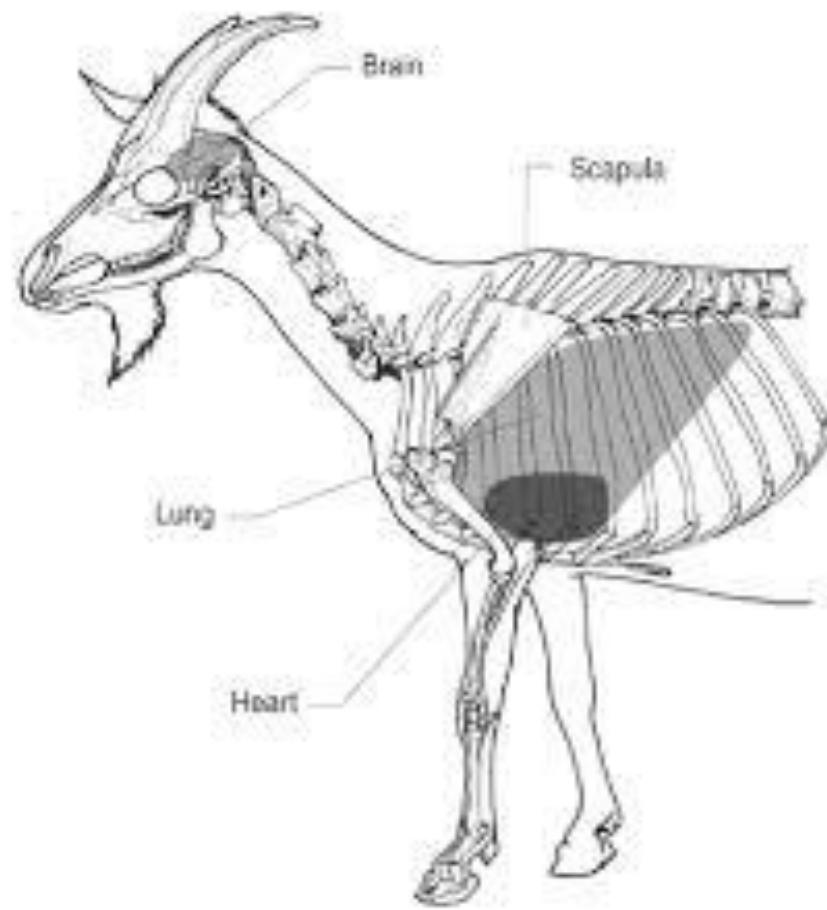
Curry:

1/2 cup oil
4 cups coconut milk
2 cups chopped onions
1 cup chopped capsicum
1/2 cup chopped carrots
1/4 cup chopped onion
4 bay leaves

Rice or rice and peas, for serving

Directions

1. For the marinade: Mix the soy sauce, curry powder, garlic, basil, oregano, and black pepper in a large bowl. Add the goat to the bowl and marinate overnight.
2. For the curry: Remove the goat from the marinade. Heat the oil in a large pan and add the goat. Turn the heat to medium and sear the goat until brown, about 15 minutes. Add the coconut milk and 4 cups water. Cover and cook, about 2 hours.
3. Add the onions, bell peppers, carrots, green onions and bay leaves and simmer, about 1 hour.
4. Serve with rice or rice and peas.



References for this article

Australian Government – Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

Grant H – GHAA Game Stats 2019