

GOATS IN FLORIDA

A change in Florida's ethnic mix, with many of our newer citizens arriving from countries where goat meat is a normal part of their daily diet, has led to a rise in its demand. Florida's goat industry is determined to meet the needs of this fast-growing segment of the population.

Despite the fact that goat meat (known as Chevon or Cabrito) and other by-products (such as milk and cheese) are consumed by over a third of the world's population, it is not common in the United States.



Though not routinely found in our grocery stores or meat markets, goods derived from goats are quickly becoming a most sought-after product. Health-conscious people looking for options to cows' milk recognized long ago the benefits of goat's milk. Goat hair (in the form of Mohair and Angora) has been used for clothes for hundreds of years. Still, very few Americans ever thought of eating goat meat.

The desire for more products to meet the cultural and religious needs of this growing segment of our society has led to a rise in the number of goats produced in Florida. Small and limited resource farmers, realizing that goats could serve as an alternative enterprise, began incorporating goats into existing family farms and raising them to supplement their income.

This shift began in the 1980s and has gradually but persistently taken hold. During the 1990s, goat production became one of the fastest-growing livestock enterprises in the nation. A national survey taken in January 2005 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture put Florida in the top 25 states in the production of goats used primarily for milk. It now ranks in the top 10 of those same states in terms of goats raised for meat.

Supported by the agricultural programs at Florida A&M University and the University of Florida, producer groups are being formed and local markets established to better serve the community at large. Through their research efforts and producer training meetings, Florida is the leader in creating Best Management Practices and standards that are being adopted nationwide.



The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is fostering a climate for training, education and knowledge. Through the National Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification, participation in the National Animal Identification System and other initiatives, the state is pursuing health issues facing today's market.

Florida's goat enterprises will continue to grow. The increasing interest from consumers for this new taste experience will drive market demand to new heights. Florida, with its growing ethnic population and ever-increasing interest from mainstream consumers, will continue to keep pace with consumer preferences.



Rules and Regulations Relating to Goats

- ▶ Florida requires that all goats be identified according to the Scrapie Eradication Uniform Methods and Rules (APHIS 91-55-066).
- ▶ To bring goats into Florida, they must have a health certificate and individual identification (Rule 5C-3).
- ▶ A health certificate is also required for goats presented for exhibition (Rule 5C-29).

Interesting Facts about Goats

- ▶ Goats were once used as currency.
- ▶ The effects of coffee were discovered when goat herders noticed goats behaving more energetically after eating the plant!
- ▶ Florida is in the top 5, of states in the southeast, in the production of goats raised for meat.



To learn more, contact:

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For assistance with animal health programs
or the National Animal Identification System.

Florida Meat Goat Association
www.fmga.org

Florida Dairy Goat Association
www.fdga.org

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Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Charles H. Bronson, Commissioner

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in, Florida



TODAY'S Growing Market