



DEPARTMENT: AGRICULTURE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Cashmere—new marketing opportunities

Several South African goat breeds are good producers of cashmere. They are:

- Boer goats
- Savanna goats
- Gorno Altai goats



In spite of a large goat population, the country does not produce cashmere. There is the possibility of joining Australia, New Zealand and the Eastern countries in meeting the demand for this popular commodity. Let's look at the prospects:



Market potential

- There is a worldwide shortage of cashmere.
- Products made from this fibre are in great demand, especially in Western countries.
- Foreign spinning and weaving companies would like to establish ties with South Africa if the country could produce sufficient quantities of cashmere.
- In spite of large fluctuations in both wool and mohair prices internationally, the cashmere market has remained stable

More about cashmere

- Cashmere is the fine undercoat hair or “down” produced by goats during winter.
- The fibres are soft, light, warm and look dull.
- The colour of cashmere varies from white to brown, but white is preferred.
- This hair forms an insulating undercoat that protects the goat against cold.



- Cashmere is one of the finest fibres in the world and is much warmer than wool.
- More cashmere can be combed out from a goat with a woolly coat than from one with hard hair.

What is a cashmere goat?

- There is no specific cashmere breed.
- Any goat from which marketable quantities of cashmere can be harvested is a cashmere goat.
- The fine down must, however, be of a specific diameter and length to comply with market requirements.
- In South Africa both the Savanna and Boer goats produce superwhite cashmere which is highly graded. This fibre has the correct diameter and length.
- The Gorno Altai goats yield fibres that are much thicker and longer than that of the Savanna and Boer goats. This breed is also hardier than the Angora.



Harvesting cashmere

- Hair can be harvested when the goats are 6 months old.
- Fibre starts to grow during midsummer (from December to June) and the goats begin to shed soon after midwinter (July until September).
- Cashmere can be combed out as soon as the primary coat is shed.
- The entire herd should be combed every 2 weeks to obtain maximum quantities of cashmere. Goats do not shed cashmere at the same time.
- Fluff hanging from thornbushes or fences indicate that it is time to start combing.

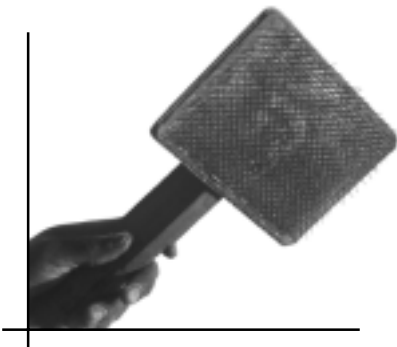


Combing out cashmere



- Various kinds of combs can be used to comb out cashmere.
- Tie the animal up by the head in a standing position.
- It takes about 20 to 30 minutes to comb out a goat.

- Keep on combing until few or no fibres are combed out with each stroke of the comb.
- If a sufficient quantity of fibres is not obtained with the first stroke, skip the goat and take the next one.
- Goats with woolly necks are usually good cashmere producers.





How cashmere benefits smallholder farmers

Combing out cashmere is expensive and time consuming for the commercial farmer

- A roving comber could visit a commercial farmer to comb out cashmere. A small percentage of the money he earns in this way could be paid to the goat owner who allows the combing of his goats.
- The roving comber can comb out the goats anytime and place.
- Cashmere could be a secondary product after meat for the smallholder farmer.
- Extra income could be generated if the smallholder farmer processes the cashmere fibre into products by carding, combing, spinning and weaving or knitting.



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