2023–24

# Goatmeat Industry Update

**Data used in this report**

The Goat Data Collation and Tracking Project collates data from various sources. The information in this report should be interpreted with an understanding of the data sources and their limitations outlined in the *GDCT Data Guide*.




**The Goat Data Collation Tracking Project is co-funded by Meat & Livestock Australia and NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.**

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MLA acknowledges the matching funds provided by the Australian Government to support the research and development detailed in this publication.

# Summary

In 2023–24, the Australian goatmeat industry achieved record-breaking levels in processing and export trade (volume and value). Abattoirs processed over 3.1 million goats, a 57% increase from the previous year in response to increased production from New South Wales (NSW), Queensland and South Australia (SA).

Exporters doubled the volume of goatmeat traded to 42,383 tonnes, enabled by a resurgence in exports to the United States, along with continued growth in reliable markets and interest from less consistent importers attracted by reduced prices.

Although the rapid growth in supply and international economic conditions led to lower returns per kilogram, exports generated $298 million.

**3.1M** goats processed

**$298M** export value

**33%** increase Y-O-Y since 2022–23

# Production and supply trends

Australian producers supplied 3.1 million goats for processing in 2023–24 (DAFF, 2024a), 57% more than the previous year. The source of this supply is indicated in **Table 1** and **Figure 2**. The supply increase was driven by producers marketing surplus animals rather than a reduction in core numbers or a major shift away from goat production in response to depressed prices. Herd development during 2020 to 2022, favourable seasonal conditions and increased minimum carcase weights contributed to a higher volume of goats available for marketing. Producers reported the need to market goats, regardless of price, to keep herd numbers in check and manage grazing pressure.

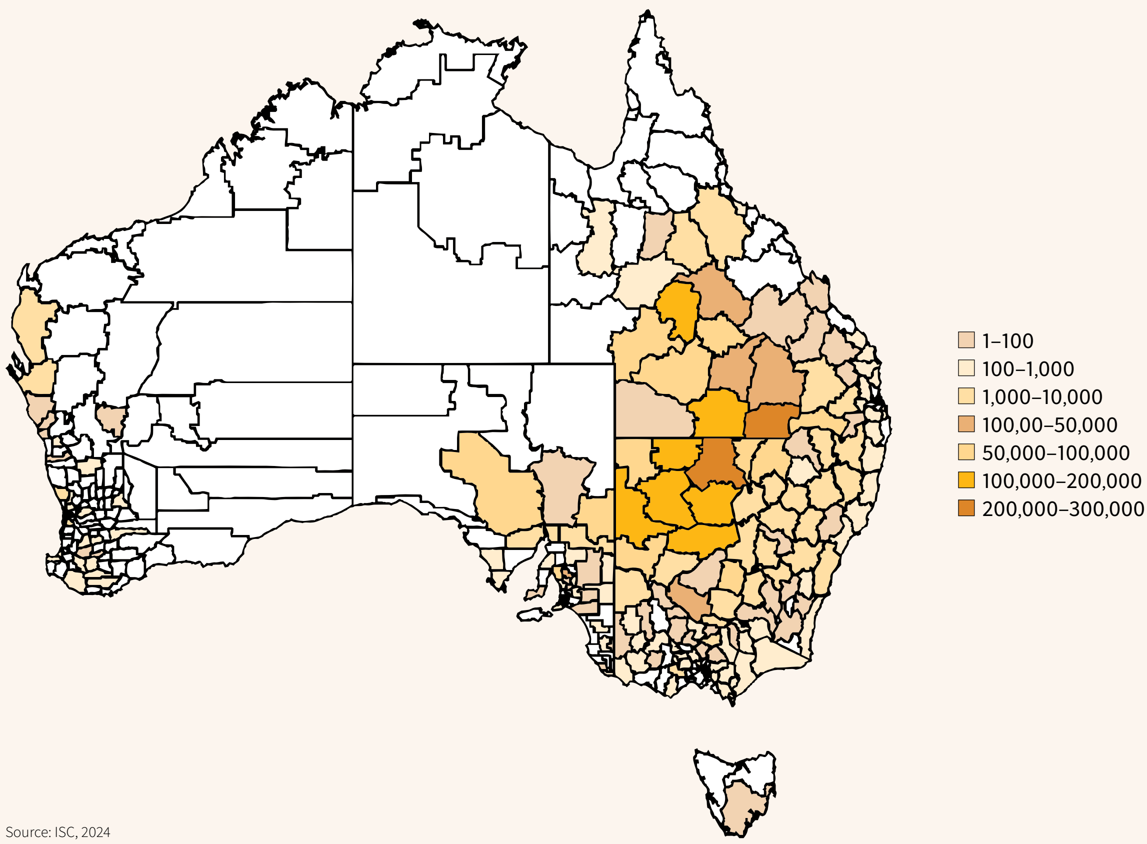
**Table 1:** Goats supplied for processing (2023–24)

| State | Head | % change (from 2022–23) |
|---|---|---|
| NSW | 1,302,101 | 58 |
| QLD | 879,946 | 40 |
| SA | 125,483 | 51 |
| TAS | 179 | – |
| VIC | 12,923 | -52 |
| WA | 21,136 | -8 |
| **Total** | **2,341,768** | |

Note: Please refer to the *GDCT data guide* to understand the discrepancy between the number of goats supplied and the total processed (Table 3). Source: ISC, 2024

Producers reported that favourable seasonal conditions boosted reproduction rates in managed and unmanaged herds. The main production regions of NSW, Queensland and SA experienced average to very much above average rainfall in 2022–23. This was followed by average to above-average rainfall conditions in NSW and Queensland in 2023–24, albeit with some short-term drier periods. Seasonal conditions in SA were less favourable in 2023–24 compared with NSW and Queensland, with some areas experiencing below-average rainfall to very much below-average rainfall (BOM, 2024).

**Figure 1:** Goats supplied for processing from NLIS regions (2023–24)




Source: ISC, 2024

During 2023–24, most goatmeat processors required a minimum carcase weight of 10 kg. Higher minimum carcase weights increase the likelihood that females will reproduce before they are sold. Consequently, this makes managing herd numbers more challenging, especially in reducing core numbers because herds always contain a proportion of underweight goats, which are difficult to market.

Producers dealt with ongoing competition for kill space and longer wait times when booking over-the-hooks consignments throughout the year. Despite these challenges, the processing sector expanded enough to handle most goats that producers wanted to market above the minimum carcase weight of 10 kg. The peak demand for booking in over-the-hook consignments occurred from August to October, when producers faced declining seasonal conditions and an unfavourable forecast for the coming summer. This situation improved somewhat when Queensland and NSW received good summer rainfall.

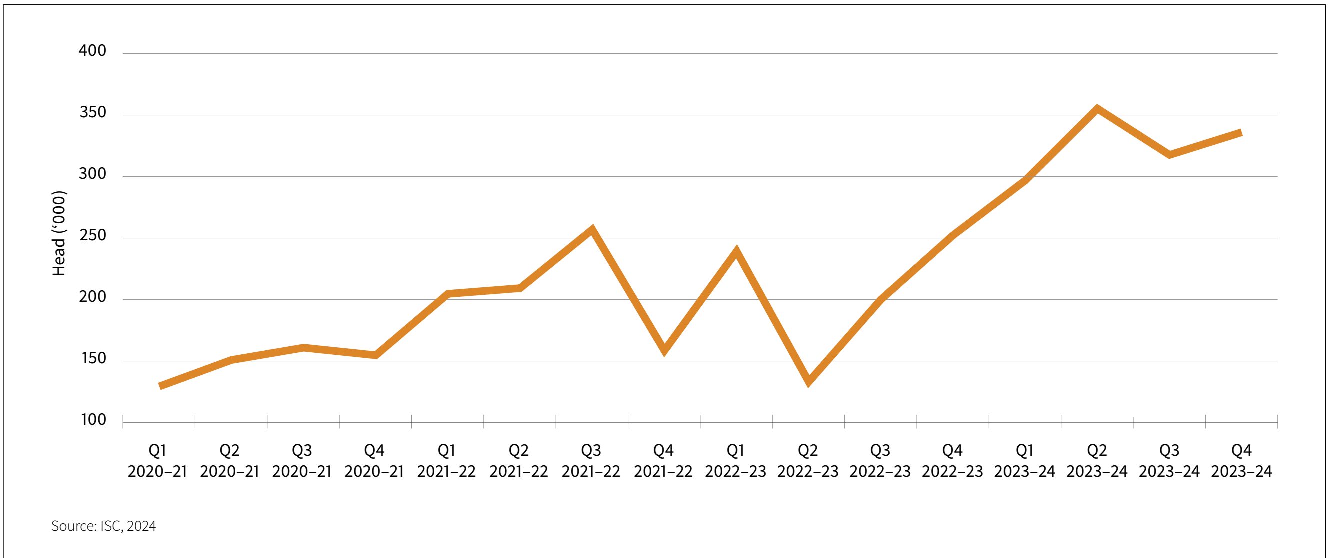
According to ISC data, Bourke (NSW) and Balonne (Queensland) were the two regions that supplied the most goats to processing during 2024 (**Figure 1**), each supplying more than 200,000 goats. Within NSW, the Wilcannia, Cobar, Broken Hill, Wanaaring and Hillston regions turned off more than 100,000 goats each and increased supply by more than 20% compared to 2022–23. The Queensland regions of Paroo and Longreach also supplied more than 100,000 goats each, with year-on-year supply increasing by 30% and 104%, respectively (ISC, 2024).

## New South Wales

Supply from NSW contributed to the increased turn-off of goats in 2023–24 (**Table 1**). NSW producers continued to supply the highest number of goats to meat processing compared with the other states. According to the ISC data, NSW supplied just over 1.3 million goats to processing, a 58% increase compared with 2022–23. Supply peaked in quarter two when NSW producers supplied more than 350,000 goats for processing (**Figure 2**).

The aerial survey in 2024 used a revised design that included more transects than in 2023. The increased sampling effort in some areas of the state improved the precision of the estimated population size. The estimated population size for goats in central and western NSW in 2024 was 5,888,975 (95% confidence interval: 4,915,977–7,054,554).

**Figure 2:** Goats supplied for processing from New South Wales by FY quarter (2020–21 to 2023–24)




Nationally, there is insufficient data to differentiate between the number of goats supplied from harvesting operations, and those produced from managed enterprises. However, the Annual Land and Stock Returns submitted by NSW ratepayers provide information about managed goat numbers across the state. While the Land and Stock Return data most likely under-reports the total number of managed goats, according to the 2024 reporting, at least 2,613 holdings managed 367,624 goats (**Table 2**).

The reporting suggests that there has been a downturn in managed goats and holdings with goats since the total peaked at 523,761 goats managed on 3,269 properties in 2022 (LLS, 2024). However, it is uncertain if this reflects an actual reduction in managed goats or increased unwillingness to report managed goats.

**Table 2:** Goat holdings by Local Land Services (LLS) region (2022–24)

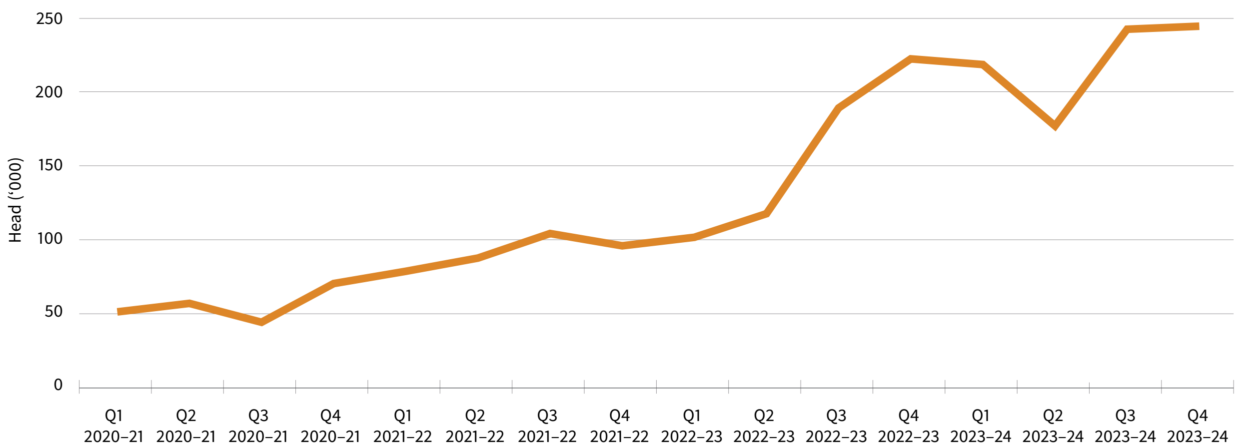
| LLS region | 2022 | | 2023 | | 2024 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Head | Properties | Head | Properties | Head | Properties |
| Western | 395,421 | 195 | 289,736 | 162 | 286,208 | 117 |
| Central West | 35,790 | 287 | 15,954 | 200 | 24,798 | 165 |
| South East | 12,683 | 702 | 8,067 | 510 | 7,893 | 617 |
| North West | 24,839 | 184 | 12,109 | 152 | 7,709 | 110 |
| Riverina | 14,264 | 191 | 17,551 | 169 | 12,281 | 139 |
| Northern Tablelands | 15,058 | 178 | 19,363 | 184 | 10,041 | 125 |
| Central Tablelands | 12,231 | 396 | 8,946 | 298 | 9,122 | 317 |
| Hunter | 3,682 | 339 | 3,087 | 304 | 2,796 | 307 |
| Murray | 3,997 | 87 | 4,356 | 65 | 1,142 | 56 |
| Greater Sydney | 3,054 | 329 | 2,390 | 306 | 3,352 | 349 |
| North Coast | 2,742 | 381 | 2,469 | 282 | 2,282 | 311 |
| **Total** | **523,761** | **3,269** | **384,028** | **2,632** | **367,624** | **2,613** |

Source: LLS, 2024

## Queensland

Supply from Queensland producers increased again for the third consecutive year to 879,946 goats, a 40% increase compared with 2022–23 (**Table 1**; **Figure 3**). Turn-off in Queensland peaked in the third and fourth quarters when producers supplied more than 240,000 goats during the quarter (ISC, 2024).

**Figure 3:** Goats supplied for processing from Queensland by FY quarter (2020–21 to 2023–24)

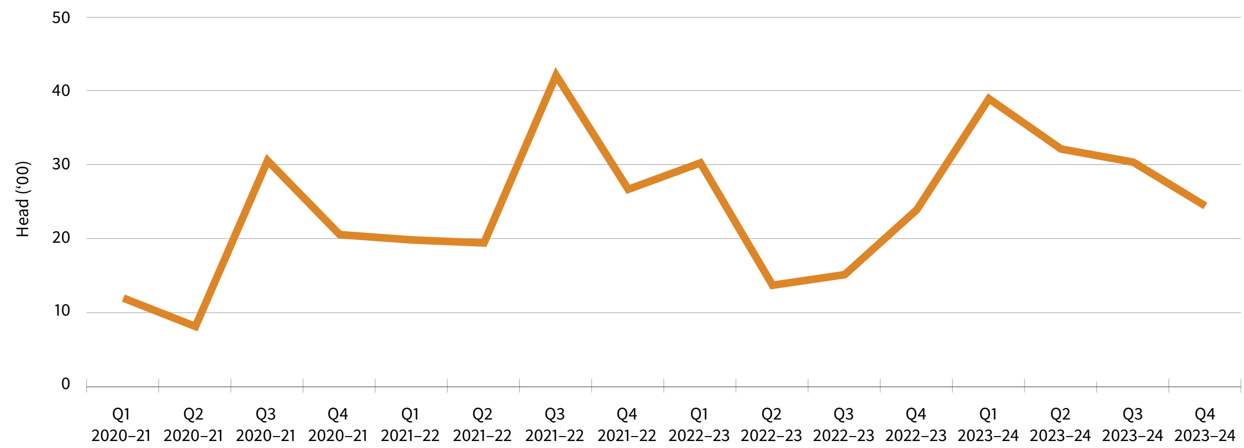



Source: ISC, 2024

### South Australia

South Australian producers supplied more than 125,000 goats to Australian processors, 51% more than in 2022–23 (**Table 1**). However, South Australian supply has not shown the same growth trends as Queensland (**Figure 2**), and the turn-off from South Australian properties remains volatile (**Figure 4**). In 2023–24, supply from SA peaked at 38,865 head (**Figure 4**) and then consecutively decreased for the remaining three quarters to 24,170 head in the last quarter (ISC 2024). The less favourable seasonal conditions in the main production regions of SA during 2023–24 may have encouraged producers to offload goats to reduce grazing pressure.

**Figure 4:** Goats supplied for processing from South Australia by FY quarter (2019–20 to 2022–23)

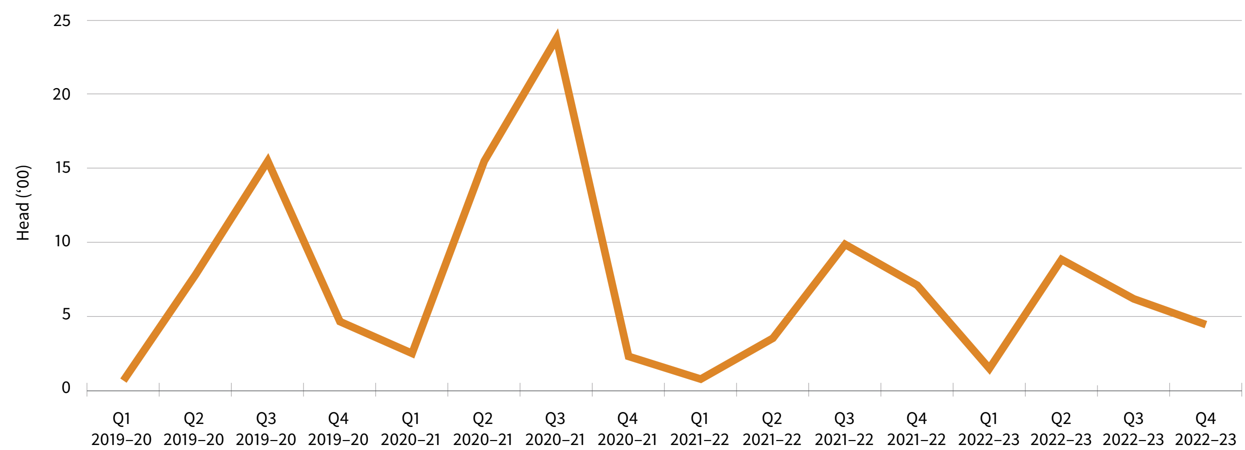



Source: ISC, 2024

### Western Australia

Western Australian producers supplied 21,136 goats to processors in 2023–24, an 8% decrease from the previous year (**Table 1**). Like SA, there is no indication that production from WA is increasing, and seasonal turn-off remains highly variable. In 2023–24, turn-off ranged from 1,488 head in quarter one (**Figure 5**) to a peak of 8,972 head in quarter two (ISC, 2024).

**Figure 5:** Goats supplied for processing from Western Australia by FY quarter (2019–20 to 2022–23)




Source: ISC, 2024

# Processing

The goatmeat processing sector has expanded since 2020–21 to absorb the booming supply from Australian farms. During this time, the number of goats processed rose from just over 1 million to over 3.1 million, a 189% increase over three years (**Table 3**; **Figure 6**). In 2023–24, processing levels expanded again in NSW, Queensland and Victoria, marking the third consecutive year of growth in these states. Meat processing in the first quarter of 2023–24 broke records with 776,044 goats processed (**Figure 7**), but the total for the fourth quarter of 930,349 goats quickly surpassed this record (DAFF, 2024a).

**Table 3:** Goats processed (2023–24)

| State | Head | % change (from 2022–23) |
|---|---|---|
| NSW | 847,116 | 257 |
| QLD | 820,962 | 40 |
| SA | 104,390 | -41 |
| TAS | 125 | - |
| VIC | 1,308,626 | 38 |
| WA | 22,249 | -0.1 |
| **Total** | **3,103,468** | **57** |

Source: DAFF, 2024a

In 2023–24, the increase in NSW was most noteworthy, with the total slaughter exceeding 845,000 goats, a 257% year-on-year increase (**Table 3**). NSW processed a similar number of goats as Queensland for the first time in at least 16 years. NSW abattoirs slaughtered 27% of the goats processed nationwide, a substantial increase compared to historical levels (DAFF, 2024a).

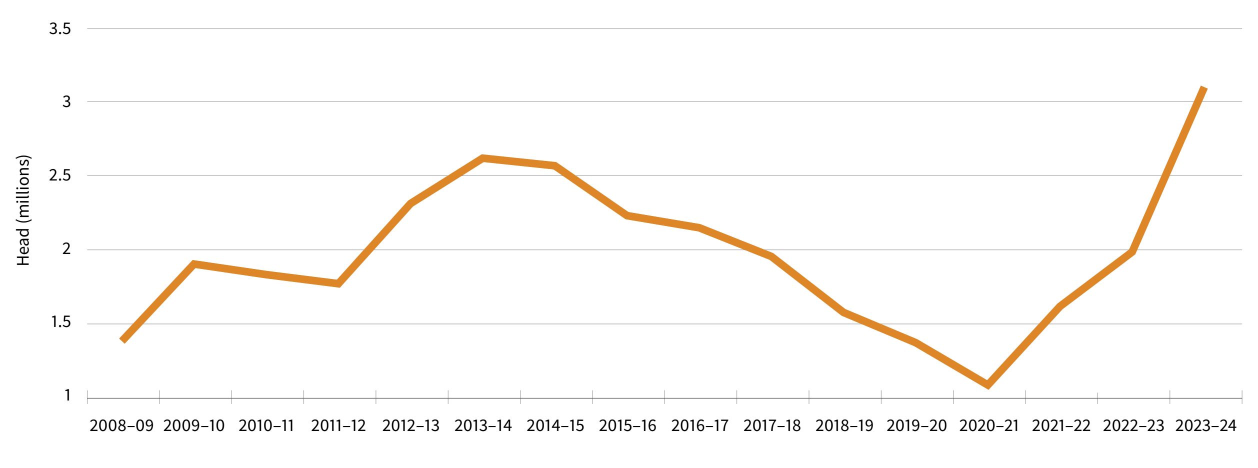
Processing in Queensland also grew to its highest level, with 820,962 goats slaughtered during 2023–24. Queensland processors slaughtered 301,949 goats during 2020–21 (**Table 3**), and since then, the state has recorded three years of consecutive increase in its throughput, including a 40% lift from 2022–23 to 2023–24 (DAFF, 2024a).

The number of goats processed in Victoria expanded by 38% from 2022-23 to 2023–24. However, the state's share of the national kill dropped to 42% during 2023–24, a notable decrease from the typical level of 45-53% over the past ten years (DAFF, 2024a).

South Australian processors slaughtered just over 100,000 goats during 2023–24 (**Table 3**), the lowest total in over ten years. Processing in this state has trended downwards since 2016, nearly halving from 2021–22 to 2023–24 (DAFF, 2024a). The decline does not reflect a decrease in supply from SA properties, which more than doubled in 2023–24 compared to 2022–23 (ISC, 2024). Opportunities for industry development continue to be limited in SA due to legislation restricting producers from managing goats in the pastoral zone.

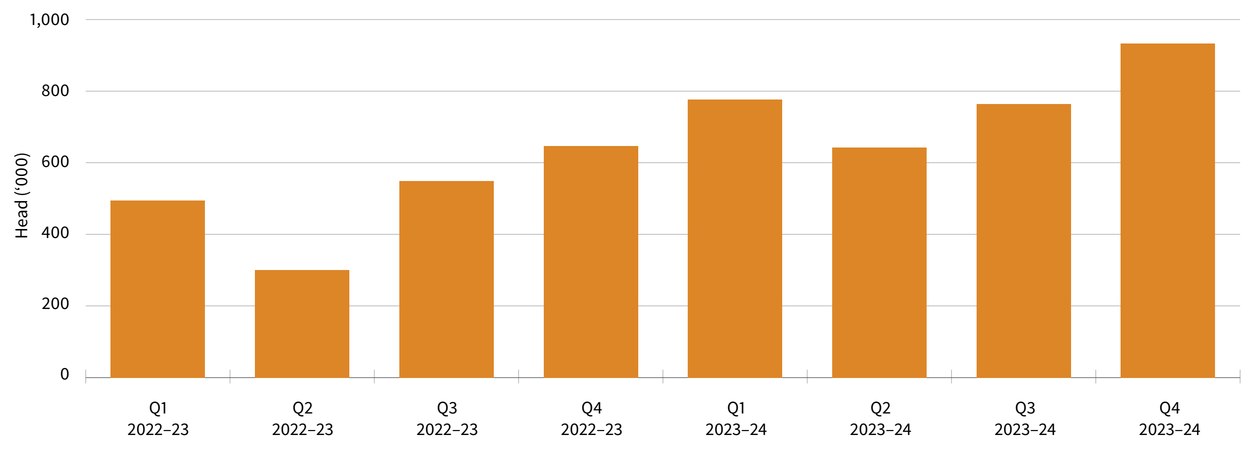
Western Australian abattoirs slaughtered 22,249 goats in 2023–24, a similar total to 2022–23 (**Table 3**). The number of goats processed over the previous five years has been reasonably stable, ranging from 16,895 to 29,495 head. However, the number of goats processed fluctuates seasonally, with quarterly totals in 2023–24 ranging from less than 1,000 to 11,263 (DAFF, 2024a). This variability is presumably due to the reliance on wild harvest, with the most throughput occurring during the warmer months.

**Figure 6:** Goats processed (2008–09 to 2023–24)




Source: DAFF, 2024a

**Figure 7:** Goats processed by FY quarter (2022–23 to 2023–24)




Source: DAFF, 2024a

# Price

The buoyant supply and international economic conditions kept pressure on export value and over-the-hook prices for goats. In 2023–24, the average over-the-hooks price dropped to 214c/kg cwt, a substantial fall from the 2022–23 average of 488 c/kg cwt. The price hit a low of 133 c/kg cwt in May 2024 but then slightly recovered to 163 c/kg cwt in June (MLA, 2024).

Goatmeat's export price has traditionally been positioned between mutton and lamb, but from early 2019 to the middle of 2022, it was consistently valued higher than lamb. At this time, the price of goatmeat, beef, lamb and mutton all experienced substantial declines. However, the proportional decline in the value of goatmeat was particularly significant, potentially due to its relatively high value before the downturn. The average quarterly export price peaked at over A$14/kg in the third quarter of 2021–22, a level some consumers and industry experts thought was unsustainable. From that peak, the price fell rapidly to between A$6/kg and A$7/kg by the second quarter of 2023–24 (S&P Global, 2024).

Image credit: G. Turnbull

# Exports

In 2023–24, Australia exported 42,383 tonnes of goatmeat to over 30 destinations worldwide (**Table 4**). The value of these exports reached $298 million, a 33% increase in the industry's export value from 2022–23 (**Figure 8**). However, for context, Australia earned $297 million from exports of just 21,521 tonnes of goatmeat in 2021–22 (DAFF, 2024b; S&P Global, 2024).

A resurgence in demand from the United States (US) underpinned the strong upturn in goatmeat exports. Additionally, there was substantial year-on-year growth in exports to South Korea (63%), Canada (118%) and Trinidad & Tobago (66%). Demand also increased in traditionally smaller and more volatile markets, such as China, Jamaica, Fiji and Indonesia (DAFF, 2024b).

From quarter three in 2022–23, exports to the US increased consistently for five quarters, rising from 2,558 tonnes to 7,935 tonnes (**Figure 9**). This sustained uptick in demand resulted in exports to the US nearly doubling compared to the previous year to 22,427 tonnes (DAFF, 2024b). The growth in demand from the US relieved industry observers who were looking for indicators that the market could absorb the increased production.

**Table 4:** Goatmeat exported (2023–24)

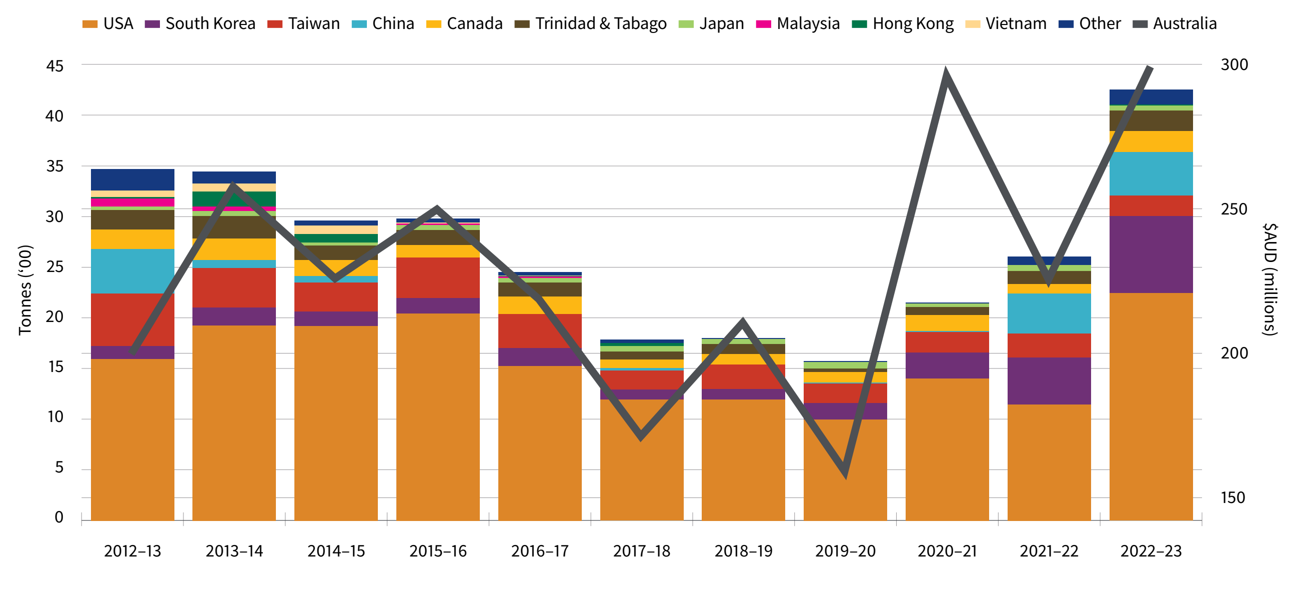
| Destination | Tonnes | % change (from 2022–23) |
|---|---|---|
| United States | 22,427 | 96 |
| South Korea | 7,538 | 63 |
| China | 4,334 | 9 |
| Canada | 2,085 | 118 |
| Taiwan | 1,990 | -16 |
| Trinidad and Tobago | 1,979 | 66 |
| Japan | 475 | -21 |
| Jamaica | 454 | 500 |
| Fiji | 429 | 92 |
| Indonesia | 253 | 109 |

Source: DAFF, 2024b

Meanwhile, goatmeat exports to South Korea have grown for the fifth consecutive year, with another 63% increase from 2023–24 to 2022–23. South Korea imported 7,538 tonnes of Australian goatmeat during this financial year, making this the highest volume ever traded into this expanding market (DAFF, 2024b).

China was the third-largest importer of Australian goatmeat for the second consecutive year. Imports grew 9% from 2022–23, reaching 4,334 tonnes. The drivers of this increased demand include the lower prices and 0% tariffs on goatmeat from January 2023 under the China-Australian Free Trade Agreement. However, quarterly consumption remains somewhat volatile (**Figure 10**), ranging from 523 tonnes in quarter four to 1,745 in quarter two (DAFF, 2024b).

**Figure 8:** Goatmeat exports (2012–13 to 2022–23)




Source: DAFF, 2024b; S&P Global, 2024

Exports to Canada and Trinidad & Tobago saw substantial increases compared to the previous year, reaching their highest level since 2014–15 (MLA/DAFF, 2024b). Both countries have been long-term, consistent importers of Australian goatmeat, and the easing prices encouraged greater demand (MLA, 2024b).

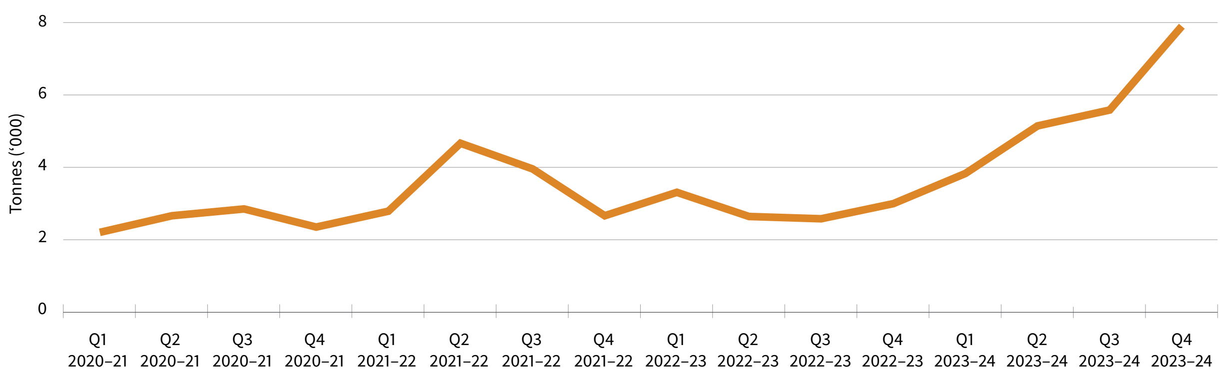
In 2023–24, Fiji, Jamaica and Indonesia imported their largest volume of Australian goatmeat since 2000–01, 2012–13 and 2014–15, respectively. This represents a significant increase in demand across these markets, which traditionally have been relatively low and highly variable importers of Australian goatmeat. While these countries have occasionally been among the top ten importers, they have sourced no goatmeat from Australia in other years (DAFF, 2024b).

Taiwan and Japan were the only major markets that imported less goatmeat in 2023–24 than in 2022–23. Although Taiwan has been a long-term and consistent importer of Australian goatmeat, its demand has not increased due to trade tariffs, domestic production, and lower consumption by younger generations (MLA, 2024b). While sales to Japan were down compared to the record-breaking peak in 2022–23, exports in 2023–24 were still the third largest volume of Australian goatmeat ever received (DAFF, 2024b).

In 2023–24, there were also 16,499 goats airfreighted live to international destinations that included Botswana (150 goats), China (4,778 goats), Indonesia (410 goats), Malaysia (9,380 goats), Papua New Guinea (30 goats), Philippines (166 goats), Sabah (1,575 goats) and the United Arab Emirates (10 goats) (DAFF, 2024c).

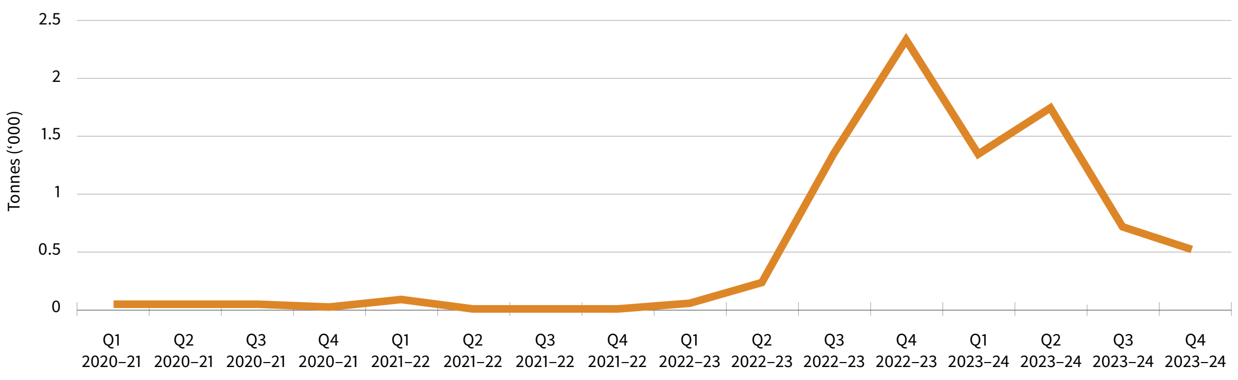
To learn more about goatmeat export market, visit **mla.com.au/goat-snapshot-23**

**Figure 9:** Goatmeat supplied to United States by FY quarter (2019–20 to 2023–24)




Source: DAFF, 2024b

**Figure 10:** Goatmeat supplied to China by FY quarter (2019–20 to 2023–24)




Source: DAFF, 2024b

# Forecasts

The National Forecasting Committee did not forecast supply for 2023–24, while Meat & Livestock Australia contracted the new project. However, the Committee met to discuss projected supply for 2024–25, forecasting that the industry will process 3.3 million goats this financial year.

The Committee agreed that there is a sufficient abundance of goats to supply this forecasted total. The 2024–25 forecast was more influenced by processing throughput than the industry's capacity to supply goats. When the Committee convened in September 2024, processors were handling around 60,000 to 70,000 goats per week. The Committee felt that these recent slaughter totals demonstrated that the sector can achieve the projected total, barring major external disruptors.

Turn-off processes, such as harvesting, mustering and trucking, will have to be highly efficient for the industry to deliver 3.3 million goats at the current price. The availability of services that support the supply chain, such as mustering contractors and livestock transporters, will be critical under these historically high levels of processing. This factor may be the most uncertain element in the industry in terms of reaching the projected target.

If the sector can process 3.3 million goats, producers will still face competition for kill space and extended wait times to book in over-the-hook consignments. However, this level of processing should enable them to have the vast majority of their saleable goats (over 10+ kg) slaughtered.

Seasonal conditions could disrupt supply, impacting the projected total. Extremely wet seasonal conditions may limit turn-off by hindering mustering and trucking, leading to a short-term price increase or leniency on minimum carcase weight. Conversely, dry seasonal conditions will increase demand for kill space as producers try to reduce stocking rates. However, significant disruption would require widespread and consistent wet or dry conditions across most production areas.

Despite some uncertainty, the Committee thought the unmanaged population and core breeding numbers would be relatively stable if the industry achieved the forecasted turn-off. Limited slaughter space, minimum carcase weight requirements, and low demand for underweight goats from other enterprises will make it challenging for producers to exit goatmeat production. As a result, the current conditions will likely prevent widespread herd reductions in response to the ongoing low price or a desire for enterprise change.

While the market outlook is continuously changing, and it is difficult to predict market demand and international economic conditions, current indicators suggest that markets can absorb the projected supply. The recent positive trends in the US market and the potential for further consistent growth into other growing and emerging markets support this position.

Image credit: T. Atkinson

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