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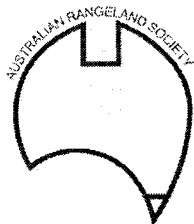
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*The Australian Rangeland Society*

## RANGELAND MEAT CO-OPERATIVE

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The Rangeland Meat Co-operative was formed in 1999, after a group of Gascoyne and Murchison Pastoralist met to discuss the merits of forming a co-operative marketing group for the sales of their animals.

This group now consists of 15 pastoral stations who have banded together to co-operatively market their animals. Through doing this they aim to improve the price they have been receiving for their animals.

Currently focusing on rangeland goats, the group aims to diversify into all rangeland meats including exotic meat/sheep breeds such as Damara and Dorper, along with standard lines of rangelands animals ie Sheep.

The inaugural directors of the co-operative, which was officially registered in March 2000, were Dudley Maslen, Mardathuna Station, David Steadman, Wooramel Station, Elaine Kempton, Winderie Station, Sandy McTaggart, Mt Narryer Station and Brian Wake, Hamelin Station.

The benefits of working as a co-operative are derived from a single entity moving enough product to become a substantial player in the market. This has lead to the group being able to attract a premium price for their product. This in turn is hoped to increase the profit margin of group members, and will encourage future growth and development of the industry. It is also believed that the close working relationship established by the members will improve the standard of husbandry within the industry as they learn from each other the best ways to turn off a quality product.

It is well recognised by the members that individual businesses will benefit from working as a team rather than as individuals.

The members work together to establish a monthly quota which is then put out to tender. The first tender of 2700 goats was called during November 2000, and was bid for by three tenders.

The levy paid by members on the sale of the goats helps to pay for the administration costs of the group.

As seen from the graph below, there is a noticeable relative price differential between the price received by co-operative members prior to the group's formation, and after the group formed and worked together to get a price premium for their goats.

One of the issues facing the goat industry is a lack of continuity of supply over the winter months. The existence of surface water means trapping is not possible. As such, few stations make sales during the winter months due to high mustering costs.

In the coming year, four stations will complete fencing plans to enable domestication off goats. This will bring the number of domesticated goats behind wire to approximately 20 000 on an ongoing basis. The benefit of this is the ability to sell in the winter season and maintain market dominance. It will also allow small goats previously of no commercial value to be put through a training process and retained on station until they reach a commercial weight.

Goats are able to be produced virtually chemically free in a rangelands system. This appeals to the new markets, which are looking for safe, chemical free product. One member of the cooperative is involved in a pilot program trialing an "integrated quality and environmental SQF 1000 system".

There are also future plans for development of a product suitable for the Capretto market and transporting of small goats to properties in the agricultural areas for finishing.

With the increasing demand for overseas markets to be supplied with quality product, the Rangeland Meat Co-operative group has a bright future.