



Feral goats are a pest in Taranaki and the Taranaki Regional Council promotes the voluntary control of them to reduce the threat to agriculture and the environment.

To hunt or kill feral goats, you must have the prior consent of the appropriate land owner.

FERAL GOAT HERDS IN TARANAKI

Goats were introduced to Taranaki in the early 1900s to control weeds and regenerating scrub following forest clearing and land development. Goats soon infiltrated the unfenced Egmont National Park and in 1927 official control operations began to reduce rapidly increasing numbers and the destructive impact on the Park's flora.

Large feral populations also quickly established and infiltrated scenic and conservation reserves in north and east Taranaki.

DESCRIPTION

Feral goats are non-domestic free-ranging goats that are not being farmed. They have a high reproduction rate and prosper in a wide range of habitats.

There are medium to high densities of feral goats in north and east Taranaki but numbers are much lower in and around Egmont National Park

They vary in size and colour. The adult male is larger than the female, weighing between 50 to 70 kg, and can stand almost 70 cm high at the shoulder.

Feral goats are active during the day. They are notoriously difficult to contain with fences and their escape from farmland to forested areas is an ongoing problem.

GOATS AND WEED CONTROL

Some farmers don't consider goats are a pest and still use them for controlling weeds. But this requires intensive management as goats are opportunist feeders and, unless confined by goat-proof

fencing, they will eat only the most attractive food available.

Uncontrolled feral goats will not provide effective weed control. Their natural behaviour of roaming and choosing a varied diet of what's available means that they are unlikely to keep any sustained pressure on weeds.

IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE

Feral goats do infrequently have some commercial value but the benefits are questionable as goats can seriously affect the health of farm stock.

Feral goats are therefore considered a pest by the Taranaki Regional Council and the voluntary control of feral goats is encouraged.

Goats carry most parasites and diseases common to sheep, and cross transmission between sheep and goats is likely in integrated grazing systems. Goats can carry serious livestock diseases such as yersiniosis, pneumonia, listeriosis, coccidiosis and Johns Disease. The common liver fluke can infect cattle, sheep and goats. Once infected, cattle develop a strong immunity to subsequent infection. But sheep and goats are highly susceptible to initial infection with liver fluke and are readily susceptible to re-infection. And liver fluke infections in goats are increasing.

A survey of feral goats in north Taranaki showed that large numbers carried body lice and 90% had signs of lungworm. Some were also infected with liver fluke and often had damaged livers with extensive fibrosis.

IMPACT ON ECOLOGICAL VALUES

Goats have had a major impact on New Zealand's indigenous forests, mainly because of their selective feeding habits. Goats can alter the character of the habitat by preventing regeneration of palatable species which are often the dominant plants.



Feral goats

Areas of dead trees, hectares in size, and a bare understorey were common in Egmont National Park over the past 75 years. In some areas sub-alpine scrub up to five metres high was destroyed within four years of goats moving in.

ANIMAL PEST MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

There is no rule requiring control of feral goats but their voluntary control is promoted.

SHOOTING TO CONTROL FERAL GOATS

Intensive shooting is the only effective method to control feral goats. A .222 or .223 rifle or any other centre fire cartridge is recommended.

Hunters using indicator dogs and a suppressed or silenced rifle have the greatest success. Indicator dogs are particularly successful in locating goats in forested areas.

A list of keen and trustworthy shooters is available from the Taranaki Regional Council for landowners wanting shooters to control feral goats.

You must have a permit to shoot on land administered by the Department of Conservation (contact the New Plymouth office).

On private land hunters must have the permission of the landowner. To build a good relationship with the landowner, you should:

- Hunt only in the area you have permission for.
- Avoid disturbing farm stock.
- Make sure you don't inconvenience the farmer (eg leave gates as you find them).
- Show you are a sensible, safe, reliable and trustworthy person.



Bare forest floor following heavy goat browse.



Forest recovery following years of intense goat control.

For further advice or information about pest animal management contact:

TARANAKI REGIONAL COUNCIL

Pest Animal Management Section

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