

GOATS FOR THE GODS – OR WHEN COVID AND THE GODS CLASH

South Africa

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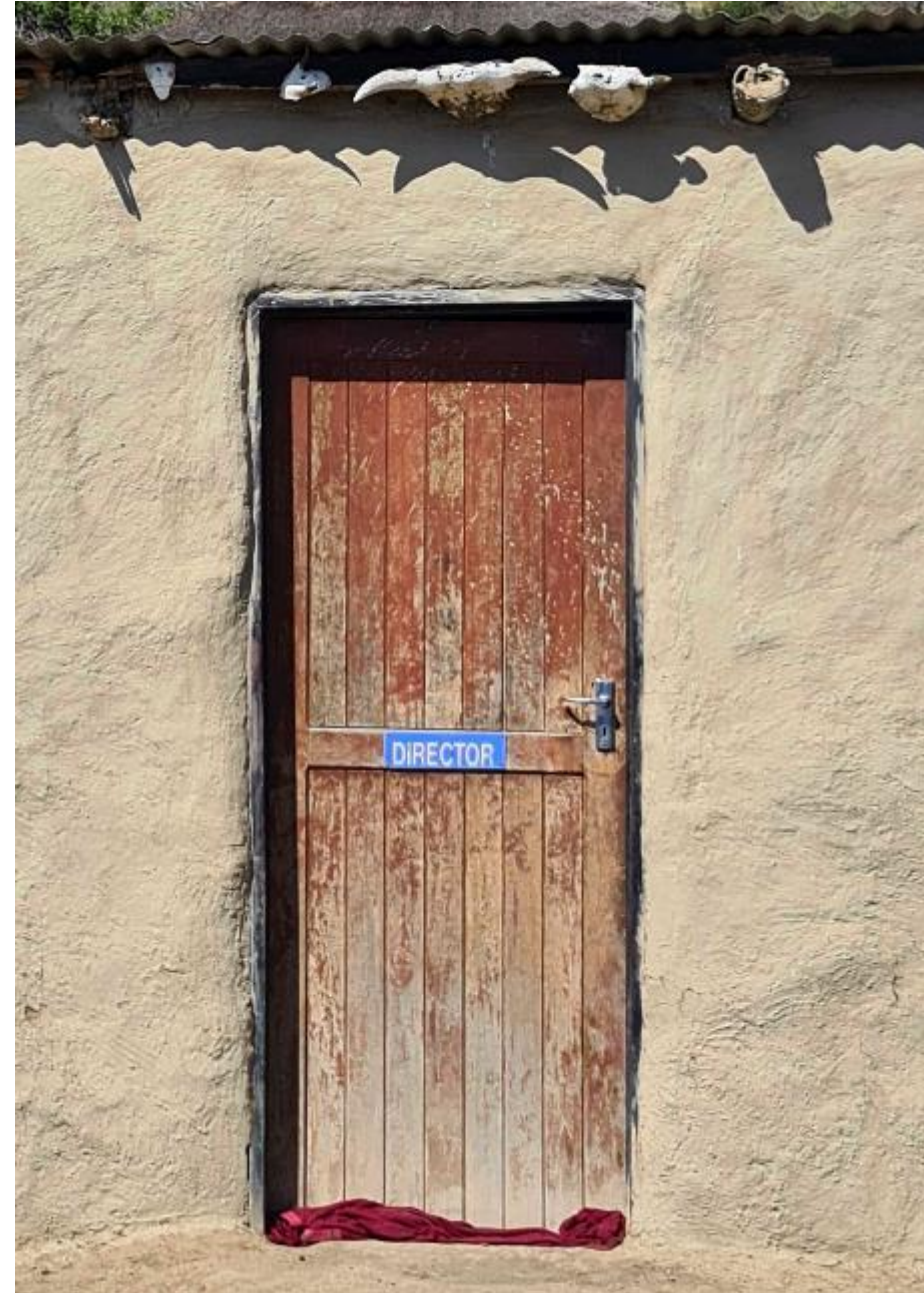
Goats of the World and World of Goats- Emerging from the Shadow of COVID-19

16 November 2021

International Goat Association Virtual Conference, Budapest Hungary

Overview

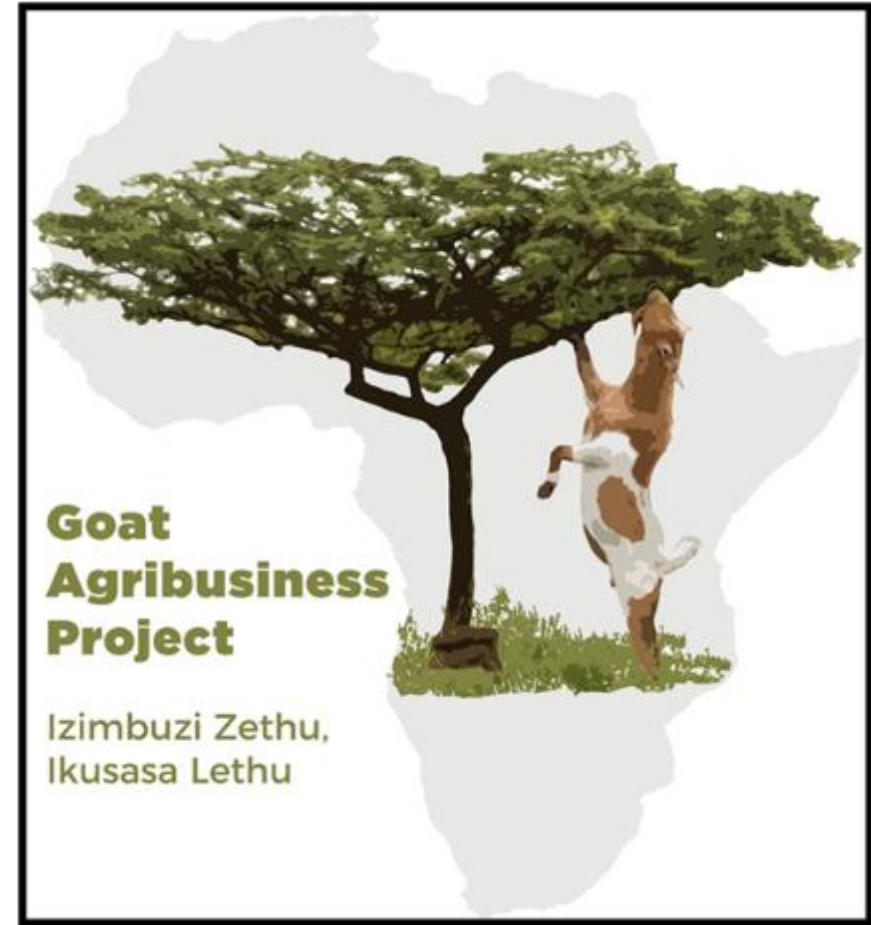
- Introduction to South Africa
- Breeds
- Current ownership and numbers
- The goat market
- Sales and pricing
- Covid impact on production
- Covid impact on demand
- Current shortfall and its effects
- The future



Goat Agribusiness Project- South Africa

- The South Africa **Goat Agribusiness Project (GAP)** is a project aimed at commercialising goats owned by African communal farmers in rural areas in South Africa.

www.gapkzn.co.za



South Africa

- Population of 60 million
- 100 million hectares of largely arid farming land
- 80 percent of land only suitable for livestock
- 40 000 (mainly white) farmers using 37 percent of the land
- The rest occupied by African smallholders
- Generally these are not recognised as farmers by the state so no support or extension system is in place



Boer goats- and other 'commercial breeds'

- Angoras with a population of approximately 832 000 goats producing 50 percent of the world's clip
- Although the Boer goat is considered the 'South African' goat there are only 60 000 registered Boer Goats in the country
- Both of these are also very limited in range due to susceptibility to tropical diseases
- Although there is demand there are not enough Boer goats to supply demand in South Africa



The rest of the goats

There are 3 eco-types of indigenous goats in South Africa - the Nguni type (*Mbuzi aka Indigenous veld goat*), Eastern Cape Xhosa Lob-ear, Northern Cape Speckled. The majority (80%) of these 'unimproved' goats are in African hands.



And a new species, almost...

The Tankwa goat, a feral goat found in the Tankwa Karoo National Park is in the process of being registered as a new breed at the South African Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (2018).



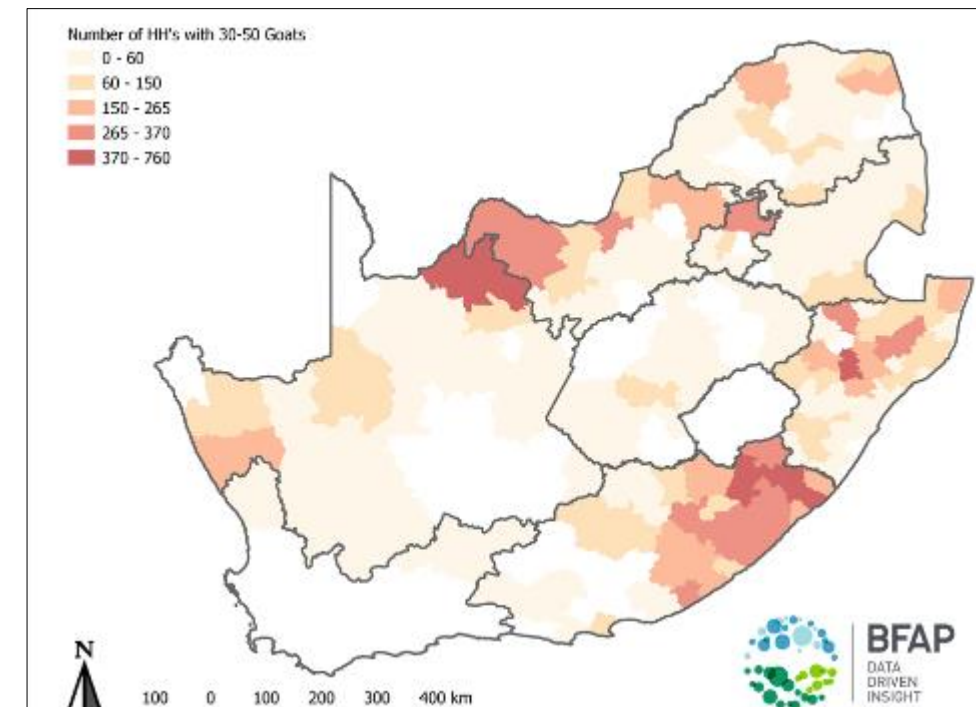
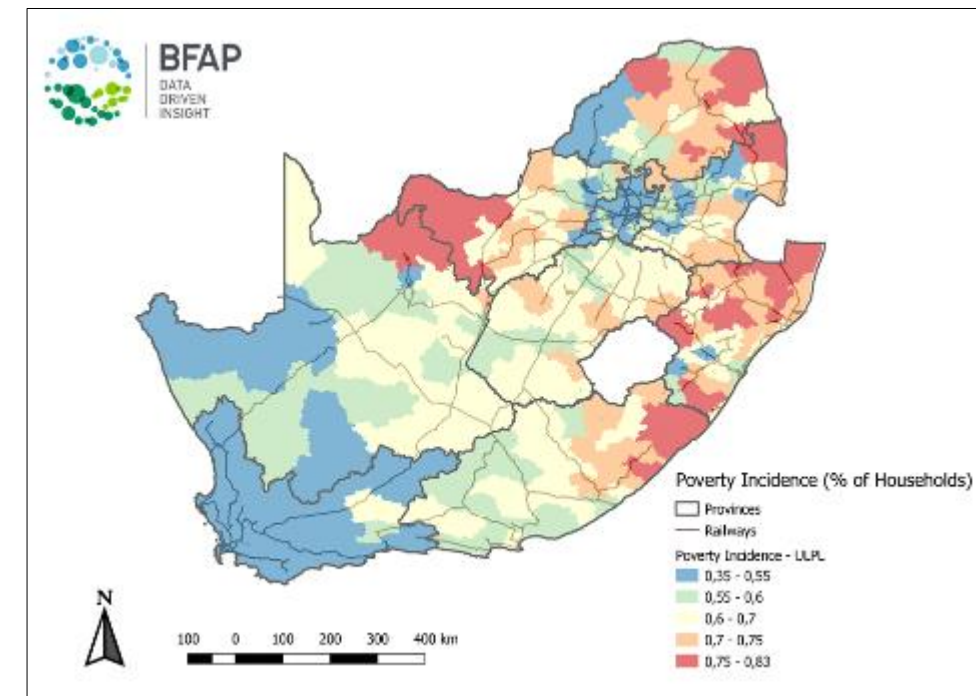
How many? Well we sort of know...

Conflicting statistics on goat numbers	
Directorate Agricultural Statistics, 2002	6 977 000
National Livestock Statistics: 2019	4 300 000
StatsSa 2016 (Statistics South Africa)	7 800 000
Latest Agric statistics 2021	5 100 000

Figures from Meissner et al., 2013		
Type	Numbers	Percentage
Dairy	21 000	0.3
Angora wool	1 000 000	14
Meat goats/ commercial stud stock	1 730 000	25
Communal	4 286 000	61
Totals	7 037 000	

Production and ownership

- Goats are seen as hardship animals
- Owned in small herds across the rural areas of the country
- Overlap of poverty (brown, red) top map and goat ownership bottom map
- They are free range in open landscapes
- Productivity is low from 60- 70% mortality in kids



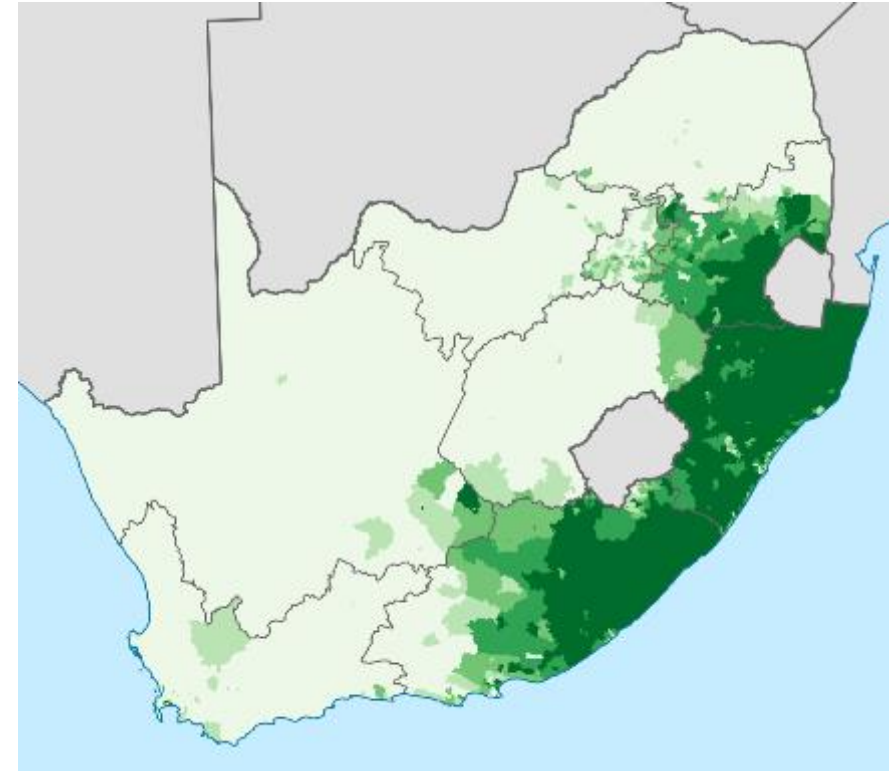
The invisible market

- More than 4 million goats a year are estimated to be 'consumed' by the South African market- it is a live goat market worth billions of Rands
- 1 512 goats are exported live and 1,2 tons of goat meat is exported
- 300 goats a year are slaughtered in abattoirs
- So where do 3.9 million goats a year go?



The country's goat market- communicating with the 'Gods' and ancestors

- The Nguni speaking people of the country practice an ancestral worship system with the slaughter of goats
- Goats are the main communication system with these ancestors
- Goats are the **only** animal said to “wake” the ancestors
- 20 million people are Nguni speakers (Zulus and Xhosas) and use goats for sacrifices to the ancestors
- Most of family life is built around the ancestors and these ceremonies



Nguni speaking areas of South Africa

The country's goat market

The graph below shows one province, KwaZulu Natal, with a Nguni population of 10 million, 2.2 million goats used in just 3 types of family ceremonies. There are up to 10 types of ceremonies involving goats.

Goat numbers for sacrifice in an average year for KwaZulu Natal, South Africa					
Event	Annual numbers	Percentage-Zulus	Estimated numbers for Zulus	Multiplier	Goats slaughtered annually
Deaths	117 000	81	94 000	8	752 000
Births	220 0000	81	178 000	7	1 246 000
Marriages	21 000	81	17 000	11	187 000
Total					2 185 000

Other markets

Other markets in the country are the Eastern Cape among the Xhosa people for ancestral communications and circumcision ceremonies

There is also a market for goats among the large Indian population both Hindu (Mariamman) and Muslim (*Eid* al-Adha) ceremonies



Sales and pricing

- These goats are bought from homes or on roadside markets in towns and villages in South Africa
- The prices are much higher as live animals than sold as meat
- The average price of a 9-month female is €85, which makes goat meat too costly for household consumption outside of sacrificial purposes (50% higher than beef comparatively).

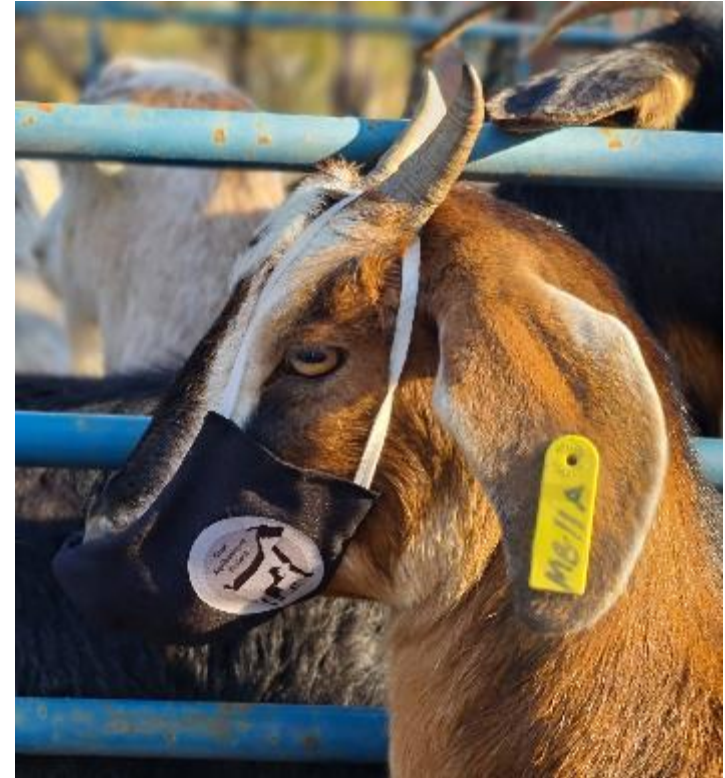


The ceremonial sacrifice and the taste for meat

- The whole goat is slaughtered and eaten by family and neighbours in ceremonial way where it is boiled with only salt – none of the goat is spiced, fried or roasted and it is not meant to be enjoyed
- The perception of goat meat in a restaurant or store is thus very negative in much of the country
- There are many other transactions and ceremonies where goats are necessary



And then Covid “happened”...



Effects of Covid on production

- Goats are a form of liquidity to buy household necessities such as food. And pay for education
- Social gatherings of more than 50 people are banned which has meant sacrificial ceremonies are awaiting restrictions to be eased
- Covid restrictions have meant most state officials have stayed at home so extension and vet programs have halted for the last two years, so no parasite controls
- 57% of farmers interviewed by GAP said their goat farming and selling had been severely affected by Covid

In the two years of Covid 2020 and 2021

- Farmer's markets and farmers transporting live animals were initially restricted because of Foot and Mouth Disease in parts of the country then **further** restricted by Covid lockdown
- In June 2021, civil unrest closed down much of the country and its supply chains with goat sales points looted and burned



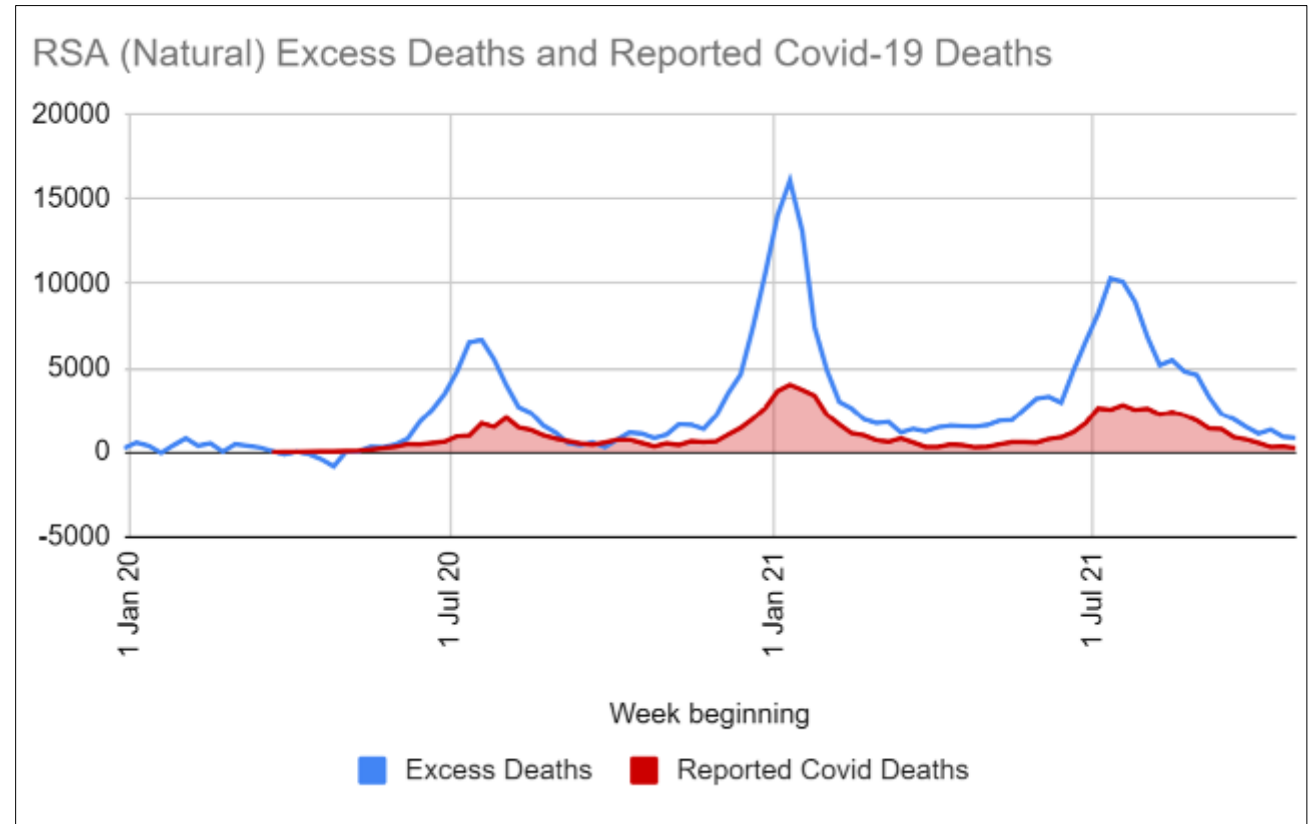
The effects of Covid on stock

- Borders have closed and neighbouring, Namibia, imports dropped to almost nothing – normally at least 150 000 goats per year



The Covid effect on demand

The parastatal entity, South African Medical Research Council, SAMRC have been publishing what's been called 'excess deaths' –those not reported as Covid deaths but probably caused by Covid.



The unique effect Covid deaths have on goat demand in South Africa

Goat numbers for sacrifice in 2 years of Covid for KwaZulu Natal, South Africa					
Event	Annual numbers	Percentage-Zulus	Estimated numbers for Zulus	Multiplier	Goats needed
Deaths	220 000	81	178 000	8	1 424 000
Births	440 000	81	356 000	7	2 492 000
Marriages	42 000	81	34 000	11	374 000
Covid deaths	14 722	81	12 000	8	95 700
Excess deaths	54 718	81	44 300	8	355 000
Total					4 740 000

Summary- So where we are with goat numbers?

- The 'normal' ceremonies have been halted meaning a build up in demand as lockdown eases
- The province is short of **450 000** goats needed from recorded and unrecorded Covid deaths in an already depleted market
- More than **300 000** that would normally come in across the borders have been locked out by border restrictions
- The overall effect on the goat industry prices have increased over 60% per goat at the last count and continues to increase by a reported 10% monthly
- Already the provinces goats are depleted and farmers speculators are driving 1000 kilometre round trips to try source goats

Summing Up- Pressure on the goat market and pent up demand

- For Farmers-
- Covid has meant loss of markets, inability to get medicines and feed from local shops, government extension support disappeared at the same time (free parasite control)
- Farmers loss access to buyers due to transport being cut off
- Restrictions- Covid banned auctions and public sales

Summing Up- Pressure on the goat market and pent up demand

- For buyers-
- Lack of stock leading to extremely high selling prices
- Or no stock
- Cancellation of ceremonies
- Having to drive long distances to find stock in other provinces



Summary- The short term future

- Limited goat supply and linked demand will mean high prices will extend into the next two years at least
- The backlog and increase of ceremonies will take years to catch up
- The bringing together of people for ceremonies causes its own small outbreaks as vaccination rates are low



Thank you

