

PERSPECTIVE

The 'secret' herbs IN KAROO LAMB

It would appear that consumers are not wrong when they say that mutton or lamb raised in feedlots or on pure grasslands is comparatively tasteless when compared to the delicacy from the Karoo. Research by the Agricultural Research

Council has established that fragrant indigenous semi-desert shrubs and herbs play a role in the unique taste of meat from the Karoo and Karoo-like regions, such as the southern Free State and the Kalahari. These include anchor karoo, kapok

bush, silver karoo, river ganna, and *perdebos*.

The study included a selected panel of judges that evaluated mutton from various parts of these regions. To familiarise the panel with the aroma and taste of various shrubs, they were served hot tea brewed

from the leaves and fine twigs from each of the plants before judging began. It is interesting that the panel could find no difference between Karoo Dorper and Karoo Merino meat.

Genuine Karoo lamb can be defined as animals originating from the

Karoo or that remained there for at least 12 months and animals that have free access to natural veld and may have additional access to farm feeds containing grain, silage or any other natural plant matter. – *Words and photo by Roelof Bezuidenhout*



FIRES

High transport costs hamper disaster relief in the Northern Cape

The delivery of animal feed to fire-stricken areas in the Northern Cape was restricted by exorbitant transport costs. This was according to Agri Kuruman vice-chairperson, Deon Hoon. Some 90 000ha were destroyed by wild fires in the Kuruman district since the beginning of November this year. "The problem is exacerbated by high feed prices too. Wheat stover presently costs between R600/t and R650/t. We get most of

the stover from Vaalharts and if one adds transport cost of R200/t, it becomes very expensive. We had offers of stover from Ceres, for instance, but the transport cost of R14 500 per load makes it impossible," he said.

Large parts of the Kuruman district still urgently need follow-up rain after widespread rain at the beginning of December. Hoon said although the R2,75 million made available by

government for the purchase and transport of feed was highly appreciated, it would not last forever. The funds were allocated for Kuruman, Koopmansfontein and Daniëlskuil. "There is virtually no reserve grazing available in the fire-stricken areas in Kuruman. All that can save us now is good rain," said Hoon.

Chairperson of the Koopmansfontein Farmers' Association, Bart Daffue

said that animal feed contractors were not prepared to transport the feed and claim the costs from the provincial government. "They are scared that they won't get paid by government. I therefore petition that state funds made available must be allocated to Agri Northern Cape and managed by us. In the meantime we use the funds in our own disaster relief fund to pay as far as possible." – *Annelie Coleman*