



Real people doing unreal things

## Cedric Stoch - Nguni cattle breeder

Hilary Prendini Toffoli  
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SA's decorative and hardy indigenous Nguni cattle are not only beginning to replace the zebra in curio shops, art galleries and décor studios as the country's preferred animal emblem, they're proving to be a good investment. But management of the herds is key, says Malmesbury Nguni breeder Cedric Stoch. "Otherwise you can fall flat on your face."

Stoch (57) is an Nguni pioneer. In 1987 he saw the potential of the Zulu cattlemen's indigenous livestock, until then regarded by many farmers as inferior to the European cattle brought in by the settlers, and started building up a herd on his farm near Malmesbury on the west coast. He has bred about 7 000 since then and is recognised by the SA Studbook Association as the country's largest breeder of registered Nguni, currently running 1300 on his farm. He farms for beef as well as breeding stock.

As one of the first senior inspectors appointed by the Nguni Breeders Society, he examines the registered herds of farmers who apply for annual inspection in order to comply with breed standards.

"No other cattle breed can match the Nguni for productivity," he says. "Irrespective of the area, the carrying capacity ratio, kilogram per hectare, will always be in favour of the Nguni.

" Among the most underestimated value-for- money animals are Nguni weaner calves. If you have the grazing available or are able to hire grazing, the following will happen in the west coast area, for example. You buy a 170kg calf at R13,50/kg, which equals about R2300. If you graze the animal for about 240 days it will gain roughly 130kg, making its final mass about 300kg. You sell it to a feedlot for R11,50/kg, and get about R3450. In eight months its value has increased by 50%."

With an honours degree in zoology from the University of Cape Town, Stoch was farming European cattle before he decided indigenous was the way to go, and put what he calls his "few pennies" into seven Ngunis. At that stage they were just beginning to be recognised for their adaptive abilities in Africa's harsh conditions —

the result of natural selection after several millennia of trekking southwards from North Africa through areas of drought and tick- borne diseases.

Concerned about the future of all of Africa's traditional cattle species, Stoch envisages UN-sponsored projects to build up satellite herds from embryos of endangered species. He believes they're the answer to Africa's problems as global warming heats up the continent .

"We must preserve the genetic diversity that is such a prominent feature of the African cattle. One could even look to exporting to the rest of Africa again."

He and his wife René hope one of their five children will carry on their life's work with the Nguni.

On May 23 they are holding an Nguni open day for the public. Inquiries: [cstoch@isales.co.za](mailto:cstoch@isales.co.za).

### **THE UNREALITY CHECK**

- \* SA's largest breeder of registered Ngunis**
- \* A pioneer in the days when Ngunis were regarded as an inferior breed**
- \* Ngunis give you a good return on your money and could be Africa's cattle of the future as the continent heats up**
- \* Nguni Open Day on his west coast farm in May**