

Lean meat gain on Nguni weaners

The Nguni Cattle Breeders' Society set out to establish why Nguni weaners are penalised by feedlot buyers, and to remedy the situation.

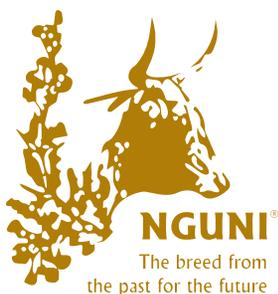
The Nguni produces a good low-cost carcass on the veld. But feedlots pay up to R2,00/kg liveweight less for Nguni weaners than for other breeds.

Feedlots classify weaners into early-, medium- and late-maturing breeds, according to how much lean meat they produce during the feedlot period. Some breeds are better suited to feedlotting, others to marketing directly off the veld.

FEEDLOTTERS DISCRIMINATE AGAINST EARLY-MATURING CATTLE

A group of Nguni producers experimented with finishing their weaners at the Douglas Beef Feedlot, paying feed and management costs but selling the finished weaners direct to the abattoir, and so adding value. The study determined the Nguni weaners' feedlot growth parameters. The producers contacted the feedlot association about the penalty and noted its response.

A newborn Nguni calf has very little fat. As it grows and matures, it gains weight, and fat



deposition accelerates. A finished animal with acceptable carcass fat can be slaughtered. The weaner price affects feedlot profitability, especially at a low feed margin. A feedlot needs a positive feed margin, which translates to high weight gain at low feed cost.

The ration must match the animal type and be the most cost-effective available. Early-maturing animals will deposit fat earlier and are marketed at a lower liveweight than later maturing types.

Nguni weaners can be feedlotted profitably, as these preliminary results show. More data will enable a more accurate comparison between the Nguni and other breeds.

CRITERIA FOR NGUNI FEEDLOT CALVES

- Healthy calves with high disease resistance.
- Calves with good feed conversion ratios.
- Calves that produce more meat.

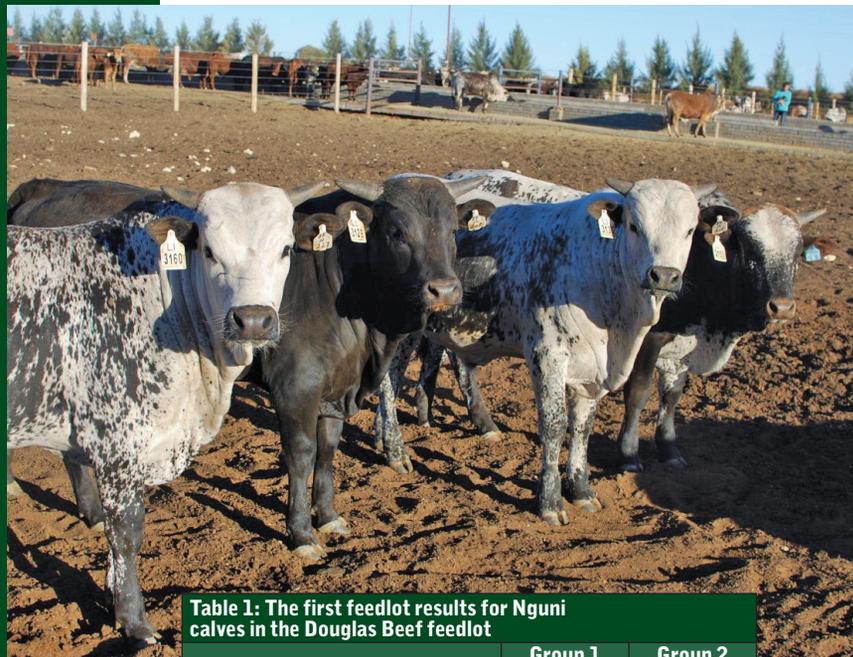


Table 1: The first feedlot results for Nguni calves in the Douglas Beef feedlot

	Group 1	Group 2
Number of animals in the group	8	10
Days in feedlot	68	67
Start-off mass	304kg	287kg
End mass	408kg	398kg
ADG	1,52kg	1,66kg

ABOVE: Nguni weaners in the feedlot. The Nguni descends from *Bos taurus* and has been in Africa for 8 000 years. COURTESY NGUNI CATTLE BREEDER'S SOCIETY

Table 2: Profit/Loss analysis for Nguni calves in the Douglas Beef feedlot

	Group 1	Group 2
Carcass weight	226kg	220kg
Dressing out	55,53%	55,35%
Purchase price	R12,00/kg	R12,00/kg
Total purchase price	R3 648,00	R3 444,00
Selling price	R26,80/kg	R25,80/kg
Total selling price	R6 056,80	R5 676,00
Gross margin	R2 409,00	R2 232,00
Feed and transport cost	R1 318,00	R1 299,50
Gross profit	R1 091,00	R932,50
Nett income	R15,59/kg	R15,25/kg

- The right type of animal sold to a feedlot at the right price and the right time.
- Identify the demand for meat.

BREEDING

Feedlotters prefer intermediate and late-maturing animals, discriminating against early maturing cattle. But not all cattlemen have the veld and production infrastructure to finish off their animals on their farm.

The Nguni is a small-framed breed and breeding it into a larger-framed feedlot type will sacrifice its good

inherent characteristics. It is the ideal dam line for economical meat production and cross-breeding, its smaller frame and lower weight enabling more animals per unit area. Smaller-framed calves gain fat quickly and fulfil the need for smaller cuts or carcasses. Lighter-framed carcasses tend to have a lower slaughter percentage. Lighter feedlot calves should be fed for longer at higher costs, which is less profitable.

- Phone the Nguni Cattle Breeder's Society on 051 448 7303 or visit www.ngunicattle.info.