

# The benefits of introducing Nguni cattle to a game farm

The hardy Nguni cattle breed allows the game ranger to address problems caused by heavy parasite and tick populations in an economical and environmentally friendly way.

Advances in game ranching and conservation practices have led to a situation where today, South Africa has more game than a century ago. Many game species are no longer threatened by extinction.

## NGUNI CATTLE ACT AS A 'MAGNET' FOR TICKS

At the same time, though, game-proof fences have led to a proliferation of parasite and tick populations. The negative impact of a heavy tick load on all game species, particularly on the breeding success of eland and the survival of sable antelope calves, leads to

significant economic losses. Apart from the expense of applying acaricides and constructing application infrastructure, control and management measures contribute significantly to the resistance of tick populations. In addition, game fences constrain game's natural migration patterns and lead to over-utilisation of desirable plant species, resulting in bush encroachment.

## THE NGUNI CAN HELP THE RANCHER

Nguni cattle, and oxen in particular, give the game rancher an opportunity to address these problems in an ecologically friendly manner, while also earning additional income.

The introduction of Nguni cattle to a game



ranching operation enhances range and forage management. The cattle act as a 'magnet' for ticks, and managing the movement patterns of the cattle by means of electric fencing enables more balanced range management.

It also makes non-selective grazing possible in areas where veld grass is inclined to become moribund. The rancher can dip if he feels that

the tick load on the cattle justifies this.

Implementing high-density grazing disturbs the soil surface, stimulating new plant growth. The hoof action of the Nguni cattle also leads to a remarkable improvement in the grass species composition of camps grazed by the cattle the previous season.

Oxen offer the added benefits of being simple to manage and easy to market in deteriorating conditions, such as a drought.

## HEALTHY, GRASS-FED BEEF

As a hardy indigenous beef cattle breed, with natural resistance to parasites and indigenous livestock diseases such as heartwater, the Nguni is ideally suited for production of grass-fed beef, free from added growth stimulants, hormones and systemic antibiotics.

Demand for this is growing amongst informed consumers. The many advantages of beef off the veld are well known, and game ranchers are uniquely positioned to exploit this developing market.

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**BELOW:** The indigenous Nguni breed has a natural resistance to parasites and indigenous livestock diseases such as heartwater. NGUNI CATTLE BREEDERS' SOCIETY



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