



NGUNI Beestelersgenootskap Cattle Breeder's Society

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Dear Nguni Breeder

This newsletter serves to inform members of planning and decisions taken at the recent council meeting of the Nguni Cattle Breeders Society.

A number of negative factors influencing beef production in South Africa were taken note of. These include the current drought, the poor economic climate and discrimination by certain feedlots against weaner calves from indigenous cattle breeds. This letter serves to assure all Nguni cattle breeders of Council's commitment to promote the Nguni as a dam line to commercial farmers for cross-breeding and secondly to assist with the development of models and strategies regarding the utilization of male Nguni calves and steers in the national beef production process.

A number of possibilities could be considered to achieve this goal. Under some circumstances this could be achieved by adjustments to herd composition (replacing unproductive cows with steers), acquiring additional land (renting, collective purchasing, government land, mine properties, etc). Joint ventures and projects could be considered for the growing out of steers. Ownership of animals could also be retained in "hotel" type feedlots (contract feeders), where owners of animals are billed for specific expenses incurred to prepare the animal for marketing. The Douglas feedlot serves as a good example in this regard and also serves as a model to be duplicated.

The Council meeting was also addressed by prof. Frikkie Naser from the University of the Free State presenting a talk on a new genomics project involving all cattle breeds. For the Nguni to provide sufficient data it is important that breeders do performance measurements. A technical committee has been constituted to determine guidelines for meaningful performance measurement that is applicable and beneficial to the Nguni breed's specific needs. The emphasis should be to promote features such as cow efficiency, fertility and hardiness within the breed. The Council is currently investigating, subsidizing members doing performance measurement, in order to encourage this practise. The first step will be to get, at least, cow and calf weights at weaning.

As many of you are aware, Elmarie du Preez has resigned and the office is temporarily under pressure. Sarah Crause has been appointed by Council to commence duty on the 3rd of March. Please be patient and render assistance to Yolanda, Louise and Maki during the interim.

Thank you to all breeders contributing positively to breed promotion by basic co-operation, keeping administration up to date, co-operating with office personnel and participation in their local club activities.

Be assured that Council is aware of the challenges the breed and its members are facing and is constantly working on creative solutions.

All the best for 2014.

Nguni Council

