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Contents

FOREWORD

Dear readers,

I am delighted to introduce the first edition of our new online magazine, which is set to be published on the 4th of March 2023. As we launch this exciting venture, I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude to the agricultural industry for their unwavering support over the past six years.

At MyFarm (The FarmSpace Online Magazine), our aim is not to be just another magazine, but rather an interactive experience that focuses on positive and current events in South-ern Africa. We want to provide valuable information for both the layman and experienced farmer, as well as industry leaders, and we invite everyone in the agricultural industry to get involved in our mission.

I would like to extend a special thanks to André Groenewald (Tjoopie) for making the resources available for this project, as well as to our dedicated team - especially Suzette Badenhorst and Suné Bartman - for their enthusiasm, work ethic, and commitment in bringing this vision to life. Thank you to Angeliqa for your support and guidance in the office whilst André and I are on the road; to Carissa and Lizelle for your continued hard work, and also to Michelle for supporting us all the way from Jan Kempdorp.

While I cannot name everyone in the team, I am grateful to all those who have worked tirelessly over the last two years to make our goals and dreams a reality, bit by bit. We are looking forward to making this online magazine available on the FarmSpace App, and I would like to express my gratitude to Christo Maree and his development team for making FarmSpace dreams come true.

We are fully aware that we are doing things differently, and we take pride in that fact. However, we also value feedback and encourage anyone with issues, problems, or sug-gestions to reach out to us. We want to make agricultural marketing and media great again, and with your support, we believe we can achieve this goal.Once again, I would like to express my gratitude to the agricultural industry for their support, and I look forward to giving back to everyone in and around FarmSpace for many years to come.

Kind regards,

Tinus Havinga

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“From the Outback to the Veld: The Rise of the Droughtmaster Cattle Breed”

The beautiful region of Southern Africa is well-known for its vast array of climatic conditions that often results in prolonged droughts or extended periods of heavy rains.

Author: Suné Bartman
(MSc Agric Production Physiology and Product Quality)

photo credit: Hurwitz farming

The beautiful region of Southern Africa is well-known for its vast array of climatic conditions that often results in prolonged droughts or extended periods of heavy rains. This range of extreme climatic differences presents a unique set of obstacles for agricultural activities, with only a small portion of the region receiving adequate rainfall for crop farming, and only a fraction of that being fertile enough to sustain crops - the rest is suitable only for grazing and extensive livestock production.

These tough conditions make cattle farming in Southern Africa a challenging affair, as traditional European breeds may have difficulty in adapting to such environments. In order to survive, thrive and be successful, farmers must use adapted, functionally efficient animals that calve annually, perform well, and easily reconceive. Given all these challenges and requirements, a breed like the Droughtmaster is perfectly suited for the advancement of cattle farming in Southern Africa.

The Droughtmaster breed was initially developed in Australia, a country with similar diverse and harsh conditions to those we experience here in the most Southern tip of Africa. The origin story of this exceptionally well adapted and functional breed is rather interesting and unique; in 1910, three Zebu bulls were taken from the Melbourne Zoo to the northern regions of Queensland, Australia.

The zoo curator at the time made the bulls available to a few of his cattle farmer friends, who bred these bulls to cows from their own European-type herds. Greatly impressed by the offspring of the Zebu bulls, these pioneers kept the crossbred calves and continued incorporating them into their breeding programs for the next several years. In 1926, a well-known farmer, known as Mr. Monty Atkinson, was left astonished after seeing one of these groups of progeny from the Zebu bulls. Despite the severe drought prevailing at that time, these animals were in top body condition whilst also maintaining sufficient reproductive rates.

Queensland farmers at the time were suffering, severely discouraged by the inabilities of the British breeds as they simply could not adapt and perform adequately in those harsh conditions. In particular, the lack of heat tolerance of the Bos Taurus breeds and their susceptibility to tick infestations sent the beef production industry on a steep downward trajectory, with little hope of recovery if nothing was to change.

It was for this reason that Mr. Atkinson was particularly excited when he saw the group of beautiful Zebu crosses and their ability to thrive under such conditions.

Here the plan was born to cross Bos Taurus and Bos Indicus animals and only select animals with the desired adaptability and fertility traits of both types. Mr. Atkinson brought in several Brahman bulls into the region and used them on Shorthorn and Shorthorn-Devon cross cows over the next few years, whilst other breeders used British breeds like the Hereford and Red Poll, but with similar breeding programs which included the Indicus bulls.

After years of selection and carefully planned breeding, a new breed emerged with an Indicus-Taurus ratio of about 50% each. These animals were smooth-coated, light to dark red in colour, medium-framed with traits that are functional-efficient, and met the current requirements of the commercial cattle farmer, and the related beef industry.

Like the Beefmaster in America and the Bonsmara in South Africa, the Droughtmaster emerged in Australia to face specific environmental challenges. Since its initial beginning, the Droughtmaster breed has developed into one of the most popular cattle breeds in the extensive parts of Australia today. Despite their popularity in their country of origin, little is known about the Droughtmaster and its successes outside of Australia.


photo credit: Considerata SA

The story of the Droughtmaster in South Africa begins with Johan van der Nest, a well-known auctioneer and cattleman from the Vryburg area. When he travelled to Australia in the early 1990s, he came across the well-adapted Droughtmaster cattle upon visiting Queensland. He was immediately fascinated by these red, uniform cattle with their somewhat differentiated look to some of the other breeds he had seen before, and it was not long before their abilities impressed and astounded him even further.

At that time, he was a Beefmaster farmer, however the adaptability and of this uniform, functional breed in the harsh Australian environment was immensely exciting. The masculinity of the bulls and the heavy calves with the cows – who had more than enough milk - was striking.

What Johan was particularly impressed by was its adaptability and fertility under the extensive, harsh conditions of Australia, as these conditions are often similar to the extensive environmental conditions of Southern Africa. Although the Droughtmaster and the Beefmaster came about in a similar way, one aspect that distinguished the Droughtmaster to him was its genetic dominance. You could immediately identify the Droughtmaster bulls calves in commercial herds.

Van der Nest was convinced that this breed could play a significant role in the South African beef cattle industry. Under the protection of the South African Beefmaster Breeders Association at the time, he obtained permission and imported several shipments of Droughtmaster bull semen, and in this way began to upgrade his Beefmaster herd to Droughtmasters. In 1999, permission was obtained from the former Registrar of Animal Improvement, Mr. Keith Ramsey, to import live animals from Australia.

That same year, 26 registered heifers and 2 bulls were imported to South Africa. When it came time for breeding and selecting the best animals, Johan placed a specific focus on the selection of medium-framed animals with good underlines. This carefully planned selection program led to the South African Droughtmaster as we know it today; a highly adapted composite cattle breed consisting of about three-eighths Indicus genetics and five-eighths Taurus genetics.

At present, there is a strong representation of Droughtmaster cattle genetics in South Africa, with experts increasingly being impressed by the breeds capabilities. The contribution of the Droughtmaster breed to the Beefmaster, Brangus and Simbra breeds in South Africa is also very evident in the herds where they have been infused.

By means of well-informed, strict selective breeding programmes over the years, cattle breeders have been able to develop a breed that is well adapted to survive in South-Africa's diverse climatic environments. The modern Droughtmaster cattle is renowned for its outstanding hardiness, adaptability and breeding efficiency, characteristics which make the breed an exceptionally valuable asset for both the Southern African beef producer and the Southern African beef industry.

This is the breed that could revolutionise how extensive cattle farming in Southern Africa is performed, and it is clear that the future of beef production in Southern Africa would heavily benefit from the continued success of the Droughtmaster breed. With its unique combination of hardiness, adaptability, functional efficiency and pre-potency, the Droughtmaster is increasingly becoming the breed of choice for farmers in the industry.

With the continual increase in demand for high-quality beef, the Droughtmaster is poised to play an increasingly important role in the Southern African beef industry, and it is clear that this breed has a bright future ahead. It is important for livestock producers and industry experts to continually invest and support the breed, so that we can continue to reap the benefits of the Droughtmasters unique characteristics in the years to come.

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From Then to Now:

The Unfaltering Legacy of the Reliable Nguni

CLICK TO WATCH

Author: Suné Bartman
(MSc Agric Production Physiology and Product Quality)

The success of Exsteen Ngunis begins like all good stories, a long time ago... thirty years ago, to be exact, in the Piketberg area in the Western Cape. Hannes Eksteen has always been a cattle farmer in heart and soul. His journey to a pedigree herd started with him as a commercial farmer, who had crossbred cattle with influence from almost every breed found in South Africa.

But the path to success was by no means an easy one. On his farm, Melkbosfontein, where winter rainfall averages 312mm per year, he could keep only one animal for every 5-7ha of land he owned, and supplementary feeding for these animals was non-negotiable. The area's extremely hot summers and frequent droughts were a constant challenge to the productivity and profitability of the farming, and for that reason a profitable enterprise was one that was never to be ignored.

Little did Hannes know that his little bargain-buy in 1992, a herd of Nguni cows he bought for speculation, would set the wheel in motion for an unplanned herd that would exceed all expectations in later years. The herd was purchased with the intention of simply fattening them up and selling them for a profit.

However, the plan was abandoned when Hannes realized that the entire herd was pregnant, after which the beautiful calves and good mothering abilities of the cows led him to decide to keep them in his herd. Deeply impressed by the abilities of these Nguni cows, Hannes went on to buy a few Nguni bulls as well as old cows between 16 and 18 years old from good herds. The cows went on to each deliver two more calves for him and grow well.

Captivated by the breed's potential, Hannes selected a herd of bush cows from Pietersburg that were either pregnant or had calves on the ground to supplement his own herd. Like any good breeder, he did not fail in aquiring an excellent bull, and purchased purebred Swazi Nguni bulls from Ben Fyver. The Swazi Nguni is one of many Nguni ecotypes, each with its own strengths and characteristics, which leads to a great genetic variation in the breed.

These bulls were then used on all the cows already in the herd, and after a very severe drought in 2004, Hannes was able to reap the good fruits of this decision. The drought resistance, fertility, and performance of this breed despite the actual poor conditions of that year finally convinced him to get rid of all his other cows and stick with the Nguni from then on.

That same year, he imported Sanga Ngunis, another Nguni ecotype, from Namibia. Omtjene Sanga Ngunis, Sandveld Sangas, and Caprivi Sangas were imported and kept pure until 2006. Afterward, Hannes bred Swazi bulls with Sanga cows, which resulted in a beautiful bunch of calves added to his growing herd. Later that year, the Nguni Breeders' Society made the decision to bring commercial animals as appendices A and register them as stud animals, provided that two senior inspectors inspect the animal through strict inspection, and both find that all breed standards are met and that the animal is stud quality.

Until 2006, the Exsteen farm was still only commercial, although much effort was put to maintain the management and record-keeping of the animals in the same fashion as that of a stud herd. However, after 140 of his animals were approved and given stud status, Exsteen Nguni Stud was born.

On this herd, Hannes Eksteen and his son, Lochner Eksteen, continued to build by investing in good bull genetics and applying purposeful line breeding to achieve hereditary dominance on desired traits. Their main focus point was, is, and always will be fertility, growth capabilities, and milk production, and therefore, the selection criteria in this flock are very strict.

For a heifer to remain in the Exsteen Nguni herd, she must be placed with the bull between the ages of 12 and 15 months and conceive; any heifer that does not have a calf by 24 months of age is simply slaughtered. No exceptions are made for climatic conditions, drought, or diseases. Of those heifers that conceive between 12 and

These characteristics of a cow play a cardinal role in her reproductive abilities. Furthermore, a cow must show good depth in the hindquarters with a low udder attachment without it being a bag udder.

15 months, only the first 55% are retained to potentially return to the herd, while the other 45% are sold at production auctions to commercial farmers to ensure their excellent quality to buyers. Of those 55% retained, only those that are 36 months old and standing with a second calf are considered for the herd, provided they pass further selection criteria that de-termine whether the cow is phenotypically functional.

A cow must have a thin and fine, feminine neck and face, and a nice slope towards the back. One of the most important phenotypic characteristics that the Exsteen family looks for in a cow is the ratio between the length of the rump, with a slope of 12% or more, and the width between the sitting bones.

Finally, even then, no cow is guaranteed to stay in the herd and is measured year after year by her calves' performance. Cows that have calved more than 5 times and show less than 35% herd retention in offspring are simply sold if their next calf is not kept for personal use.

The selection for bulls to be part of the exceptional herd is just as strict; bull calves are only chosen from the first 25% of arriving calves. In addition, he must come from a cow with extreme fertility and very good milk production, and the bull calf must wean over 50% of his mother's body weight. After that, the bulls, like the cows, undergo a phe-notypic inspection to determine the top 8% of bulls for that season.

It is crucial that a bull displays a strong broad mouth, good width between the eyes with deep, protective eye sockets, and a very mas-culine head with good width between the horn attachments. From above, the shoulder should protrude, with good width between the shoulder blades where it attaches to the back - this is the one phe-notypic trait of a bull that puts everything in place.

Bulls must also have a strong back with a good eye muscle, but the topline doesn't have to be entirely flat. Non-negotiable is a beautiful rump with a slope of 12.5% or more, with a long and low tail attachment, as well as good jumping ability from the rib. For bulls to be selected, they must also have an average scrotum circumference of 35cm or more. There must be some visible buttocks on the bull, and he must not pull up too much in the flanks but must be wedge-shaped and heavier in the forelimb.

Those top 8% of bulls are then subjected to phase D growth tests, after which the results of those tests are used to form contemporary groups and compare bulls with their similarities. After the growth test, at 12 months, 35% of the selected bull calves that did not grow phenotypically and/or as desired, or showed poor weight gains, are summarily slaughtered.

At 18 months, the remaining bulls are subjected to a stringent semen test, after which the top 5% are selected and retained

Important to remember when it comes to breeding is the words of Lochner Eksteen:

"There is no such thing as a perfect or best bull, but there is a perfect and best bull for your circumstances and needs. It is extremely important to apply bull selection based on the needs of your cow herd. Identify your herd's shortcomings and acquire a bull that can correct the problem."

for herd improvement, while the others are sold to commercial farmers at a production auction.

As part of the breeding policy, it was decided to use variation in bulls in combinations. First-generation bulls must be late-maturing, large bulls with high growth potential. For the second generation, a flat, broad, and long bull is used to bring the calves back to a medium frame. For those calves, the third generation, a medium to large frame bull that is well-balanced and comes from a strong inherited milk and fertility line is used, after which the process starts again.

Over the years, this combination has produced the best bulls and cows. For the breeding season, cows are divided into approximately 14 herds ranging from 35 cows to 110 cows, and single bull matings are done. Only cows that are 15 years or older are artificially inseminated with seed from good bulls that are no longer alive or with seed from current bulls for targeted

corrective matings. Older cows have already been proven by the system and have successfully weaned 14 or more calves, making the chance of getting a desired calf from such breeding almost a given. However, AI (artificial insemination) calves are held to the same standards as other calves and do not benefit from their AI origin.

The Exsteen Nguni herd welcomes calves from between 11 and 24 different bulls each year. Larger herds are mated with b ulls whose daughters have already been bred in a desirable way and have reproduced well in the herd. Unproven bulls are paired with smaller herds and will only be phased out when their daughters pass the test. Each year, the bulls with the most daughters that did not conceive are sent to slaughter.

Breeding cattle requires much more than just increasing your herd's numbers; through breeding, the farmer achieves deliberate and noticeable progress in the herd through planned matings. In the Exsteen herd, we evaluate weaned calves annually to determine whether the bull that would likely be the best match for a certain cow is indeed the best to mate with her. It is also important to see whether a weaker calf is the cause of a cow that produces poorly or whether it is the bull that does not complement her. You determine this by comparing the cow's production year after year.

The Eksteens aim to breed their own bulls whenever possible, but will purchase bulls that meet their standards, have been tested, and fit their reference framework. This all depends on the availability of animals. Purchased bulls will initially have smaller herds until their offspring prove themselves. The Nguni cattle breed has consistently proven itself as a high-performing and resilient breed. After the Eksteens replaced their crossbreed cows with Ngunis, the carrying capacity of the farm increased from 7ha/LLU to 1ha/LLU, with minimal or no supplementation, consisting only of corn straw and protein lick if necessary.

Even in their driest year between 2003 and 2004, the cows had a 90% conception rate simply by grazing the field. Despite an

average rainfall of only 175mm during the growing season from 2015 until now, there is no observed decrease in fertility among the Nguni cows, and calves are not weaning any lighter. Exsteen Ngunis have also received numerous awards and prizes in addition to their excellent performances.

In 2021 and again in 2022, they were one of only 10 herds of all breeds nationwide nominated for the "SA Studbook Platinum Award". In the past six years, they have won the "SA Studbook Platinum Award" for best cow of the year five times, as well as the LNR's "Cow of the Year" award four times. They are also one of the finalists for the LNR's herd of the year competition, in which only 10 herds nationwide qualify. With this winning recipe, the outlook for Exsteen Ngunis is promising and the future is wide open; they were able to learn from their mistakes over the years and improve each time to create an animal that performs ideally in given circumstances.

"You make a huge mistake if you only look at what consumers want and chase popularity curves, and I learned that the hard way. You are your own single biggest consumer and client, so you must breed an animal that will produce and reproduce the best for you in your unique circumstances"

- Lochner Eksteen.

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CLICK TO WATCH

Author: Suné Bartman
(MSc Agric Production Physiology and Product Quality)

photo credit: Hurwitz farming

Words that are echoed by how well the Boran has performed at various competitions and in several studies held over the last few years. Thanks to their remarkable performance in these competitions and during the various studies, the Boran has attained great respect and interest.

This is due to its ability to produce high quality meat with low maintenance needs whilst greatly withstanding the harsh conditions of the African continent.

Thirty-six cull animals were used in a study done in 2019 to determine the economic efficiency of the Boran breed, and to prove that these animals are ideal for feedlot conditions. Despite their older age and weight at finish – which was due to a prolonged period on the veld - the results obtained were pleasantly surprising.

Even at an older age, the majority of carcasses were classified as A and AB class carcasses, with only a minor percentage classified as B class carcasses. Average Daily Gains (ADG's) and Feed Conversion Ratios (FCR's) were very good, despite not receiving any growth promotors for the duration in the feedlot. During the feeding time, no morbidities or mortalities occurred and there was no need for the administration of any medications, which really testified to the hardiness and toughness of the breed.

The majority of the Boran cattle used in this study also had favourable fat distribution; 89% of carcasses were classified as a either

photo credit: Hurwitz farming

a grade 2 or 3 carcass, despite them being older and heavier than the average slaughter cattle. Overfat carcasses are unfavourable and can be a sign of poor fertility and inefficiency in cattle, therefore the lower range of fat levels on these animals – who were older and thus expected to be fatter - was quite encouraging and promising.
In 2020, the Boran performed once again after it formed part of the University of Pretoria's Feedlot challenge, along with various other breeds of cattle.

Despite the Foot-and-mouth disease outbreak at the time, the Boran breed attained excellent feedlot and carcass results, ultimately ending second overall, and first in the 500-525kg live mass category.

In December of 2021, the Boran Breed Society of South Africa participated in a slaughter competition, where animals are taken directly from the farm to the abattoir for slaughter, and the best carcasses are selected as winners. Once again, the Boran excelled and won the interbreed classes - for the second time since the existence of this competition.

The carcasses of the cattle used in this competition showed excellence in all the carcass traits, including carcass conformation and fat distribution. The muscling of the Boran is one of the characters that really makes this breed shine, even when grown out on the veld.

These achievements just further attest to the likely advantages of farming with Borans and making use of their unique genetics in crossbreeding programs. Efficient conversion of feed to muscle - even low-quality roughage - combined with the early-maturing and highly resistant traits of this breed make this a uniquely qualified breed to use for hybrid vigour good performance, whether in the feedlot, or on the veld.

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The Dormer Difference

In South-Africa, the demand for lamb and mutton exceeds 190 000 tonnes per year, most of which is produced by the roughly 8000 commercial sheep farmers throughout the country.

Even though sheep farmers are found in all nine provinces, the majority are concentrated in the more arid regions of South Africa such as the Karoo and parts of the Western Cape.These semi-desert areas often fall in winter rainfall regions, resulting in harsh production conditions with many challenges. These challenges served as the basis for the development of the Dormer sheep; a breed with the potential to produce slaughter lambs unlike any other.

Author: Suné Bartman
(MSc Agric Production Physiology and Product Quality)

The first sale of Dormer rams was held in 1947 at Elsenburg, the research station where this remarkable breed was developed over a period of roughly ten years. Scientists from the Elsenburg research station were determined to develop a breed particularly well adapted to the harsh conditions of the cold and wet winter rainfall areas of South Africa, without having to compromise on their ability to produce meat rapidly and economically. As such, they conducted a series of extensive slaughter-lamb experiments to determine the best existing breeds that would achieve these aims and objectives.

In the beginning stages of these experiments, Merino ewes were crossed with a variety of rams to determine which crosses resulted in the desired characteristics. Later on, the larger German Merino was used on the Merino ewes to improve their mutton configuration and increase the size of the progeny, without changing the merino's wool characteristics.

Merinos were decided on due to their high fertility and fecundity, good milk production and relatively long breeding seasons. These crossbred Merino ewes were then mated with rams of different breeds, including the Dorset Horn rams – these rams shared the same fertility qualities the Merino ewes showed, whilst also having a fairly long breeding season. Because of the risky local market of the time, lambs from these crossings would have had to be able to compete with slaughter lambs from Australia and New Zealand when exported to the overseas market, and so breeding rams were imported from Australia and England.

This consideration was taken very seriously when the Dormer was still in its development stage, and after more that 6000 lamb carcasses were exported to the Smithfield market in England as experimental consignments, it was confirmed that the best slaughter lambs were offspring of the Dorset Horn rams.

The conclusion was made that lambs from the Merino ewes, when crossed with Dorset Horn rams, showed the most remarkable performance with regards to live mass gain and carcass quality, whilst also being the only cross to produce satisfactory lambing percentages in autumn. In the Western Cape, this trait is utterly important as winter pastures are primarily used to produce slaughter lambs.

In addition to this, winter rainfall regions pose a large risk of infection with Muellerius capilaris, a lung parasite.
This parasite resulted in abnormally high mortality rates under mature Dorset horn sheep but seemed to have no effect on the mortality rates of the SA Mutton Merino produced under the same conditions. The high resistance of the SA Mutton Merino to this parasite, combined with the excellent mutton qualities and growth rate of the Dorset Horn resulted in the ideal slaughter lamb for the winter rainfall area.

Today, the Dormer is a breed known for its high fertility, excellent mothering abilities, ease of lambing and long breeding season – making this one of the most efficient mutton breeds in the country, especially under extensive conditions in the winter rainfall regions.

To start out the new breed, it was crucial that good breeding material that showed no signs or symptoms of the lung infection would be utilised, therefore 10 Dorset Horn rams were imported from studs in Australia. After strict inspections, only four of these were selected for eventual use in the Elsenburg research flock. Apart from the Elsenburg flock, private farmers also went on to breed Dormers and participated in the development of the breed.

Today, the Dormer is a breed known for its high fertility, excellent mothering abilities, ease of lambing and long breeding season – making this one of the most efficient mutton breeds in the country, especially under extensive conditions in the winter rainfall regions.

Additionally, the lambing percentage of this breed is between 120 and 150%, depending on specific conditions and management practices. In terms of production qualities, the Dormer can also boast with high slaughter percentages and early maturation, as well as exceptionally high average daily gains.

These qualities also make the breed particularly well suited to the feedlot enterprise. Compulsory performance testing combined with the implementation of breed standards has led to dramatic improvement of the breed over the last decade.

Many sheep farmers believe that the Dormer is the answer for the lamb and mutton industry in South Africa, and with the ever-increasing demand farmers have for this breed, the high quality and high value of the Dormer is self-evident.

dormer

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The Dual-Purpose Sheep Breed Taking South Africa by Storm

The Ile de France sheep plays a significant role in providing the South African market with quality lamb

Author: Suné Bartman
(MSc Agric Production Physiology and Product Quality)

The Ile-de-France breed of sheep, as the name states, is a French breed of domestic sheep that was first developed at a veterinary college in the early 1830s in the Île-de-France region of France near Paris. Crosses of Rambouillet, Dishley Leicester, and later the Mauchamp Merino sheep were used in the process of development, and therefore the breed was originally known as the Dishley Merino sheep.

After its development, it quickly became one of the most popular sheep breeds in France, and today it is highly regarded throughout the sheep industry globally. It is widely distributed in countries such as Australia, South Africa, Europe and the Americas, and is considered one of the top sheep breeds for meat production.

Although this breed is primarily raised for meat and wool production, they are also classified as dairy sheep in the United States, and their milk can be used for the feeding of lambs, for human consumption, and even for cheese production

The arrival of the Ile de France sheep in South Africa can be traced back to 1903, when Madam Arnaud Ginchard sent a number of these sheep from the well-known breeder, Delacour from Gouzangrez, as a gift to the farming community of the time. Little is known about the movement of the imported sheep after their arrival at Table Bay in March of 1903, but a few years later, in the 1930s, a great interest in the breeding of slaughter lambs for export arose in South Africa.

This resulted in crossbreeding programs that led to the development of breeds such as the Dorper, Dormer, and Dohne Merino – much like that of the Ile De France 100 years before. Shortly after WWII, a few Ile De France rams were imported and used with great success on Merino ewes, the offspring of whom were sent to the Research Institution in Pretoria as a means of further researching the performance

of these animals by measurement of the key economical traits. These animals showed exceptional performance in lambing percentage, milk production, survival potential, adaption to unfavourable climatic conditions and duration of the breeding season. Unfortunately, due to the ongoing war at the time, no further imports were possible and the Ile de France breed would not be seen again in South Africa for the next 30 years.

It was only in the early 1970s when this breed would once again come into the lime light and be imported to South Africa for both research and commercial purposes. Researchers found the breed to be quite alert, yet docile, making it extremely easy to handle and care for. Additionally, they were found to be suited to a variety of climates, thriving in both hot and cold areas. The lambs produced by the Ile-de-France breed also showed fast growth and good carcass quality, with lean, succulent, and tasty meat.

They also observed that these animals produce a fine quality wool that would be well suited to produce knitted garments, clothing, blankets, and more. Upon realizing the potential of this breed and the possibilities of using it for commercial production of mutton and wool in South Africa, the Ile de France Breeder's Society was established in 1980.

Today, more than a century later, continuous and selective breeding has resulted in a breed prized for their large, meaty bodies

and their pure white fleece. Their lambs are characterized by their fast growth rate and a high-quality carcasses that are lean, juicy, and exceptionally flavourful. The meat retains its distinctive lamb taste even as the sheep matures, with the meat displaying a delicate texture and attractive colour.

The Ile de France sheep breed also boasts a remarkable milk yield of between 180 to 495 litres of milk per lactation period, making it possible to raise twins and even triplets without any difficulties. This, combined with their exceptional mothering abilities, results in a strong bond between the ewes and their lambs.

The Ile de France ram, as a terminal sire, is highly sought after in the South African sheep industry due to its well-formed physique, developed muscles, and rapid growth rate. These traits are passed down to its offspring and contribute to the production of top-quality slaughter lambs for the market. As mentioned before, the breed is also renowned for its high fertility, abundant milk production, and remarkable maternal skills, making cross-bred females particularly sought after.

The Ile de France sheep plays a significant role in providing the South African market with quality lamb and is an overall testament to the importance of breeding for quality in the livestock industry, with the continued success of this breed in South Africa showcasing the industry's dedication to delivering top-quality products to breeders and consumers alike.

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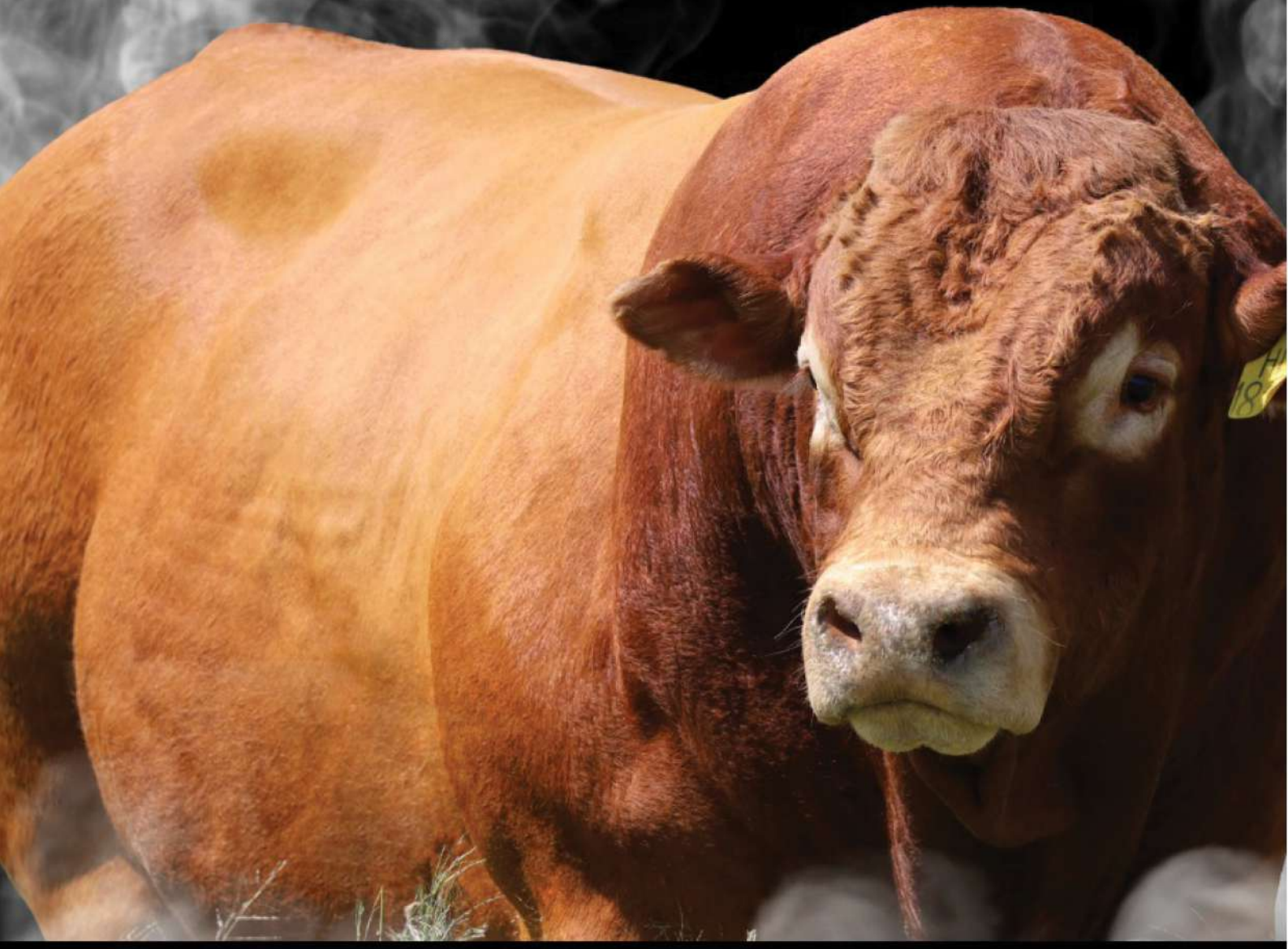

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Why the Limousin is a Commercial Breeder's Dream.

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Author: Suné Bartman
(MSc Agric Production Physiology and Product Quality)

Once upon a time - long before the advent of modern civilization, in the heart of France's Limousin region - there lived a tribe of people who were gifted in capturing the beauty of nature in their rock engravings. Deep in the caves of Lasceaux, these tribesmen paid homage to the majestic beasts that roamed their lands and provided food for their families, stunningly capturing their sturdy bodies, alert eyes, and proud stance in a carefully carved image of hard rock. Fast forward 20,000 years, and an extraordinary discovery was made; the beasts engraved in the caves of Lasceaux in France remarkably resembled the present-day Limousin cattle - a testament to the history and importance of the breed as we know it today. At present, the modern Limousin can be found in more than 70 countries worldwide, including South Africa.

From those early depictions, the breed has evolved and adapted to changing environments through breeding and selection, but it has always maintained its characteristic traits of strength, efficiency, and adaptability. The region of their origin was known for its acidic, weakly mineralised granite and large variations in temperature, leading to the development of a hardy breed with an unusually thin but solid bone.

Although an average-sized animal, its eyes sparkled with life, and its body was well-moulded, a testament to its hardiness that did not go unnoticed by the people of the Limousin region, who soon realized the worth of these golden red cattle with their unique characteristics. It was because of this that the Limousin Herd book was created in 1886, sending a message of uniformity to breeders all across the land.

By 1914, over 5000 Limousin cattle had already been registered in France and as time passed, breeders began to crossbreed the Limousin with the Agenais – resulting in the production of high-quality beef cattle that would later become a prized breed all across the world.

In the year 1974, the first Limousin cattle set foot on the soil of South Africa. The popularity of these sturdy creatures – with their beautiful red coats, bright eyes and strong physique - has grown immensely since they were first imported to South Africa 1974.

In the year 1974, the first Limousin cattle set foot on the soil of South Africa.

Nearly 10 years later, in 1986, the Limousin Cattle Breeders' Society of South Africa was established, giving the breeders a platform to come together and share their knowledge and love for these creatures with one another. Since then, the society grew stronger and more independent, with the number of breeders having grown from a mere 7 to over 100 today.

During this time and with each passing year, more and more Limousin cattle were imported, and their numbers swelled to over 11,000 registered cattle. In 1996, the Limousin Cattle Breeders' Society of South Africa became an entity that operated independently, owning its own office in Bloemfontein and operating the Breedplan performance recording system.

The reason for this enormous growth in numbers and interest in the breed was due to its exceedingly impressive abilities, in spite of the harsh conditions of the African continent. The Limousin breed boasts a reputation for its effortless calving,

producing robust and well-adapted calves that thrive in the harsh conditions of the highveld with its unpalatable sourveld grasses and cold winters, as well as its longevity – the exact traits that commercial breeders need to succeed in the industry.

On a genetics level, the Limousin has what is known as the "myostatin gene mutation". They possess 2 copies of the F94L gene that results in a non-double muscling phenotype with an increased muscle fibre count.

These cattle are also prized for their remarkable feed conversion, average daily gains, and ability to produce top-quality lean beef, making them extremely desirable to feedlots.

They boast with some of the most efficient and profitable carcass traits of any breed found in South Africa, with high slaughter percentages, meat yields, and meat-to-bone ratios, and minimal excess fat wastage - something that retailers highly value.

The significance of this is a carcass with a greater percentage of high-value cuts, a greater percentage of retail cuts, minimal excess fat wastage, and meat that Is both tender and delicious – all natural without the need of growth promoting hormones.

Additionally, Limousin meat has exceptional marbling whilst still being low in saturated fats and cholesterol, all qualities that currently drive the consumer market.

The Limousin breed is perfectly positioned to cater to the needs of the South African beef market, providing exactly what the consumers want, what the retailers need, what the feedlots desire, and what the commercial breeders are looking for.

The Limousin cattle breed has proven itself to be versatile, efficient, and profitable, exceptionally well-suited to the needs of the South African beef market. And the best part...there is no need to travel across the world all the way to France to get your hands on these magnificent animals. Limousin breeders can be found in any of the 9 provinces across South Africa, hard at work creating the perfect solution for South Africa's beef market.

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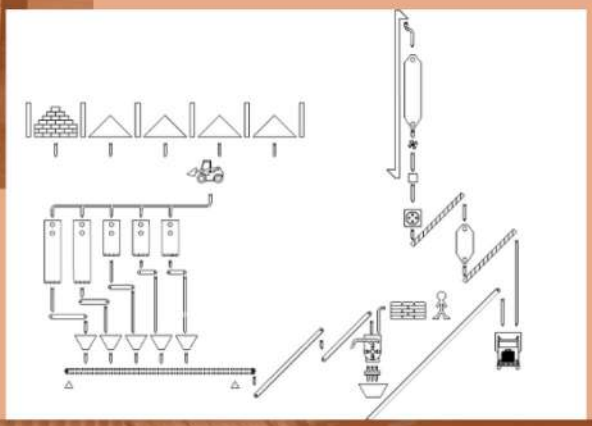

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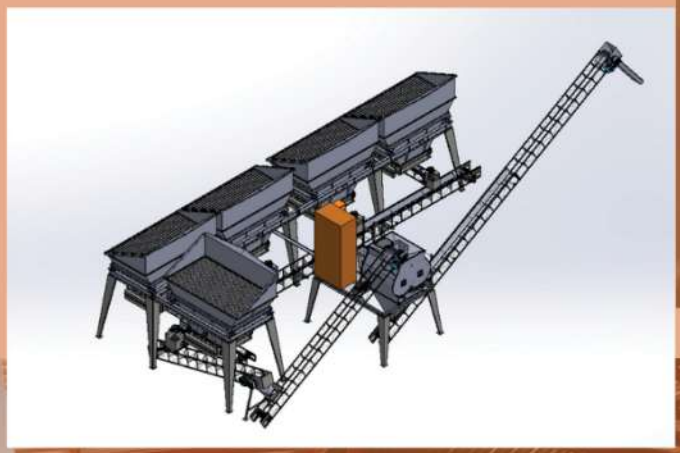

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Gift to Greatness: The Evolution of Santa Gertrudis

Author: Suné Bartman
(MSc Agric Production Physiology and Product Quality)

In 1910, a South-Texan farmer by the name of Thomas M. O'Connor generously gifted a half-Brahman, half-Shorthorn bull to the Kleberg family of King Ranch. If only he were able to see a few decades into the future, he perhaps would have opted to keep the animal to himself and claim the honour of creating the superiorly dynamic breed of cattle that most cattle farmers know and love today.
Its well hooded and focused eyes - a natural shield against the sun's harsh rays – only further enhancing its striking appearance, whilst its strong and sturdy legs and feet, move with grace and agility - a true testament to the exceptional creature born and bred in the harsh conditions of Southern Texas. Alas, Mr O'Connor, unbeknownst to himself, was the great catalyst putting into motion the creation of a beautiful breed of beef cattle known as the Santa Gertrudis.

Behold...the majestic Santa Gertrudis, whose coat shines with a rich, deep hue of dark red, exuding an air of elegance and poise unlike any other.

Shortly after his arrival on King Ranch, this particular bull jumped the fence and – like any young and prolific bull should - mated with more than 3000 Shorthorn heifers, leading to the birth of a sturdy young bull calf named Chemmera. One of the Kleberg family members, Robert Justus Kleberg, Jr. was a true cowboy at heart. He was determined to overcome the harsh conditions of South Texas and breed the most exceptional heavy beef cattle imaginable. With a relentless spirit, he battled against the merciless sun, meagre pastures, and the constant onslaught of drought, pests, and diseases.

Despite these seemingly insurmountable obstacles, he remained steadfast in his pursuit of breeding the best of the best. The hardy offspring of Chemmera gave him the tools he needed to start the controlled development of a brand-new breed of cattle. Recognising the value of the Indicus traits, Kleberg obtained a Brahman bull named Vinotero to be mated with one of the offspring of Chemerra, a blood-red Shorthorn cow with one-sixteenth Brahman cattle blood running through her veins.

The result was a dark-red bull calf of superior qualities and big personality - this calf was aptly named Monkey, and he would go on to produce progeny of uniform superiority and therefore be referred to as the father of the Santa Gertrudis. The name given to the breed might sound peculiar to those unfamiliar with the history of the region in which they developed, but the Kleberg family was actually paying homage to the original owner of the land, who named the region “Los Cerros de Santa Gertrudis” or Hills of Santa Gertrudis.

1918 was the year when Kleberg Jr. started to implement an extensive crossbreeding program, randomly crossing Zebu bulls imported from A.P. Borden – the same breeder where Vinotero originated from – to purebred Shorthorn cows and a few select F1 crossbred cows, allowing for limited interbreeding of the premium crossbreeds to establish a desirable type. He also imple-mented his selection strategy to achieve genetically based progress in weight gain, employing a vast number of cattle as a base for selection and continually remaining responsible for the selection and breeding process.

With the growing success of this exceptionally adaptability breed, forged by nature to thrive in the harshest of climates, the King Ranch’s next goal was to establish a herd in Virginia. So much was the success of the 30 years of a well-defined breeding program that in 1940, the Department of Agriculture acknowledged the Santa Gertrudis as the first breed to be developed in the New World. And so, in 1943, the King Ranch loaned some Santa Gertrudis bulls to William DuPont to make the dream of a Virginian herd a reality.

The first of many public bull sales was held in 1951, where 29 bulls were brought for $99,000. Afterwards, the Santa Gertrudis Breeders Association, previously known as Santa Gertrudis Breeders International, was formed and settled in Kingsville, Texas. Only a year later, the second public sale was held, this time with bulls reaching bids of up to $27,000 and totalling in $212,550 for the 25 bulls sold on that day. Later that same year, King Ranch entered into a partnership with Australian cattlemen, shipping 272 head of cattle to North-Eastern Australia in

a very successful attempt to upgrade their Hereford, Devon, and Angus cattle herds. Had these cattlemen known that by the early 1990s the Santa breed would have been promoted into a highly profitable enterprise - with thousands entering the market each year - they would have gone into this partnership even sooner. After purchasing the Virginia herd in 1966, King Ranch went on to produce many high-quality animals and spread then worldwide.

The Department of Agriculture acquired a batch of 20 heifers from Texan breeders, and 3 bulls who carried the well-known King-Ranch brand. At the time, the Santa Gertrudis served as a benchmark model of what an adapted breed should look like, after which the newly developing local breed, the Bonsmara, was patterned. It was only as a means of comparing the progress of the Bonsmara's development that they imported these 23 animals. The imported animals and their offspring were initially held at the Mara Research Station in the Northern Transvaal

for evaluation up until 1964, after which they were transferred to the Omatjenne Research Station in South-West Africa – known today as Namibia.

The move was motivated by the breeds excellent performance under the climatic conditions and nutritional standards of the Northern Transvaal. After this, the presence of the Santa Gertrudis in the Mara region silently disappeared, whilst the scientific records of these animals sent to Omatjenne mysteriously vanished, nowhere to be found!

The Santa Gertrudis was first imported to South Africa in the early 1950's by the Department of Agriculture, as well as a few hopeful breeders looking to establish the breed in South Africa.

As for the breeders, located in the Vryburg region, they imported a total of 4 bulls and 16 heifers, who they exhibited at local shows and used for crossbreeding, with extremely impressive results – a massive testament to their potential here in South Africa. However, due to the difficulties of pertaining import permits and the lack of a breeder's society in South Africa for the Santa Gertrudis, the owners sold the cattle to a Natal breeder in the 60's. Once there, many of the cows were artificially inseminated, but later sold again.

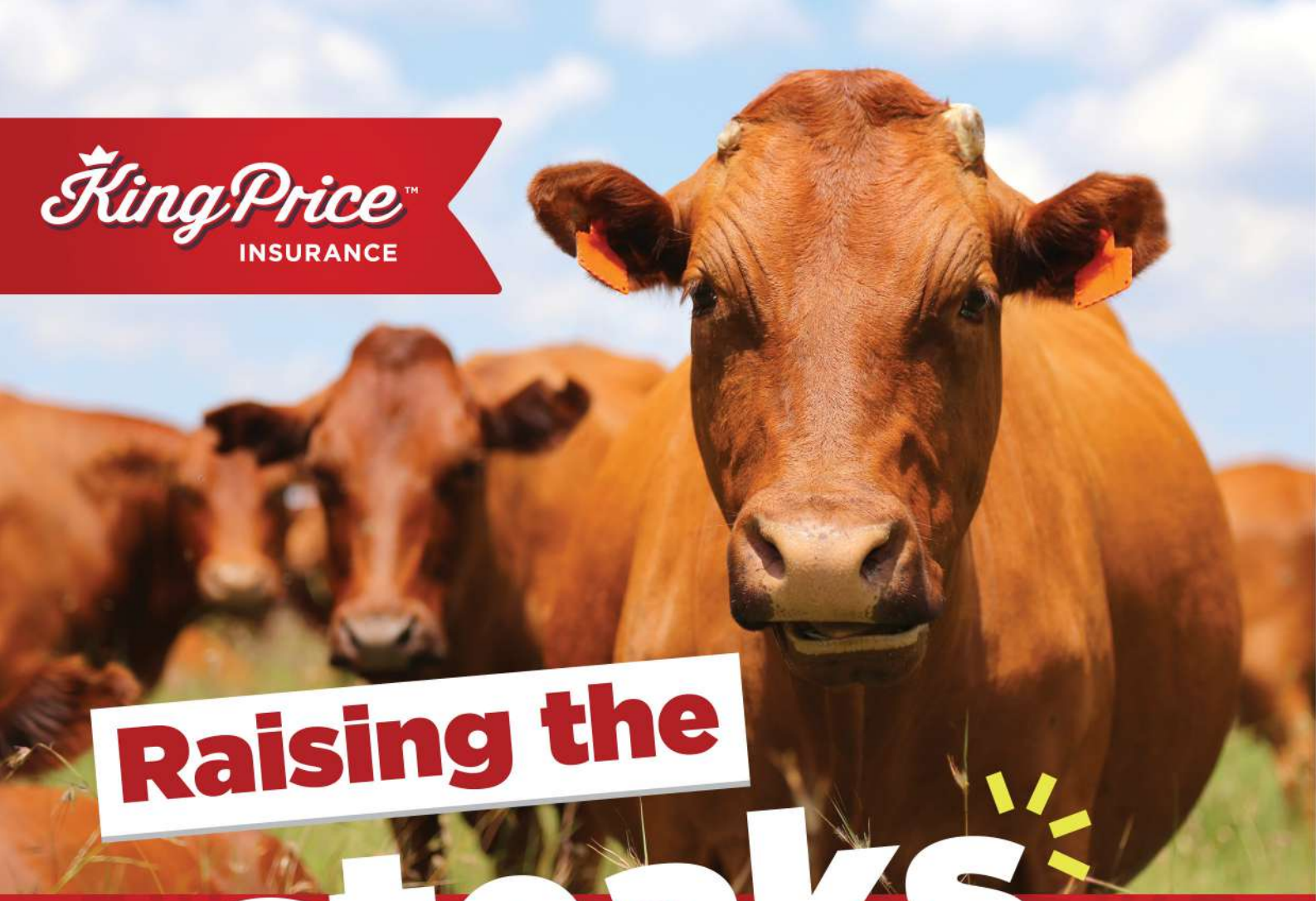
After years of struggling, permits to import this well-suited breed of cattle were finally obtained in 1965 by a man named Don Hillhouse. Don made a thorough study of the breeds history, the breeding policies, and the distribution of the Santa across the world, and finally decided to buy animals only from herds older than 25 years with roughly 1 000 approved stud cows – this would ensure that only established and dependable breeding material was acquired.

Throughout the 1960's, more and more breeders imported the breed, leading to the recognition of the Santa by SA Stud Book. By 1974 more than 250 members, 13 000 registered cows and 2000 registered bulls were recorded. At the same time, news that results from the herd at Omatjenne were rapidly improving spread like a wildfire among cattle breeders, marking the time for this new, well adapted pure breed who performed just as well, and even better, than other crossbreeds.

The Santa was the whole package: it was suitable to the feedlots, showed extremely good growth characteristics, was well-adaptable and had a great temperament.

Santa Gertrudis
South Africa
Since 1973

Today, the Santa is a well-known breed throughout South Africa, notorious for its reputation as a top performer on the veld and in the feedlot; this breed never ceases in its abilities to adapt to the emerging tendencies of the beef industry and would be a prime pick for any farmer looking for a hardy, beefy, and adaptable breed to improve their herds.



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Introducing The Cattle of Kings


photo credit: Ntaba Nyoni

Author: Suné Bartman
(MSc Agric Production Physiology and Product Quality)

In the vast and beautiful land of Nkore in Western Uganda grazes a magnificent breed of cattle regarded as sacred by the Banyankole people, who believe that these majestic creatures were a divine gift from their ancestors as a timeless symbol of their cultural heritage. With their ivory-like horns elegantly curving in reach of the blue African skies, this breed of cattle is the very embodiment of nature's grace and beauty.

Greatly admired and revered worldwide as a symbol of status and wealth, the Ankole cattle can be traced back more than 6000 years to the hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt. They were first discovered around the Nile Valley in 4,000 BC, and back then they were known as the Egyptian or Hamitic Longhorns, as evident by the many different pictographs around the Egyptian pyramids.

Travelling down the Nile-river all the way to Ethiopia 2000 years later, these animals would spread further and further South. Around the same time, the humped-cattle known as the Longhorn Zebu from Pakistan and India made their way to the African continent, and was soon after sold off to cattlemen in Ethiopia and Somalia.

Following this, the cattlemen made the decision to interbreed the Zebu animals with the Egyptian Longhorns, which led to the creation of the Sanga-type cattle. Shortly after, these animals were introduced to Uganda by pastoralists from the more Northern regions of that country, evolving into the "Cattle of Kings and Royalty" as we know them today.

The lives of their keepers rotated around their beautiful Ankole herds. These animals were treated as almost sacred due to the significance they had to the cattlemen's families, providing food and milk, leather for clothing and sandals, and religia such as drums and stools.

These magnificent creatures were bred for their prized longhorns and beautiful coloured hides, signifying the wealth of the owner and even being seen as the start of one's journey towards wealth and dignity.

For a long time, the Ankole cattle were found only in Uganda and the close surrounding areas, but nothing so far south as South Africa. However, in 2004, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa made history by bringing the first Ankole genetics into the country. Ramaphosa's interest in the breed was sparked when he first saw these magnificent creatures during a visit to the Ugandan President that same year.

Unfortunately, the inadequate disease control measures in place in Uganda at the time prevented him from bringing in any live animals into South Africa. After some time and with the help of Morné de la Rye - a veterinarian and director of Embryo Plus - Ramaphosa bought 43 cows, which were transferred from Uganda to an embryo

photo credit: Ntaba Nyoni


photo credit: Ntaba Nyoni

station run by Embryo Plus in Kenya. Here the cows were artificially inseminated, and the embryos were flushed seven days later and sent to South Africa, where they were implanted into surrogate cows. This resulted in the birth of the first Ankole cattle in South Africa. The Ankole Cattle Breeders Society of South Africa was then formally established in 2018, and little more than a year later they could boasts almost a thousand registered cattle.

Despite this, the Ankole is still a very scarce end exclusive breed of cattle in South Africa. This is mainly due to the high cost and many regulations associated with importing these animals from Uganda. Bringing Ankole cattle to South Africa is a strictly regulated and expensive process that can cost millions of Rands, a definite contributing factor to why the numbers of these animals are so low.

Regardless, the Ankole breed has become a part of the larger beef production industry in South Africa, adding diversity to the breeds already available to farmers and consumers alike. The Ankole cattle have gained popularity in South Africa for their dual purpose as both a beef and dairy breed. Their excellent milk quality, combined with their lean meat, has made them a sought-after breed among more health-conscious consumers and markets.

The unique adaptations of the breed, such as their honeycombed horns and ability to withstand harsh climatic conditions, also make them practical and robust for farming. The breed has been able to adapt to most parts of South Africa, making it a versatile choice for farmers. These cattle are a major tourist attraction in South Africa, giving the opportunity for a unique hunting experience for avid hunters looking for a trophy unlike any other. These attributes make the Ankole an interesting and sought-after breed in the farming industry.

Despite their newfound popularity in South Africa and the opportunities that this breed brings to the table, the Ankole cattle still remain a sacred breed to the Banyankole people and continue to play an important cultural and economic role in Uganda.

Preserving the integrity of this breed through deliberate breeding and selective practices is crucial to ensure that future generations can continue to uphold the traditions of their ancestors, and it is therefore imperative that we prioritize the conservation of this unique breed for its invaluable contributions to both cultural heritage and economic growth.

Ankole
SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA

AUCTIONS

4	March 11:00 am	Bela-Bela	Ntaba Nyoni Cattle 2-in-1 Auction	Read more
18	March 12:00 pm	Waters Edge On the Vaal	The Devlan 30th Anniversary Auction	Read more
25	March 11:00 am	Pretoria	Sale of the Bont's	Read more
30	March 10:00 am	Klerksdorp	Theres Bonsmaras 20th Production Auction	Read more
1	April	Phala Phala Auction House	Mambushi & Friends Auction	Read more
13	April 11:00 am	Parys	Considerata Production Sale	Read more

20	April	Krugersdorp	Sterkfontein Boran 3rd Annual Auction	Read more
29	April 07:30 am	Bloemshow show grounds	BKB SA Championships and Elite SA Ile de France Auction	Read more

EVENTS

14	-15 April	Farm Klein Otjikango ost	Kalkfeld Agri Mega Day	Read more
19	April	Excelsior Proefperseël	Someroesdag 2023	Read more
27	April -6 May	Bloemfontein show grounds	Bloemshow	Read more
29	April 07:30 am	Bloemshow show grounds	BKB SA Championships and Elite SA Ile de France Auction	Read more
16	-19 May 12pm	Bothaville	Grain SA's NAMPO Harvest Day	Read more

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