



Promising PROSIM BULL TESTS



ABOVE: Simbra bulls are inspected on economically important characteristics before they're approved for registration.

LEFT: Though colour doesn't affect production, the society selects Simmentalers for a red colouration since the market prefers it.
PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE SIMBRA AND SIMMENTALER SOCIETY

A poor bull can ruin many years' careful cow selection in one season, says Simmentaler/Simbra Breeders' Society CEO **Johan Potgieter**. A good herd bull is crucial for sustainability and profitability in any beef enterprise and the Prosim Simmentaler/Simbra Study Group's annual Phase D bull test underpins this quest for excellence. Since 2003, more than 400 bulls have been put through these tests at Prosim, and many have been identified as AI bulls. **Annelie Coleman** reports.

Altogether 38 Simbra and 48 Simmentaler bulls from breeders as far flung as Hopetown in the Northern Cape and Bela Bela in Limpopo, participated in the 2010 Prosim Phase D tests.

The average daily weight gain (ADG) was no less than 2kg/day, reveals Prosim chairperson Herman van der Merwe from Bothaville.

"Very few, if any, other cattle breeds can equal this performance," he points out.

"We conducted the tests in the dead of winter but the bulls adapted so well that they already averaged an ADG of 1,2kg during the 28-day adaptation period."

THE AIM OF THE GAME

One of the goals of Phase D testing is to identify AI bulls based on genetic breeding values, phenotype and performance.

Semen from chosen bulls is then collected and the straws are sold through the Simmentaler/Simbra Breeders' Society to the stud and commercial beef sectors at affordable prices.

The tests were conducted using a balanced ratio without any growth hormones or stimulants.



The ratio mix consisted of 300kg maize silage, 120kg Voermol Liquid, 15kg feed-grade lime, 500kg hominy chop and 50kg maize stover. The mix was developed by Ulrich Muller from Voermol as not to damage the rumen.

The bulls received the same ratio throughout the test period, but during the adaptation period they had unlimited access to roughage in the form of maize stover. "We are very careful about this ratio," says Herman. "It's meticulously designed to maintain normal rumen function and not to damage the rumen lining, which could lead to acidosis, characterised by excessive acid in bodily fluids."

FURTHER EVALUATION

The animals were also evaluated for phenotype.

- Excellent walking ability with a comfortable stride is vital, as bulls under

extensive conditions walk long distances in serving the cows. "A bull that can't walk properly, can't work," Herman stresses. "We also select for large, well-developed testes and against pendulous sheaths."

- "Minimum scrotum requirements for registration depend on the weight of the bull: < 400kg = 32cm 401kg to 450kg = 33cm 451kg to 500kg = 34cm 501kg to 550kg = 35cm 551kg to 600kg = 36cm > 601kg = 37cm
- "We also look for clearly defined and well-developed musculature. A well-muscled forearm is always an indication of overall muscularity, as are the shoulder, eye muscle and hindquarters.
- "We avoid bulls with prominent shoulders and those who show any signs of coarseness.
- "Also important are large, closed, deep and uniform

1. Hennie Viljoen from Parys's Simbra bull (VLB 09 108B) came out tops in the latest Prosim Study Group Phase D Test. The bull had an ADG of 2,2kg. The 28 Simbras and 48 Simmentalers that took part in the Phase D test achieved an average ADG of no less than 2kg.

2. Erico Napoleon, one of the top Simmentaler stud bulls in the country. Johan Potgieter warns that both stud and commercial cattle breeders should be very careful when selecting a bull, as the wrong bull can do untold damage to a herd in a relatively short time.

Prosim Study Group

The Prosim Simmentaler/Simbra Study Group was established in 1992, and one of its objective is to expand the breeds' genetic base and provide the best genes to stud and commercial cattlemen. The original four members, under

the leadership of Karel Breedt, have since increased to 60 members from as far afield as Standerton, Thabazimbi, Christiana and Vergeleë.

During the past seven years, 450 bulls have undergone Prosim Phase D testing.

FAST FACTS

- Exceptional Simmentaler and Simbra ADGs were achieved in the Prosim Phase D testing.
- The semen of top bulls is selected for AI.
- The best genetics are made available to the cattle industry.

hooves; broad, dry and correctly angled hocks and a fine bone structure.

- "Well-sprung ribs, length of body and smooth coat are important.
- "No excessive fat is allowed, particularly not in the flanks, brisket and around the root of the tail.
- "Although colour has nothing to do with production, we select for a red colour since the market prefers it.

Ellis from Klerksdorp coming in third. The top Simbra (VLB 09 108B) with an ADG of 2,2kg was bred by Hennie Viljoen from Parys. Klerksdorp-based Fanie Maré's bull (FM 09 91) came in second, with fellow Klerksdorper Jannie van Deventer's bull (JVD 09 123) in third place. Simmentaler/Simbra breed director Johan Potgieter said the society's strict standards are not negotiable.

"Since the inception of the society, breed experts have inspected all Simmentaler and Simbra bulls on economically important characteristics before they are approved for registration.

'A WELL-MUSCLED FOREARM IS ALWAYS AN INDICATION OF OVERALL MUSCULARITY.'

- "A strong, masculine head with well-developed eye ridges for protection against the sun are essential.
- "We also select for a calm and placid, yet alert temperament."

TOP CONTENDERS

The Simmentaler bull (E 09 183 polled) that came out tops was bred by Erich Schulenburg from Coligny.

He averaged an ADG of 2,6kg. Herman van der Merwe's Verma Gladiator (VER 10 14) came in second with Ellis Junior (DJA 09 60) bred by Andre

"Bulls with defects or those who don't conform to the standards are rejected and their progeny never qualify for registration. Sales talk such as 'this is a pure-bred bull without papers' is likely to cost the buyer dearly.

"Years of selection for purity and the best genetics ensure that registered bulls such as Prosim's will transfer the breed's characteristics for long-term sustainability and profitability."

• Contact the Simmentaler and Simbra Breeders Society on 051 446 0580/2. ■FW