COVID-19!
The biggest catastrophe in the history of our Society.

Regrettably I need to inform you that we need to make drastic changes to our operations due to this pandemic.

The board and office staff will endeavor to take every effort possible to make the organization a smooth operation during these trying times.

We have put in place several measures to enhance our capabilities to provide you with the best service possible!

Fortunately we breed with the best cattle in the world!

Auctions will continue as normal only with a restriction of 50 people present at the auction.

With the assistance of multi media most of the prestigious auctions will also be online to enhance the ability of all Simmentaler lovers to purchase world class animals.

“If you never want to be criticised, for goodness sake don’t do anything new.” - Jeff Bezos

May God be with us during these trying times!

Cattle

greetings

Jan
Dear Simmentaler breeders,

**Phase 5 of the lockdown has come to an end** and we are happy to report that all staff members have successfully been working from home during this period. Communication and data work have been running smoothly thanks to the wonderful advances in technology. We have been able to keep all things up to date from our homes, and as we go in to phase 4 of the lockdown we will continue to do so. When we return to the office in the future we’ll hit the ground running.

**Impact of the Corona Virus on the Society**

You are all aware of the phases (page 8) that Government has set up and the implementation thereof. The Council has therefore decided the following, in order to put the safety of breeders and animals first:

- The Simmentaler National Championships will be postponed until 2021.
- Inspection of animals will selectively take place within the rules of the specific phase. Danie Erasmus and his team will organize inspection within provincial borders where possible.
- The regulations of the Government will be strictly adhered too.

Please be assured that we are acting in the best interest of you as breeder.

We have noticed an increase in days to calving and weight data being sent to the office during the last couple of weeks. Thank you to everyone who has used this lockdown period to catch up on outstanding data. It hasn’t gone unnoticed and you will reap the benefits of having more complete Breedplan data available to you.

On that note, please remember to measure your 200 day / weaning weights and submit the data to us. See page 17 for weaning guidelines for Simmentaler SA breeders.

We realise that auction, event and show dates have been affected by the lockdown restrictions, by either being cancelled or postponed. Please see our online calendar on www.simmentaler.org to compare dates. **If your date has changed you can inform us at info@simmentaler.org**. The calendar is one of the most popular pages on our website and a great free marketing tool. We would like to have the correct information on our website for all potential buyers and the general public.

Thank you to all of the farmers out there delivering an essential service to Southern Africa. We look forward to talking to you from our office and meeting with you at events as soon as it’s allowed. Until then, please keep safe!

Best wishes

SIM Office

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**From the Office**

**April 2020**

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Work hard in silence, let success make the noise...
Megsim Simmental Stud
Pieter Myburgh, Hopetown

The MEGSIM Simmental stud was started by Piet Myburgh in January 1989 with only 10 stud cows. From small beginnings, fast forward to 32 years later and the stud will be registering their 1500th calf this year!

The story of the stud name is an interesting one filled with heart-warming family nostalgia. The “MEG” part of the name derives from the initials of Piet’s wife, Miemie. He decided to dedicate the stud name to her, as they were able to purchase their first Simmentaler stud cows after selling her Drakensberger cows. She received the cows from her father when she left Ugie after their wedding, and sold them to assist with buying the more sophisticated stud cows. Piet had one rule for his sons when they would take over the stud - the name may never be changed.

Located on the farm Gelukspoort near Hopetown in the hard parts of the Northern Cape, the area is much better suited for goats and sheep but the Simmentalers adapted wonderfully.

The stud’s aim was never to participate in big shows or to breed champions, but to be one of the most fertile herds in the country. This goal was certainly rewarded multiple times. In 1995/96 MEGSIM Simmentalers was named the best Simmentaler Simdex herd in South Africa for a herd of 10-24 cows. However, this was just the beginning. For 10 consecutive years from 2001 to 2010, the stud was placed in the top 3 Simdex herds in the country, winning first place again in 2002 (herd of 10-24 cows) and in 2009 (herd of 25-49 cows).

Piet passed away in 2019 leaving big shoes to fill and a legacy for the Myburgh family to continue. The stud has been taken over by his two sons, Pieter and Gerrit. Pieter manages all business on the farm as he has been doing for the past few years. They will reap the rewards of their father’s hard work and solid breeding principles in the future.

The stud’s goal still remains fertility, but also to supply good, hardy stud bulls to the commercial market that will effortlessly adapt anywhere in the country and give extra weight to weaners.

Driven by an incredible love and passion for stud breeding and the wonderful Simmentaler breed, we believe that the stud will go from strength to strength.

Photos by Pieter Myburgh

The 1500th Simmental calf born at the stud - Megsim Serice (MEG2016).

Miemie, Gerrit and Pieter with founder of MEGSIM Simmentalers, Piet Myburgh.
Dear Farmers

The world has entered a unique period in its history, and none of us have a rulebook to follow. No matter who you are or where you live, the ramifications of what’s happening currently will continue to be felt for a very long time.

But that’s for later. Right now everyone is battling to cope with immediate circumstances, and anxiety levels are extremely high. People are afraid for their health and the danger posed by COVID-19, and they are just as worried about whether they will be able to continue to access food and vital supplies today, and tomorrow.

Within this ever changing and worrying scenario, what you and your employees are doing right now, on your farms is making a massive difference to everyone in the country; from individual citizens to families to all of us here at RSA Group.

You have answered President Ramaphosa’s call to national action. You have also ensured that our Agriculture Minister’s vision of a food value chain being able to deliver enough safe and nutritious food to all South Africans during lockdown is a reality.

I’d like to thank you for the huge effort you’re putting in, to make sure South Africans continue to have access to vital fresh produce during this time of crisis.

I thank you on behalf of our company – because you’re the heart of the RSA Group business – and also on behalf of every South African. Without your effort our people wouldn’t be nearly as strong as they currently are.

I’d also like to assure you that everyone at RSA Group is working 24/7 to make sure we keep the markets – including export channels and direct sales to retail distribution centres – running smoothly and efficiently, so that your efforts are supported and your businesses have every opportunity to stay active and sustainable in the midst of the uncertainty.

In summary: we are extremely grateful for your incredible efforts, and we’re working hard to match you every step of the way!

Best wishes
Jaco Oosthuizen

NELBERG BOERDERY PRODUKSIEVEILING
20 BULLE - 15 KOEIE & KALWERS - 10 DRAGTIGE KOEIE - 22 VERSE

21 Mei 2020
Lichtenburg skougronde om 11:00

Vir meer inligting besoek ons webtuiste:
www.studstocksales.co.za

Marius Nel 083 983 7280
Jamie Berger 084 410 3703
Steven Mathews 076 865 0640
Easing of South African lockdown restrictions

Level 4 will see all agriculture, hunting, forestry, fishing and related services, including the export of agricultural products, permitted to operate.

Automotive manufacturing, including components, will be scaling up in phases to 50% employment. Stationery production will be scaling up in phases to 50% employment. Cement, other construction material, and hardware, will from next month also scale up in phases of up to 50% employment. All other manufacturing will scale up to 20% employment.

In construction and related services, road and bridge projects, other public works civil engineering projects; and critical maintenance and repairs will commence.

From next month, restaurants will be able to sell hot cooked food for home delivery. Sit down or pick-up are still not permitted.

While the ban on the sale of alcohol will remain in level 4, stationery and educational books as well as tobacco product sales will commence. Personal ICT equipment, including computers, mobile telephones and other home office equipment, will be permitted in the relaxed regulations.

The updated regulations will also lift a ban on ICT services for all private and business customers.

Stay at home
- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (where this absolutely cannot be done from home)
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

https://www.gov.za/Coronavirus
One such producer is JR (Tubby) du Preez of the farm Glenlea, Alexandria district, Eastern Cape.

“Simmentalers form the basis of my crossbreeding programme. Without the milk, there is NO CALF. Secondly, in crossing this breed with the Bonsmara, I get 25% hybrid vigour for NOTHING and a predominantly medium-framed, red, smooth-coated cow very well suited to my coastal dune veld farm where all the ticks in the world can be found.” Heartwater, Gallsickness and Red Water are very prevalent in this area which requires regular dipping against such ticks which carry these diseases.

Tubby runs a very efficient beef producing herd. Selected Simmentaler cows are bred to performance-selected Simmentaler bulls to breed replacement heifers. The rest of the Simmentaler cows are bred to performance-selected Bonsmara bulls to produce the crossbred Bonsmara x Simmentaler cows.

“I also perform a reciprocal cross,” says Tubby “where I mate Bonsmara cows to performance-selected Simmentaler bulls. These are sourced from Andrew Masterson of the Milagro Simmentaler stud, located about 80 km away from me, but with the same climatic conditions as my farm. This makes adaption and the transition to a new farm so much easier.”

Tubby is emphatic on buying the best quality bulls with the best performance figures for his quality herd. “Simmentaler genes are imperative as this infusion gives me milk to produce heavy, quality calves which are sought-after in the market”. He recently sold bull calves weighing 350 kg and heifer calves at 330 kg at 8 months of age, realizing over R10 000 per calf.

The farm is predominantly coastal dune veld with improved pastures of K11 and Panicums. These are fertilized and the annual rainfall is between 500 and 600mm mostly in the Spring and Summer.

Tubby uses Red Angus bulls, also mostly sourced from Milagro Angus stud, to open all his heifers. Once all of the heifers have calved down, the Simmentaler-looking type heifers are mated to Bonsmara and the Bonsmara-looking type heifers are mated to Simmentaler bulls. Some ½ Red Angus heifers have been retained for breeding, which are also mated to red Angus for their first calf after which they are either mated to Simmentaler or Bonsmara bulls.

See more Simmentaler-crosses on the next page!
Simmentaler type heifer with Angus sired calf.

Simmentaler (sire) x Bonsmara type cow.

Angus x Simmentaler-Bonsmara type heifer with 75% Angus calf.

Bonsmara (sire) x Simmentaler cows with Red Angus cross calves.

Many a beef producer will inform you that the inclusion of these genes in a beef producing herd will lead to the consistent, regular production of heavy weaner calves – “milk produces heavy calves”.

The heifer on the left (facing forward) is a Simmentaler x Bonsmara and the two on the right (seen from behind) are Simmentaler heifers. Calves from the Red Angus bull.
**Improve your livestock photography**

Hennie Viljoen, Vilensburg Simmentaler Stud, Parys

Practice and apply these helpful tips to easily improve your livestock photography skills for sale catalogues, show animals and social media posts.

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**The Animal**

- Photos should preferably be taken in the summer when animals’ short, smooth coats display the best.
- The calmer and more at ease the cattle are, the easier it is to take a good photo.
- Must stand transversely with nearest hind leg slightly behind the farthest hind leg to see udder/scrotum and muscle better.
- The head should be turned about 45 degrees to the photographer. Use another person to attract the animals’ attention and stand so that the cow/bull looks at him with ears turned forward.
- The sunlight must fall directly on the side that is being photographed - no shadows on the animal.
- The best photos have a natural, uniform background. Stay away from buildings and fences. Preferably the handler of the animal should not be in the photo.

**The Photographer**

- BE PATIENT, good photos take time, especially if the animal is not halter trained.
- The best time of the day to shoot is until 10:00 in the morning and after 15:00 in the afternoon. Photographers speak of the last hour before sunset as the “golden hour”. Always take photos with the sun behind you.
- Hold the camera approximately on the center of the animal so that the photo does not appear to be taken from above or from below. Preferably zoom in from a distance, getting too close to the cattle can cause them to become restless.
- Take as many photos as possible because everything has to work together; legs just right, eyes open and awake, tail still and straight. With a digital camera, the “Sport” option takes the fastest consecutive photos and the best one can be selected.

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Two photos of the same cow taken in different seasons, different positions and different times of the day.

First **photo (above)** taken in the early spring, winter hair, legs not placed correctly, looking straight at the camera with shadow falling on the neck.

Second **photo (right)** taken in the late summer, coat quality at its best, golden hour (look at how far the shadow falls behind the animal), leg placement ideal, looking about 45 degrees away from camera.
Although the Vetties's two pens are on average the heaviest, the title for the heaviest pen has now been claimed by Cattle Gang! While all the teams' average daily gains (ADG) decreased, both of Cattle Cartel's pens' ADG increased. But it is Tavros's and Vetties's pens that are neck and neck for highest ADG!

The other teams mustn't give up hope as anything can still happen in the next 60 days. Especially as the finisher Zilmax diet will be fed for 40 days.

Our next weigh-in is on 28 April 2020, the last weigh-in before the cattle are transitioned onto the finisher diet.

Follow the UP-Agric Feedlot Challenge on Facebook and Instagram!

When you look at the photo above, you’ll probably think “Aw cute, look at the Boran and Simmentaler socializing”. But don’t let those sweet faces fool you, these two are in cahoots and are planning their escape.

Cattle are curious and intelligent beings and can easily learn how to open gates.

Three days later...

Remember our previous post about the Simmentalers and the Boran planning their escape? Well, the Simmentalers were successful! Here they are (above) taking a leisurely afternoon stroll. The Afrikaners seem to be very interested in what is going too!
SA'S TEXAS

07 MAY 2020 - 11:00

VRYBURG SHOW GROUNDS

ON OFFER:
35 BULLS

BRAHMANE
CHAROLAIS
SIMMENTALERS

CONDITIONS OF SALE:
1. Full conditions of sale available on the day of auction.
2. Only cash or bank guarantee cheques will be accepted.
3. VAT payable (VAT no.)
4. Contractor payable to the contractor at the auction.
5. H.I.B documentation, proof of permanent address, & ID document.
6. Animals will only be loaded after payment.

ENQUIRIES:
Marketing agent: Stephan Van Wyk: 083 273 6227
Auctioneer: Theuns Visser: 082 338 1356

Boshoeck Brahmane: 071 687 8853
Vera Simmentalers: 083 297 6165
Biesiesvlci Charolais: 079 898 0785

8517-730
8517-726
8517-712

8817-81

8818-220

8817-190

8817-166
The Grandin Lockdown Show 2020

The lockdown certainly has been inspiring new and creative ways to keep busy all over the world. In this specific instance we’re referring to D’kar in the Ghanzi district of Botswana.

Since most shows have been cancelled or postponed due to social distancing and lockdown restrictions, the team over at Grandin studs decided to host their own personal show for a little entertainment and to cure some of the show fever. Hendrik and Dirk Jerling (owners of Grandin studs and official judges of the show) hosted their "lockdown show" on 11 April 2020.

Three cattle handlers were given a couple of days to select and train a Simmentaler bull of their choice. Animals were already in great condition since they were being prepped for the now postponed Simmentaler National Championship that would have taken place in Lichtenburg, South Africa.

Competition was tough between the bulls as well as their handlers, as each was sure that his bull deserved to wear the winning sash.

At the end of the day the results were:
1. Champion - Grandin Liam GDH1810
2. Reserve Champion - Grandin Chairman GDH1831
3. Grandin Robert GDH1751

Congratulations to Xgara van Xhao for training and leading the champion bull.

"Please note there was no Interbreed due to the fact that, well, let's say the Brahmans need a bit more time to train!" - Dirk Jerling
Mearns cattle breeder diversifies into selling meat direct to the public

The Press and Journal

Mearns farmer Doug Smith's life-long love of Simmental cattle has reached new levels with plans to sell meat from Simmental-sired cattle direct to shoppers.

Mr Smith runs the well-known Drumsleed herd of pedigree Simments at Drumsleed, Fordoun, Laurencekirk, with his parents Gerald and Morag.

The family is well known on the show and sales circuit and now Doug, the fourth generation of the Smith family working the land at Drumsleed, has launched his own venture with a focus on selling top-quality beef direct to consumers.

Together with his wife Fiona, who runs the successful Spud Hut farm shop at the neighbouring Cairnton Farm, Mr Smith has plans to sell meat from some of Drumsleed’s 130-cow herd of commercial cattle.

The commercial herd, which comprises cross Simmental, Salers and Shorthorn cattle, runs alongside the 100-cow pedigree herd.

“I'm a huge lover of the Simmental breed in general and the butcher that we are using said Simments produce a very good cut as well," said Mr Smith.

“It’s something a bit different. Everybody usually goes for the native breeds but because we are Simmental breeders I wanted to use them.”

He has teamed up with Forfar-based butcher and Aberdeen-Angus breeder, Alan Rennie, to launch the enterprise.

An early launch of products was sourced from Rennie’s Butchers and sold through the Spud Hut with great success.

“It’s been great and has really exceeded my expectations,” said Mr Smith.

“Quite a lot of people have been commenting on the traceability.

“I display all the tag numbers of the cattle and details of the killing plant and where it has been butchered.”

Within the next eight weeks Mr Smith plans to put his first batch of home-reared cattle through the system, and in turn sell the first of his home-produced beef through Drumsleed Meats.

He is also busy constructing a small farm shop to sell meat at Drumsleed, which will be ready in the next few weeks.

“People will be able to see the cattle in the field when they visit the shop,” said Mr Smith.

The Namibia Genetics Auction
not to be missed ...

Bull & Female Auction
6 May 2020
18:00 Agra/Bank Windhoek Ring - Windhoek

Brahman
R Mudge (Rynand Mudge Brahms)  3 bulls  10 females
D Uys (Savannah Brahms)        2 bulls  5 females
Behrens & Pfeiffer (Okario Brahms)  2 bulls  5 heifers
R van der Merwe (Wetmer Brahms) 2 bulls

Simmentaler
R Krafft (Ibenstein Simmentalers)  4 bulls  8 heifers
B Lueesse (Lichtenstein Simmentalers) 2 bulls

Simbra
M & E Wiechmann (Mica Simbras)  2 bulls  5 heifers
B Olivier (Zinkev Simbras)      2 bulls

Hereford
H Gruhn (Otongovi Herefords)    2 bulls

Braunvieh
L de Jager (Phoenix Farming)     2 bulls

Total bulls: 22  Total females: 25

Enquiries
Kiep Lepen 081 124 0648, Paul Klein 081 128 6731
or Lourens Swart 081 127 8805

agriauctions
www.agra.com.na
061 290 9226 • anke@agra.com.na

Bank Windhoek
ConServ
Engineering Services
Weaning guidelines for Simmentaler SA breeders

As many of our breeders will be weaning their calves soon, we would like to remind everyone about the important measurements that need to be taken along with the weaning weight.

The following needs to be taken at the weaning of calves:
- Calf Weaning Weight (taken at 80 - 300 days old)
- Mature Cow Weight
- Hip Height (HH)
- Body Condition Score (BC)
- Coat Score

Coat sleekness is recognised as an important tropical adaption. Research has shown that variation exists in coat type between animals, and that a proportion of this variation is due to genetic differences. The submission of coat scores to BREEDPLAN will be used in the development of a Trial EBV once sufficient data has been collected.

How Do I Record Coat Score?

Coat scores are recorded on a 1-7 scale with 1 being sleek and 7 being woolly:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coat Score</th>
<th>Coat Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Extremely Short</td>
<td>Hairs extremely short and closely applied to the skin. Found in <em>Bos indicus</em>, Tropical Adapted <em>Bos taurus</em> and in some of their crossbreds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Very Short</td>
<td>Coat sleek, hairs short and coarse, lying flat, just able to be lifted by the thumb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fairly Short</td>
<td>General appearance smooth-coated. Hairs easily lifted, usually fairly coarse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fairly Long</td>
<td>Coat not completely smooth, somewhat rough, patches of hairs being curved outwards, or whole coat showing sufficient length to be ruffled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Hairs distinctly long and lying loosely; predominantly coarse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Woolly</td>
<td>Hairs erect, giving fur-like appearance. Fingers are partly buried in the coat. Fine hairs of under-coat give soft handle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Very Woolly</td>
<td>The more extreme expression of 6, with greater length and &quot;body&quot;, and heavy cover extending to neck and rump.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DNA & Sire Verification

A popular strategy that might be implemented is the collection of hair samples on all calves at weaning, whereby the hair sample of each animal is placed in an individual envelope and stored in a cool, dry place (e.g. shoe box, filing cabinet) for use when DNA testing is required.

DNA and sire verification is compulsory for all Simmentaler bulls and female animals presented for inspection born on and after 1 January 2020. DNA and sire verification is also compulsory for all bulls offered on an auction from 1 January 2020.

Hair samples should be collected from the switch of the tail, by selecting 40 hairs (approximately the size of a thick pencil) that are dry and free of any foreign matter (e.g. manure, dirt), and pulling the hairs “up and away” from the tail switch. Pliers can be used if a better grip is necessary. Roots must be attached the hairs - do not collect samples by cutting.
Nine Point Body Condition Scoring System

Body condition scores (BC) describe the relative fatness of a cow through the use of a nine-point scale and is an effective management tool to evaluate nutritional status of the herd. The body condition scoring system allows producers to visually assess their cow herd using a number system that objectively describes the amount of condition or fat reserve of an animal. Because cow/calf producers do not weigh cows on a regular basis, they need a management technique to evaluate their cow herd as it relates to productivity and profit potential. Cow body condition score is closely related to reproductive efficiency, especially for spring-calving females, and is a more reliable indicator of nutritional status of a cow than is body weight.

Following is a description of the 1 to 9 body condition scoring system where a BC 1 cow is extremely thin and emaciated and a BC 9 cow is very fat and obese. Assign a cow a condition score in whole numbers (3, 4, 5, etc.).

**Thin**

1. Bone structure of shoulder, ribs, back, hooks, and pins are sharp to the touch and easily visible. No evidence of fat deposits or muscling.
2. No evidence of fat deposition and there is muscle loss especially in the hindquarters. The spinous processes feel sharp to the touch and are easily seen with space between them.
3. Very little fat cover over the loin, back, and foreribs. The backbone is still highly visible. Processes of the spine can be identified individually by touch and may still be visible. Spaces between the processes are less pronounced. Muscle loss in hind quarter.

**Borderline**

4. Foreribs are slightly noticeable and the 12th and 13th ribs are still very noticeable to the eye. The transverse spinous processes can be identified only by palpation (with slight pressure) and feel rounded rather than sharp. Slight muscle loss in hind quarter.

**Moderate**

5. The 12th and 13th ribs are not visible to the eye unless the animal has been shrunk. The transverse spinous processes can only be felt with firm pressure and feel rounded but are not noticeable to the eye. Spaces between the processes are not visible and are only distinguishable with firm pressure. Areas on each side of the tailhead are starting to fill.
6. Ribs are fully covered and are not noticeable to the eye. Hindquarters are plump and full. Noticeable springiness over the foreribs and on each side of the tailhead. Firm pressure is now required to feel the transverse processes. Brisket has some fat.

**Fleshy**

7. Ends of the spinous processes can only be felt with very firm pressure. Spaces between processes can barely be distinguished. Abundant fat cover on either side of the tailhead with evident patchiness. Fat in the brisket.
8. Animal takes on a smooth, blocky appearance. Bone structure disappears from sight. Fat cover is thick and spongy and patchiness is likely. Brisket is full.
9. Bone structure is not seen or easily felt. The tailhead is buried in fat. The animal's mobility may actually be impaired by excessive fat. Square appearance.

Sources
Since I mostly made use of Al, using a variety of bulls, I was sure that this was not due to the normal genetic sex-determining process where the male (producing both X and Y chromosomes) determines the sex of its progeny. For this reason, I started taking notes on the climate conditions when the insemination takes place. This I did for three years starting in 2005. I believed that the temperature, humidity, rainfall, as well as the moon could have an influence on the female animal at conception to determine this phenomenon.

We as farmers all know what influence the moon has on the weather cycle as well as the growth of our crops. Thereby the effect of the moon on the ocean is indisputable. Unfortunately, I never followed up the notes I made so that I was left in uncertainty.

By investigating this matter recently, I saw that much research had been done on the effect lunar system has on the determining of the sex in the human being. But it was only in 2017 that Derek Onken and his associates found that the lunar cycle indeed has an effect on animals. They discovered that the phase of the moon has a definite influence at conception on the determining of the sex of the offspring.

A significant correlation was found between the average male/female pattern and the time period of the moon. This has to do with the amount of solar radiation which is proportionate to the strength of the moonlight.

What an interesting discovery, which means that the environmental sex-determining ability during certain times, overrides the generic sex-determining factor in cattle. In spite of this observation, I am definitely not going to sit up all night to watch whether the moon is going to affect the sex of the calves being born or not.

Abstract. The lunar cycle has long been suspected to influence biological phenomena. Folklore alludes to such a relationship, but previous scientific analyses have failed to find significant associations. It has been shown that lunar cycles indeed have effects on animals; significant associations between human circadian rhythms and lunar cycles have also been reported. We set out to determine whether a significant statistical correlation exists between the lunar phase and sex determination during conception. We found that significant associations (\textit{p}-value <5×10−5) exist between the average sex ratio (male:female) and the lunar month. The likelihood of conception of a male is at its highest point five days after the full moon, whereas the highest likelihood of female conception occurs nineteen days after the full moon. Furthermore, we found that the strength of this influence is correlated with the amount of solar radiation (which is proportional to moonlight). Our results suggest that sex determination may be influenced by the moon cycle, which suggests the possibility of lunar influence on other biological phenomena. We suggest for future research the exploration of similar effects in other phenomena involving humans and other species.

13 Pointers for increasing fertility in Beef Cattle Farming

L J Angus (Pr. Sci.Nat.)

Slightly updated version of the article published in the 13/12/2019 Farmer’s Weekly

Llewellyn Angus, an animal scientist, Simbra/Simmentaler breeder and International Interbreed Judge, says that grazing and fertility management are both crucial to profitable beef cattle farming. Here he shares the basic principles of managing fertility in a beef herd.

In a nutshell

- Fertility is the single most important economic aspect in beef cattle (or sheep) farming.
- Fertility has a management component and a genetic component.
- Farm with breeds or types that are adapted to your area and environment.
- Good veld and pasture management are prerequisites for good fertility.
- Although fertility is only 10% heritable it is highly repeatable.
- The days to calving EBV is a direct measure of fertility. Use it with indirect measures such as scrotum size and an ideal mature mass.
- Structured crossbreeding produces hybrid vigour leading to increased fertility, growth and longevity.

1. Remember a beef cattle (or sheep) farmer is firstly a veld and pasture farmer. Make sure your animals nutritional requirements are met especially when they have calves and are running with the bull. See to it that your cattle are fully fed in a relatively short period of grazing. This implies that the farm's fodderflow must be sufficient throughout the year. A periodic full growing season rest of a certain portion of the veld and pasture is probably the most important grazing management aspect after the correct stocking rate for the area.

2. The most important economic aspect of any cattle (or sheep) farming enterprise is fertility. Fertility is economically speaking 5x more important than growth. Growth is 5x more important than carcass quality. A poorly growing calf is still always better than no calf at all.

3. Remember that fertility has a management and a genetic component. Management has more to do with feeding and animal health. Also strict breeding seasons so as to establish which animals are not reproducing. Breeding seasons make it easy to establish which animals are not pregnant by means of vet pregnancy examinations. With management high level of management we allow the cattle (or sheep) to produce and reproduce to their optimum. In this type of environment one can then look at the genetic aspects to increase fertility further.

4. When we talk about the genetic component of fertility one sees that it is only 10% heritable. This just underlines the importance of continued strict selection for fertility. It is highly repeatable though so identify the cow families that calve every year. We must also look for other genetic traits positively correlated with fertility to help us in selecting for increased fertility. Examples would be positive scrotal size, mature body mass within certain limits and a fertility EBV itself like days to calving. They are expressed as EBV's or estimated breeding values. Remember that if the animal's feed and other requirements are not met one cannot try to select for higher fertility on a genetic level as mentioned above.

5. Scrotal size in bulls plays a major role in fertility of the female offspring. The bigger the better (upto a point). Look at the scrotal size or scrotal circumference ebv's of the bulls you buy as well as physically at the scrotal development. Two equally well developed testes with good epididymus development is very important.

6. Mature mass must always be kept in check. The ebv for mature mass should ideally be around breed average. We want easy calvers, fast growing calves BUT not big mature
cattle round 3 years of age when they wean their calf or after the calf is born. This is because big cattle have high maintenance requirements. They have to satisfy these before they can go over into production and reproduction. High mature mass animals are less productive.

As Peter Massmann, ex CEO of the Simmentaler/Simbra Society, always said “the cow that gives you a good calf every year, above 40% of the dam’s mass, is the right size cow for that environment.

7. “Days to calving” is a fertility EBV and like all EBV’s it cancels out environmental effects so that we are only looking at the genetic component. If a breed has this EBV or a similar one USE IT in your selection. It identifies bulls and females that carry the genes producing fertile progeny. The animals that take fewer days to calve from initial mating date have a shorter (better) days to calving and are thus more fertile. Days to calving also plays a large part in the overall economic Rand indexes for certain systems eg the self-replacing feedlot system. If a breed has this economic index USE IT in your selection criteria.

8. Remember that a bull has a 50% genetic influence on the herd of females that he gets into calf. The last three bulls have a 87.5% genetic influence. Therefore buy and use the bulls with the correct fertility and growth attributes. The old adage “a good bull is half your herd and a bad bull is your whole herd” still holds true today.

9. Use the correct bull/cow ratio, do multi-sire mating where possible and test bulls regularly for fertility and sexually transmitted diseases such as trichomoniasis and vibriosis. Generally speaking a two year old beef bull would cope with 20 females in a two to three month breeding season. A 3 year old should cope with 30 females and a four year old with up to 40 females. Remember multi-sire matings dramatically decreases the chances of low conception due to sickness or injury to a bull resulting in temporary infertility or serving inability. The fit bulls compensate for the unfit bull.

Test bulls regularly for trichomonas and vibriosis and fertility. Try not to let bulls with open cows run in your perimeter camps. Your bull and also your neighbour’s bull shouldn’t get a chance to jump fence. Bulls should run in inside camps with good fencing and even in kraals for a short while just after mating.

10. Remember your early calvers in a season are the more fertile animals. Synchronisation with hormones increases a herd’s fertility. The more you shorten your calving season the more fertile your herd will become. The ideal is that 60% of your females should calve in the first 30 days of the season. Prof Cliff Lamb from Texas A and M university has done a lot of work on this aspect. He also found that synchronisation followed by AI or natural mating shifts calving to earlier in the season. Synchronisation as a tool has a good management level as a prerequisite. By selling your late calvers you also in effect shorten your breeding season.

11. Look after your heifers and first calvers especially well. Heifers that are above the target mass for mating mostly all take bull in a short period. Give them good pasture and production lick if needs be. Also look after first calvers well nutritionally – they are usually the ones that struggle to re-conceive. Keep them separate as a group for as long as possible and on the best pasture available and on a good lick.

12. Remember hybrid vigour increases fertility AND growth AND longevity. It pays to cross breeds BUT it must be done in a structured way. A normal crisscrossing system or a three way cross system could be followed. Management levels should be good if one wants to go into crossbreeding. If one just crosses cattle breeds randomly you end up with mongrelisation (mixed cattle). It is then better to stick to one breed or breed type only.

13. Use the breed or type suited to your environment and system. Under the more extensive conditions (in large parts of the country) breeds with a certain mix of Bos Taurus (for production) and Bos Indicus (for hardiness and adaptability) perform better regarding fertility. Under more intensive and higher rainfall systems Bos Taurus type breeds do better. Under extremely arid and hot conditions where stocking rate is very low the indigenous Bos indicus type cattle as well as Brahman cattle would do best.

In summaising
Breed with cattle breeds or types that are adapted to the environment or conditions that you farm under. Good veld and pasture management must be adhered to. Make sure the other management aspects like herd health and strict calving seasons are adhered to. Only then can one put pressure on the fertility aspects so as to increase overall herd fertility.
True, and justifiable indeed. With this selection program one selects animals that are very well adapted to the environment where bulls have to produce them. Select for fertility and everything will be all right. Also the bank account. We farmers also want to earn a bit of money, don’t we?

Reini, the Simmental world salutes you! He was also served on the World Federation Board for 25 years. Hope those who put emphasis big / heavy / carcass / long / fat / body will take note.

“Select for fertility and the rest will follow.
Unbelievable! Yes, but accountable.” - Reini Rusch

“Thanks to Reini and Peter Massmann for all that you have done for the Simmental Fleckvieh breed. You have tried to keep us all on track when we have wondered to one side or another. It was a great trip to Reini’s farm years ago.”
- Fred Schuetze, Texas

Simmentalers at Lichtenstein enjoying a rich life!
Dear Simbra/Simmentaler breeder

The Hoogland Study Group is proud to present the first digital Simmentaler and Simbra show in South Africa this year. Today we live and work in a world that looks dramatically different from a few months ago with many challenges such as Footand-mouth disease as well as Covid-19 that has put a spanner in the works for all our show plans. It is in this changing world that we want to seize the opportunity to think fresh and new.

Go and visit your young bulls again, take some special photos and videos with your camera or phone and at R100 per bull it is the perfect opportunity to introduce your animals to other breeders and also win some prizes. 3 Very experienced, interbreed judges (Fred Dell, Martin Seyfferdt and Marius Barkhuizen), with more than 70 year’s combined experience between them, are going to make sure the best young bulls win.

The closing date for entries is 30 April 2020 and must be emailed to Hooglandsim@gmail.com. The winners will be announced on Facebook and the relevant breeders will also be notified by email.

Entry fees can be deposited in the following account:
Hoogland Studiegroep
Account nr: 24 492 463 5
Branch code: 051001
Reference: Name of stud

For any further queries, please contact Rick Dell - 083 766 5552.

We look forward to seeing everyone’s entries!

Regards

Corné de Jager
Hoogland Study Group

Thanks to all our sponsors for making the Digital Young Bull Day 2020 possible and for the great prizes our winners will receive!

Make sure your Simbra and Simmentaler YOUNG BULLS are ready!

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Winners of the Digital Young Bull Day will be announced on the Hoogland Study Group’s Facebook page.

Entries 2018 Young Bulls
Send 3 good quality photos and video per email:
1. Headshot (with eartag and number clearly visible)
1. Photo of the side of the bull,
1. Photo of the back of the bull.
Video where judges can see the bull walk at a normal tempo from the front, side and back.

E-mail: Hooglandsim@gmail.com
Queries: Rick Dell Cell: 083 766 5552

Entries closes on 30 April 2020
In what has the makings of a little Easter miracle, a calf who was found lifeless in a creek has beaten the odds after he was resuscitated by a quick-thinking farmer.

It's coming into calving season on the Welsh's farm at Yarranbella on the Mid North Coast of NSW - a very different scene from five months ago when it was ablaze in the worst summer of bushfires the country has seen.

While the Welsh's lost so much to the fires, remarkably, their herd of Simmental-cross cattle survived and continues to expand as the newest editions are born. But the story of survival doesn't end there.

Last Friday evening, farmers Terry and GiGi Welsh (or Mum and Dad, as this journo knows them) decided to take a quick drive around their Kosekai Road property before calling it a day.

"We don't normally check the cattle in the evening like that, but for some reason, I just wanted to see the calves," GiGi said.

And it's lucky they did. As they drove around they noticed one of the cows, Faith, had given birth to a calf, but kept anxiously looking in the creek. So Terry went to investigate.

"I heard something in the water, just like a fish splash or something," Terry said. "But when I looked I couldn't really see anything because it was so murky."

So as any dedicated farmer would, Terry waded into the cold creek water up to his knees.

"As I got closer I could just see the calf, so I felt around in the water for him and pulled him out."

Terry laid the calf on the bank of the creek and rubbed and pushed on its chest in an attempt to get it breathing. After a short time performing these chest compressions, the calf...
finally took a breath, however shallow and weak. "A fair bit of water came up, and he took a breath, but I wouldn't say he was breathing well," Terry said.

Then Faith, the mother cow, took it from there, licking and nudging her newly-reunited calf, as its twin watched on.

While the calf was now taking shallow breaths, it still wasn't very responsive - giving little hope for a recovery.

"There's only so much you can do," Terry said, "If you intervene too much, you risk the mother disowning the calf."

Knowing they'd done all they could, Terry and GiGi left the rest to nature. But, they didn't hold out much hope the calf would survive such an ordeal.

The next morning, the couple arrived back to the farm to check the herd. Seeing from a distance what he thought was the remains of the calf, Terry presumed his expectations had come true. This idea was reinforced when he saw Faith had moved across the paddock and had only one calf with her.

"Unbeknownst to us at the time - what I had thought was the dead calf was actually the two placentas; and a calf I saw trying to suckle another cow was actually our "dead" twin - and that's when the full story started to come to life that he had survived," Terry said.

"I thought it was lovely to see he had survived, it was a real surprise, and he deserves to live after all he's been through," GiGi said.

It's no bull, this little guy is a survivor. But sadly, after everything, he was still disowned by his mother.

"As cows usually only have one calf per pregnancy, it's not uncommon for a cow to disown a twin," Terry said.

"Cows can get disorientated with twins. While they have one calf, they are less likely to go looking for the other. So one just ends up getting left behind and is usually hand-reared unless another cow adopts it."

With the chances of a successful reunion no longer an option, Terry and GiGi decided to do the next best thing.

Call up the grandkids.

"The calf is such a lovely, friendly little thing, so we thought because the grandkids were all in home isolation right now, this might give them something nice to do," GiGi said.

A Simmental-Belgium Blue mix, who's father is a gentle giant of a bull, the calf naturally has quiet genetics, Terry said - perfect for hand-raising.

So they called their daughter Emily Gough to see if Gough's farm would be open to adopting the abandoned poddy calf.

As a Simmental breeder herself, Emily didn't hesitate to bring the new baby into her herd.

"Maybe it was the maternal instinct kicking in - but it's like raring anything else, it's a beautiful little baby who needs love and care," Emily said.

"And it's something good for the kids to do, it's fun, which is what is needed at the moment," Emily said.

It didn't take long for the kids to make the little calf feel at home. Zoe 11, Annabelle, 8 and Daniel, 4 have named him Red Rocket. They've set him up in his own little stable and he even gets snuggles each night before he goes to sleep.

"He's doing really well. He's a strong little fella and very gentle," Emily said.

"All the kids get involved to take care of him - Daniel calls him his 'little buddy', and they all take turns feeding him his bottle," Emily said.

Emily's eldest daughter Zoe has been raising poddy calves since she was just six-years-old, Red Rocket will be the third calf Zoe has had a hand in raising.

"I enjoy looking after [Red Rocket]. He's got big blue eyes and he's super cute. He's my special friend," Zoe said. "I like looking after baby animals, especially big ones likes calves or foals."

Younger sister Annabelle said she just loved everything about the new calf, especially his soft fur and friendly nature.

While the kids are aware of the situation with the coronavirus in the world right now, living on a farm has been a great means of healthy distraction for them during the pandemic, Emily said. Having a new addition to the family added something fun and different to their usual routine - and just in time for the Easter school holidays too.

For Terry and GiGi, finding joy in the small things helps them navigate their journey to recovery after the bushfires. While the rebuilding effort has all but ground to a halt due to the coronavirus pandemic, the routine of farm life gives them a sense of order amidst the chaos.

With everything going on right now it's easy to get caught up in the anxiety gripping the world. But then stories like this come along and leave you with the warm and fuzzies - and a reaffirming sense of hope.

So when a few fortuitous events align, and there's a cow named Faith and a calf is resuscitated to go on to bring joy to many - maybe we can indeed call it... a little Easter miracle.

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