

CHAPTER 1: The role of breeders' societies

SA Stud Book Stud Breeders' Manual, Chapter 3

South African stud breeders may sometimes feel overwhelmed by all the organisations in the stud industry; what they represent and how they complement one another. The breeders' society is possibly one of the most important organisations for any stud breeder.

A breeders' society may be defined as an establishment of breeders of a specific breed who concern themselves with that breed and manage it in such a way that its traits will realise the maximum advantage for the breeders and owners. The concept of a breeders' society is considered so important that it is defined in the **Animal Improvement Act, 1998 (Act No. 62 of 1998)** which also allocates certain powers and obligations to breeders' societies. In terms of the Act, an animal breeders' society is defined as follows:

An animal breeders' society is a group of persons that promote the breeding, the recording or registration, the genetic improvement and the use of a kind of animal or an animal of a specified breed of such kind of animal; that determines and applies breed standards; who at its sole discretion recommends the recording or registration of an animal or a specified breed of a kind of animal, bred in or imported into the Republic; and who is registered in terms of the Act.

The task of a particular breeders' society is set out in its constitution which is formulated collaboratively by the members of that society and can be amended as necessary.

TASKS

The main tasks of a breeders' society are to:

- **formulate a policy on**
 - breed purity and identity
 - recording practices
 - breeding practices
 - membership of the breeders' society
 - breed improvement
 - breed promotion, and
 - the management of the breeders' society.
- **implement the formulated policy in such a way that**
 - the breed retains its identity
 - the breed will flourish and progress, and
 - the breeders and owners of the animals of that breed will realise the maximum advantage from their involvement with the breed.

PURPOSE

All breeders' societies have the following objectives:

- **breed identity**
 - to establish the uniqueness of the breed
 - to identify the purpose of the breed, and
 - to determine the role of the breed in the broad agricultural and economic community.
- **improvement of the breed with retention of its unique traits**
 - to formulate breed standards and to ensure its disciplined implementation, and
 - to establish a breeding policy focused on knowledge of the market and the needs of the industry.
- **breed promotion**
 - to employ established ways and to find innovative approaches to promote the breed.
- **cost-effective management**
 - to manage the finances of the society responsibly
 - to disseminate and implement the breeding policy
 - to form a council that represents the members
 - to put in place functional committees that are responsible for regular feedback
 - to deal with office administration, make proper arrangements for meetings, and keep and distribute minutes of such meetings
 - to send out notices timeously
 - to organise inspections and shows and arrange special days, and
 - a society may, as many do already, employ the services of the Secretariat, a service offered by SA Stud Book's assets company, Stemma Animalia (Pty) Ltd, to handle its many administrative tasks at a compensatory fee.

ACTIONS

The actions to realise objectives are:

- a. determining the niche and role of the breed in the industry
- b. identifying market and industry needs
- c. objectively determining the suitability or otherwise of the breed for these needs
- d. quantifying and documenting the characteristics and features of the breed
- e. developing internal and external communication programmes:
 - **internal: breeder information, training and feedback on:**
 - the role of the breed and the needs of the market/industry
 - the strong and weak points of the breed, how to address the shortcomings and benefit from the strong points, and communication with and among breeders about establishing an appropriate knowledge base, corporate identity, the promotion of cohesion and the establishment of a uniform, collective promotion message.
 - **external: promotion and marketing campaigns that:**
 - address the needs of the industry
 - promote the interests of the breed and society
 - promote a demand for animals of the breed
 - are honest and without prejudice, and
 - are aimed at the breed, rather than the breeders.

These actions demand particular solidarity among and collaboration of all breeders of the breed and a sound relationship among the breeders, their clients and other stakeholders.

THE MANAGEMENT OF BREEDERS' SOCIETIES

Owing to worldwide deregulation of the agricultural industry, environmental concerns and increasing awareness of product safety and animal welfare, it is clear that the role of breeders' societies will have to adapt to these changing circumstances. Breeders' societies are responsible for the conservation and development of two very valuable resources, namely the breeds that they represent and the people involved with those breeds through their common interest and enthusiasm.

SA STUD BOOK AND BREEDERS' SOCIETIES

The Act stipulates that a registration certificate may only be issued by a registered registering authority. A breeders' society has the right to apply for registration as a registering authority, but it is generally accepted that it is not the domain of the breeders' society to capture and verify data; its task is rather the improvement and promotion of the breed. Most breeders' societies therefore prefer to use the services of an existing registering authority, such as SA Stud Book, with its 67 breeders' societies encompassing all species.

The SA Stud Book Association is an association of breeders' societies with the basic aim to enable these societies to achieve their goals. It is the mission of SA Stud Book to be a significant role player in the genetic improvement of animals in South Africa.

SA Stud Book's broad aims are to empower breeders' societies by:

- reliable record-keeping of pedigrees and breeding information, and the issuing of authentic registration certificates on behalf of the breeders' societies, in line with acceptable international standards
- applying breed standards on behalf of the breeders' societies
- motivating breeders' societies and their members to genetically improve the production potential of their recorded animals and to enhance breed purity through acceptable breeding principles
- making procedures and data of internationally acceptable standards available
- protecting and promoting the common interests of stud breeders and breeders' societies
- promoting the use of registered animals as breeding parents in the broader livestock industry
- promoting the export of registered animals, semen and embryos
- maintaining a database of which the integrity is beyond question, and
- providing technical and advisory services to breeders' societies and their members.

As the registering authority, it is the duty of SA Stud Book to ensure that all recorded animals meet the minimum breed standards of the relevant breeders' society.

BREEDERS' DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is important to note that, when recording animals, the integrity of the data and the quality of reports to breeders depend, on the one hand, on the systems, procedures and verifications of the registering authority; and on the other, on the quality of the raw data submitted by the breeder. Breeders therefore have an obligation to ensure that the data they submit meets the requirements and provisions of the relevant breeders' society's constitution, as well as its bylaws.