



A breed for all reasons

The highly adapted Bonsmara is ideal for South African farming conditions. It has an excellent feed conversion rate, producing high-quality meat in the feedlot or on the veld.

With the steeply increasing input costs faced by today's beef producers, choosing a breed has become a serious, far-reaching consideration. The simple fact is that a farmer has to have animals that add value to his operation.

While all breeds lay claim to a certain number of characteristics, few have the results to back these up.

THE PROVEN BONSMARA

The Bonsmara breed has its origins in an intensive crossbreeding programme that started in the early 1930s. The main focus of this project was to develop a breed that could adapt to South Africa's diverse environment, and be more profitable under poor grazing conditions.

After 50 years as a registered breed, Bonsmara boasts the most important characteristics needed to qualify as an adaptable breed. This ensures



better profits for both the commercial and stud breeder, and sustainability in the long run.

Bonsmara was the first breed of cattle inspected using production records. All Bonsmara cattle are inspected at breeding age, and any not showing good veld adaptability are rejected. Well-adapted Bonsmara animals can be identified by the following:

- A smooth coat in summer;
- Well-pigmented eyes, udders and hooves;
- A strong constitution; and
- Sound feet and legs.

Any animal with structural defects or that is functionally inefficient is culled.

ABOVE: Under South Africa's demanding conditions, a beef producer needs a functional, efficient breed that can produce affordably off the veld. Bonsmara cows often wean more than 50% of their own weight. SUPPLIED

SOUND MOTHERING ABILITY

Due to intensive selection, Bonsmara calves can be produced off the veld at low cost. The breed's key mothering abilities are:

- **Early puberty**
Bonsmaras grow fast, mature early and breed at 12 to 18 months of age.
- **Ease of calving**
The trait is also of value in crossbreeding.
- **Superior fertility**
This important trait is maintained by strict selection standards.
- **Good milking ability**
This ensures a high weaning weight.
- **Low mortality**
Calves are highly resistant to tick-borne diseases.

GOOD GROWTH

It is estimated that about 70% of the meat consumed in South Africa originates from the feedlot. To be competitive, a

breed therefore has to be able to perform under these conditions.

In a study conducted jointly by the University of the Free State and the Sernick Group to determine the optimal profitable period for certain breeds, the Bonsmara showed why feedlots prefer this breed.

The animals in the study gained an average of 1,98kg/day with a feed conversion rate of

ABOVE: SP Olivier from Hotvoor Bonsmaras in Vryheid with winning carcasses in a regional SAMIC competition.

BELOW: The Bonsmara breed has the ability to perform under intensive or extensive growth conditions and is the feedlots' first choice.

5,41:1. This demonstrated that Bonsmara animals are not only good performers under intensive growth conditions, but easily convert feed into meat.

The same factors are demonstrated when Bonsmara bulls are subjected to the annual, on-the-veld growth tests used in performance testing of the breed. Animals tested on extensive conditions show excellent growth, another reason the Bonsmara is a good option for the commercial farmer in areas where grazing quality is not particularly high.

NATIONAL CARCASS WINNER YEAR AFTER YEAR

The SAMIC National Carcass Competition provides a unequivocal demonstration of the quality of carcass produced by the Bonsmara. The breed has been a national winner in the single carcass division for the past seven years, while in the group division it has won in six out of the past seven years.

In the study described earlier, the average slaughter percentage was 60%, demonstrating that the breed converts feed into meat that shows on the carcass. This is the end-product that will end up in the hands of the consumer.

CROSSBREEDING

The Bonsmara plays an important role in any crossbreeding programme. The female animals have excellent mothering abilities that can be used with many breeds, and Bonsmara has earned itself a name as an ideal option for commercial breeders looking to use quality female animals in a crossbreeding system.

THE BONSMARA IS A GOOD OPTION IN AREAS WHERE GRAZING QUALITY IS RELATIVELY POOR

CALM TEMPERAMENT

Finally, wild and difficult animals are the last thing a beef producer wants; they are dangerous to farmworkers and add to labour costs. The Bonsmara is highly regarded for its docile temperament, which makes it safe, easy, and affordable to handle.

• Visit the Bonsmara stall in the Beef Complex at Nampo Harvest Day (15 to 18 May 2018). Phone Bonsmara SA on 051 448 6084.

