

Bonsmara breeders help train emerging farmers

The Bonsmara SA Society and its members take their role of mentorship seriously, hosting and organising information days and training courses for emerging cattle farmers across the country.



South Africa's emerging beef cattle farmers are increasingly focusing on producing better animals. This translates into better quality meat for consumers and higher profits for the farmers. More importantly, these producers are playing an ever greater role in providing food security in the country.

for emerging farmers seeking help with cattle management, it is crucial for both the officers and the farmers to have access to the latest industry knowledge. All extension officers and emerging farmers are therefore welcome to attend the training. Bonsmara SA enlists the help of the various provincial

THE SERNICK GROUP IN THE FREE STATE HAS BUILT AN ON-FARM TRAINING FACILITY FOR EXTENDED COURSES

In a bid to accelerate this process, the Bonsmara Society SA, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, works with extension officers to provide training days for emerging farmers. As extension officers are usually the first port of call

departments of agriculture to hold training days. In May 2017, for example, Bonsmara SA joined with the Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture to hold a cattle farmers' day at the Nooitgedacht Experimental Farm, outside Ermelo. Approximately 400 people from across the



ABOVE: An emerging farmers' day held by the Sernick Group in Edenville, Free State.

BELOW: A packed hall at Nooitgedacht Farm, Ermelo, during a beef cattle day held by the Bonsmara Society SA.

province attended the event, with extension officers from each district bringing farmers who already farmed beef cattle or were interested in starting.

BREEDERS' INVOLVEMENT

The success of any cattle farmers' day depends on the support of breeders in the area, and the



Mpumalanga event was no exception: a group of Bonsmara breeders stepped up to the plate by sponsoring the day. The breeders also gave a map showing their location to all farmers attending the event; this was to encourage them to visit the breeders closest to them for advice and help in the future.

Farmers' days are held not only by Bonsmara SA, but independently by the breeders themselves, both as individuals and groups. Bonsmara breeders in Mpumalanga, for example, recently sponsored the Ermelo Farmers' Day.

These events work both ways: emerging farmers benefit from breeders' expertise, which helps to ensure their sustainability, and breeders get exposure to emerging farmers looking to invest in cattle who are more likely to be successful.

CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

The Sernick Group in Edenville in the Free State has gone as far as building an on-farm facility where they are able to train groups of farmers attending an extended course in cattle management.

The Frontier Bonsmara breeder group in the Eastern Cape offers a five-module cattle breeding course for emerging farmers. In this case, attendees visit a number of breeders' farms to learn about various aspects of cattle breeding. On the final



ABOVE: Emerging farmers listen to a practical talk during a beef cattle day in Mpumalanga.

ABOVE RIGHT: Fourie Scheepers (far right) from Zinabos Bonsmaras explains a detail at an emerging farmers' day in Ficksburg.

BELOW: Farmers attending an emerging farmers' day held at Marochel Bonsmaras of Charl Uys in the Warrenton district.



day, the farmers attend an auction where they can buy breeding bulls for improving the genetics of their herds. More than 15 farmers' days focusing specifically on the training of emerging farmers were held by Bonsmara SA breed advisers Bernard Burger and Louis Steyl in 2017. Farmers' days have already been held in Trompsburg, Lephalale, Lindley, Vryburg and other districts. More are planned in other districts for 2018.

ESTABLISHING COMMERCIAL FARMERS ABLE TO DELIVER

All the farmers' days held by Bonsmara SA or Bonsmara breeders are helping to secure better food security in South Africa. Beef production, along with all other aspects of agriculture, is an ever-changing industry, and to be competitive and sustainable, all farmers involved in it must work together to ensure the best possible product on the market.

To achieve this, it is crucial that the industry helps to convert subsistence farmers into commercial producers able to deliver to the formal markets, which, in the case of beef cattle farming, is the feedlot industry.

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