

High growth rate: a true Bonsmara trait

Bonsmaras are well known for their high growth and feed conversion rates. They perform exceptionally well in intensive and extensive systems, and add value to any cattle operation.



Producing meat of excellent quality at a reasonable price is the main aim of breeding beef cattle. Meat can be marketed in a number of ways, however. The first and most common way in the South African red meat industry is to sell weaner calves to feedlots. There is also the option of backgrounding calves on the farm to fatten them up for feedlots or slaughter.

Another option is to operate the entire value chain, from breeding the animals to weaning, backgrounding, feeding and slaughtering them, and then retailing the meat. But few farmers have the capacity to carry out all this.

BONSMARA WEANERS REMAIN THE FIRST CHOICE FOR FEEDLOTS

The most important aspect of meat trading is the animal's ability to grow. However, in recent years, the measuring of an animal's feed conversion ratio (FCR) has also become a key factor. The FCR is one of the most effective ways to increase the profit a farmer can generate from cattle. According to a study by Alison Sundstrom, [XXXX](#), a 10% improvement in average daily gain can produce an increase of 18% in profit, while a 10% improvement in FCR can see profit rising by 43%.

PERFORMANCE TESTING

The most effective way to select for growth is to use performance testing. Bonsmara breeders are the leaders in this respect as they are determined to ensure that only the finest genetics are used in the breed and then sold on to the commercial industry.

More than 7 000 young bulls are tested annually by Bonsmara breeders in on-farm growth tests, and only the best end up becoming breeding bulls.



**BONSMARA
SA**

According to SA Studbook data, the Bonsmara shows excellent growth in extensive, as well as intensive, environments. Eighty-eight percent of bulls sold every year, on auction or out of hand on the farm, are on or above breed average for growth breeding values. Taking into account that all Bonsmara bulls will be inspected at least once by senior inspectors, it is safe to say that only bulls with good breeding values for growth, as well as conformation, will be on auction. Commercial breeders can be assured that the bull

OPPOSITE PAGE: Bonsmara bulls perform excellently in growth tests. In South Africa, more Bonsmara bulls are tested annually than all other breeds combined.

ABOVE: Bonsmara weaner calves are known for their excellent growth rates and good performance in feedlots.
PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

they buy at a Bonsmara sale will add value to the growth capability of their herd.

TESTING FEED CONVERSION

Statistics show that Bonsmara breeders have had the most bulls tested for FCR over the past 20 years. In 2017, a total of 638 bulls were tested by breeds registered with SA Studbook. A total of 352 of these were Bonsmaras, more than 50% of the total. With more and more Bonsmara breeders sending bulls to central testing stations, this number is likely to grow. To meet this steadily growing demand, Bonsmara breeders have built seven new testing stations over the past **XX years**.

GROWTH ABILITY

According to a recent study by the University of the Free State, the Bonsmara can achieve excellent growth with a good FCR within a shorter period than is common in South African feedlots.

The study was conducted to determine the maximum profit margin period of seven breeds. With an average daily gain of 1,98kg/day, an FCR of 5.41:1, and a feeding time of only 112 days, it is clear that the Bonsmara is perfectly suited for optimal growth.

PREFERRED IN FEEDLOTS

The phrase "To measure is to know", coined by Prof Jan Bosma, the creator of the Bonsmara, can still be applied today. After 55 years, Bonsmara breeders continue to follow this motto, and this is why Bonsmara weaner calves are still the number one choice for commercial feedlots.

With its capacity for good growth combined with an excellent carcass, the Bonsmara is the solution to many cattle farmers' needs.

• Email the Bonsmara Cattle Breeders' Society of South Africa at info@bonsmara.co.za.