

The value of Simmentaler genes in creating efficient beef producing cows

By John Boule Animal Scientist



Angus x Simmentaler-Bonsmara type heifer with Angus calf



Bonsmara x Simmentaler cows with Red Angus cross calves



Simmentaler type heifer with Angus sired calf



Simmentaler type heifer with Angus sired calf



Simmentaler x Bonsmara type cow

The Simmentaler breed is well-known for its excellent milk producing qualities. 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”.

One such producer is J R (Tubby) du Preez of the farm Glenlea, Alexandria district, Eastern Cape. “Simmentaler 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 600 mm 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. ♦