



NGUNI Beestelersgenootskap Cattle Breeders Society

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NEWS BRIEF – MARCH 2008

It is some time since Council has put out a newsbrief, but we thought we would wait to the first formal council meeting of 2008 before doing so. A short communication was issued in December, after the AGM, specifically announcing the appointment of Lourens Jonker to the council, and the appointment of Johan de Jager as our new business manager in the office. We welcome them both, and look forward to the contribution that they will make to the business of our society.

Our year kicked off with an inspector's conference held in late January. As an alternative to the normal inspectors gathering at the time of the AGM, this essentially was a strategic workshop aimed at dealing with the increasing load on our inspectorate in the face of continued growth. In addition we discussed the interface between inspectors, Society and members, and developed some useful plans aimed at improving the quality of the inspection process, and accordingly, the service to members.

The following strategies emerged from the workshop:

In line with our governance policy of having working sub-committees of council, a new inspector sub-committee would be constituted under the guidance of Lourens (inspection portfolio holder), which would:

- Plan and coordinate the annual and special inspection process.
- Provide advice to Council and the technical committee on breed issues and standards.
- Review inspector training in collaboration with the training committee.
- Review and seek to implement a revised code of ethics for inspectors.
- Improve inspection administration, optimizing the use electronic data as opposed to hand written forms.
- Position inspectors as the leading delegates in the interface between society and new and inexperienced breeders.

Council proceedings commenced during the week of 25 February, and the technical and finance subcommittees met on Tuesday 26 February.

The technical committee dealt with a number of important issues of which members need to be aware. Firstly, as was the case in previous years, an exception report is to be compiled (previously termed the "blacklist") identifying animals in the system which do not meet the minimum breed standards. These will be advised to relevant breeders, and their cooperation is requested in addressing anomalies. Secondly, a revised schedule for sales under Society auspices has been formulated for implementation on 1 July 2008. This will be circulated to members in due course. Thirdly, a revised policy on fertility standards has been developed by Kevin, and is attached to this newsbrief for the information of members. On comments on this should be forwarded to the office before the end of May. This will be put to council for approval during June. Attached also is a draft breed policy, which has been the subject of ongoing discussion, and remains work in progress.

The business of the finance subcommittee was largely of a routine nature. Of note however, is the fact that our office remains under severe pressure in terms of workload, and this situation is exacerbated by

unreasonable demands on the time of office staff by some breeders. We would request members to be sensitive to this problem, and assist by minimizing telephone calls, subscribing to the direct dealing principle by referring queries straight to Studbook rather than via the office, and by making appointments to meet with office staff when necessary to do so.

On Wednesday we presented the proposed breeder training program to council and club representatives. This was done by Dr Piet Prinsloo, who is also the architect behind this project. Whilst there remain some finishing touches to be made before the program is finalized, it is of top quality and was enthusiastically endorsed by those present. We are extremely grateful to Piet for the thought and hard work he has put into this project. Once finalised, it is intended that this become the Society standard for breeder training, and will be offered to the clubs for the purposes of member training and promoting information on Nguni cattle.

With regard to the formal council meetings held on Wednesday and Thursday morning, there are number of matters to report.

In respect of the interface between clubs and Society, it is necessary to note that the decisions taken at the club "bosberaad" held last year, do not enjoy the full support of all members. Accordingly, council has reviewed this position, and it has now been agreed that club membership would not be prescribed, but rather encouraged. It has also been accepted that, whilst administratively desirable for some clubs, it is not practically feasible to deduct club fees from all members via the annual society subscriptions. Where this has happened, members who are dissatisfied with this arrangement will be credited with this amount. For those who accept this deduction, the monies will be paid over to the relevant club accordingly. Clubs are requested to furnish the office with an updated membership list. The principle that clubs are important agents of Society regarding member training and breed promotion, remains valid.

A successful engagement with the IDC in Limpopo has resulted in the purchase of registered cattle from Northern Club members for communal projects to the value of some R1 million. Further IDC projects of a similar nature elsewhere in the country are being planned, and Deon has played a pivotal role in discussions with the IDC on these plans. These projects are a standing agenda item at council meetings.

Since the meeting, we are pleased to report that an order has been placed with the Kalahari Club for a project in the Northern Cape, and it is expected that an order will soon be placed for a project in the Free State.

On Wednesday morning, the council held discussions with a group of established breeders on a number of issues, the most important being their concerns about the article on Nguni cattle published in the Landbou Weekblad on 7 December 2007. It was felt that this article unnecessarily focused on certain problems within the Society and that the tone thereof was somewhat negative toward the Nguni breed. As council, we accept the need to develop a more effective media relations policy in order to ensure that future publications of whatever nature, support the positive promotion of our breed. Discussions on other issues which included the interface with clubs, input of inspectors into technical committee matters, and the contribution to the society made by previous council members, were concluded satisfactorily.

On the promotions front, Naledi is busy working on the journal which will be published shortly, as well as preparing for our exhibit at NAMPO. She is also looking into a marketing strategy which will necessarily require the use of outside expertise.

Giel has reported that our finances are in good shape for the year to date, and Lourens is satisfied with the manner in which the annual inspection initiative is proceeding.

To you and your families, we wish you the best for the remainder of the year ahead, and trust that your cattle will benefit from the good rains most of us have enjoyed.

Council

17 March 2008