



Production potential of Nguni crosses

The Nguni's hardiness, fertility, longevity and adaptability are all excellent qualities that should be exploited to maximise the productivity of this breed.

Beef cattle breeders should always strive to improve the production efficiency of their herds.

Generally, any system that can produce more live weight per hectare from smaller-framed cattle will be more profitable than a system that has heavier animals but fewer kilograms of beef per hectare.

NGUNI COWS CAN CALVE UP TO THE AGE OF 16 YEARS OR LONGER

As a dam line, the Nguni is ideal for crossbreeding. On average, cattle eat 2% to 3% of their body weight per day. The carrying capacity

of the veld is calculated in large stock units (LSUs). One LSU is the equivalent of an ox of 450kg that grows at a rate of 500g per day. Whenever any comparison between the productivity of different cow sizes is made, it should be based on the LSU. If the official carrying capacity in an area is 7ha/LSU, then 25ha can carry three cows of 600kg each, and wean a calf of 250kg. The total weight weaned would therefore be 750kg.

If an Nguni cow weighs 400kg and weans a crossbred calf of 220kg, 25ha can carry four cows with calves. The total weight weaned is then 880kg (17% more).

From Table 1, it is clear how

Table 1: Comparison of breeds on 1 000ha with grazing capacity of 143 LSU

	Large-framed <i>Bos taurus</i>	Medium-framed <i>Bos taurus</i>	Nguni	Nguni x <i>Bos taurus</i>
Cow's weight in kilograms	600	520	370	370
Total number of cows	115	129	166	166
Calf weaning percentage	65%	75%	85%	83%
Number of calves	75	97	141	138
Average weaning weight	250	235	180	215
Total kilograms produced	18 750	22 795	25 380	29 670
Rand per kilogram (2011)	R20,50	R20,30	R19,50	R20,30
Total rand	R384 275	R462 739	R494 910	R602 301
Difference in rand		R78 464	R110 635	R218 026
Difference in profit %		(20%)	(28,8%)	(56,7%)

BOS TAURUS BREEDS SUCH AS SIMMENTALER, CHAROLAIS, HEREFORD AND ANGUS.

*DATA IN TABLE PROVIDED IN PART BY PIET WARREN.

ABOVE:

The Nguni cow can wean a crossbred calf at 60% of her body weight.

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returns from the veld can differ with different types of cattle. Observe that no vaccine or management costs were taken into account.

More calves can be produced per hectare with a smaller-framed dam line. This means more profit.

THE IDEAL DAM FOR CROSSBREEDING

It is important to continue using a pure-bred Nguni cow to exploit the benefits of its good qualities such as hardiness, fertility,

longevity and adaptability. Other positive attributes of the Nguni include the ability of the cow to limit the size of the foetus regardless of the size of the sire, calving ease and good mothering ability.

Other breeds boast size. The Nguni offers more cows per hectare that calve each year, excellent calf rearing, and the ability to calve up to the age of 16 years, or more.

• For more information, phone the Nguni Breeders Society on 051 448 7303. Visit www.ngunicattle.info.