



# The Nguni: a superb dam line

While the Nguni is known as an excellent breed under harsh conditions, there's another reason they're being run by commercial farmers: the cows are outstanding at rearing crossbred calves.

**T**ough and able to thrive with minimal management, the Nguni is increasingly popular with commercial cattle farmers. And more recently, farmers have begun to maximise profits by crossbreeding with them.

Ngunis have the ability to limit the birth weight of their calves, even if they are crossed with large-frame breeds. They then go on to rear the crossbred calves successfully up to weaning age. What's more, the cows are highly fertile, with a long, productive life. All these factors combine to make the Nguni cows the ideal dam line.

## HARDY, ADAPTABLE

Research and performance testing have proved what many farmers have long known: the Nguni is a hardy breed that is extremely resistant to ticks.

The criteria for adaptability are that an animal must survive, reproduce and be productive. Due to the

hardiness of the Nguni, the breed occurs in virtually all areas of Southern Africa, even the Karoo, where farmers previously only farmed goats and sheep.

Some of the first commercial farmers to farm Nguni simply left their cattle on their game ranches. They returned a year later to find them not only surviving, but with a calf at foot. They had had no supplementary feed at all.

## A SMALLER COW

The Nguni cow is considerably lighter (average 367kg) than most other breeds (average 505kg), so her maintenance requirements are considerably lower. More Nguni cows can also be kept in a specific area than cows of other breeds. The result is that, despite other breeds' heavier weaners, Nguni crossbred calves produce more weight at weaning

**ABOVE:** While the Nguni is known for its performance under harsh conditions, another reason for its popularity with commercial farmers is the excellent way in which the cows rear their calves to weaning.

**ABOVE RIGHT:** Nguni hides are highly sought-after due to their handsome patterns and colours.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF NGUNI CATTLE BREEDERS' SOCIETY



per 100kg of cow weight mated. In other words, cow efficiency is outstanding!

## CALF RAISING

Due to the conformation of the Nguni cow (especially her sloping rump), she can calve without assistance even when mated to large-framed bulls. Because of the cow's ability to limit the size of the foetus before birth, calving difficulties seldom occur.

## ADAPTABILITY MEANS ANIMALS MUST SURVIVE, REPRODUCE AND BE PRODUCTIVE

Fertility is one of the most important factors determining the economic profitability of beef production. It goes hand in hand with the ability to raise the calves to marketing age, as high mortality negates all the advantages of high fertility in a beef herd. In addition, the Nguni cow produces

more than 7l of milk per day, with a butterfat content of 6%, which allows her to raise the crossbred calf to its full potential.

## CROSSBRED CALVES

Studies have found that crossbred calves grow almost as fast as pure-bred, large-framed calves. In the case of Simmentaler/Nguni crosses, it is 1,65kg/day compared with 1,76kg/day. The feed conversion ratio in certain cases was even better than that of large-framed breeds – 6,36 vs 6,58.

## DESIRABLE HIDES

Ngunis have a pigmented hide with short glossy hair, varying in colour from white, yellow, brown and red to black. These colours are distributed across the hide in identifiable patterns, which make them highly sought-after, bringing in additional income once the animal has been slaughtered.

• Phone the Nguni Cattle Breeders' Society on 051 448 7302/3 for further details.