

Stamboek Times

**IN 2026, NOOI ONS
jou UIT NA:**

Kleinvee BLUP

📅 2 - 3 September 📍 Bloemfontein

Kleinvee Lenteskool

📅 9, 16, 23, 30 September 📍 Bloemfontein

SA Stamboek Trailblazer

📅 28 - 30 Oktober 📍 Bloemfontein

SA Stud Book team waves South African flag at INTERBULL/ICAR 2026

Four members of the SA Stud Book research and development team – Dr Bobbie van der Westhuizen, Jason Reding, Donné Kruger and Hannah Kruger – attended the joint Interbull/ICAR Congress held in Verona, Italy, from 31 May to 4 June this year. The congress brought together leading researchers, scientists and industry experts under the theme “Shaping the future of sustainable livestock”.

The congress provided an excellent opportunity for the team to learn about the latest developments in genetic and genomic evaluations, animal recording, data management and emerging technologies that will shape the future of livestock breeding.



The SA Stud Book team at Interbull/ICAR 2026. From the left are Dr Bobbie van der Westhuizen, Jason Reding, Hannah Kruger, and Donné Kruger.

Some of the key areas of learning included:

- Advances in single-step genomic evaluations (ssGBLUP) and the continued development of more accurate and efficient genetic evaluation systems.
- The increasing use of artificial intelligence and machine learning in livestock breeding, including automated phenotype recording, prediction models and decision-support tools.
- New approaches to measuring and evaluating health, fertility, methane emissions, resilience and sustainability traits, enabling breeding programmes to place greater emphasis on economically important and environmentally responsible traits.
- The growing role of sensor technologies and big data in improving animal recording, welfare monitoring and herd management.
- International collaboration on genomic data exchange, multi-country evaluations and standardisation, highlighting the importance of global partnerships in advancing genetic improvement.



A major highlight of the congress was Hannah Kruger's oral presentation during the "Experience with single-step" session. Hannah presented research on the re-ranking of imported Angus sires following integration of foreign genotypes into a national genomic evaluation. Her presentation showcased SA Stud Book's work in transitioning the South African Angus population from traditional pedigree-based evaluations to ssGBLUP, demonstrating how incorporating genomic information can improve the accuracy of breeding values, particularly for imported sires with limited local performance data. The presentation generated valuable discussions with international researchers working in the same field.

Beyond the technical sessions, the congress provided outstanding networking opportunities. The team established and strengthened relationships with researchers, software developers and international organisations, creating valuable collaborations that will support future research, genomic evaluations and technology development within SA Stud Book.

Attendance at Interbull/ICAR 2026 reaffirmed that SA Stud Book's research aligns with international best practice while fostering new ideas and collaborations that will contribute to continued innovation in genetic evaluations and livestock improvement in Southern Africa.

SA Stud Book attends 56TH SASAS CONGRESS

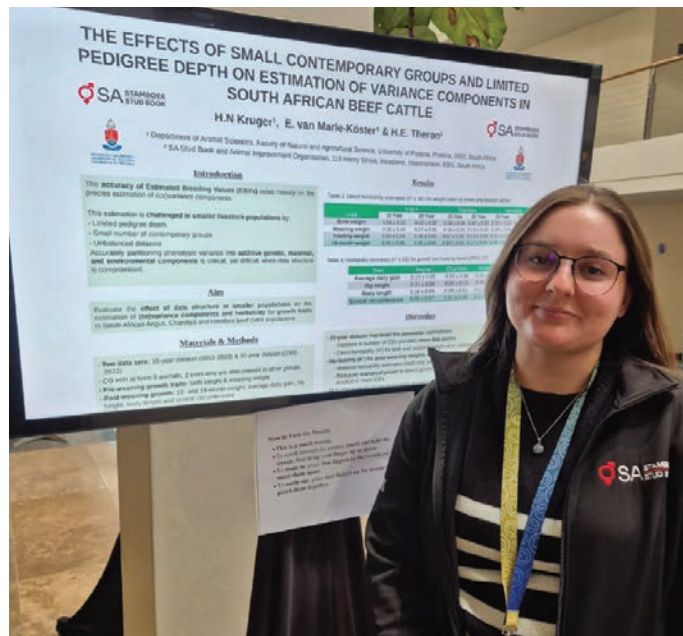
Hannah Kruger from the Genetic and Professional Services team at SA Stud Book attended the 56th Annual South African Society for Animal Scientists (SASAS) Congress, held at Lagoon Beach Hotel in Cape Town from 7 to 9 July. The congress, themed "Gearing up: Animal science and beyond", brought together researchers, academics and industry professionals to discuss the latest advances in animal science, genetics, sustainability and innovation.

A highlight of the congress was Hannah's poster presentation, "The effects of small contemporary groups and limited pedigree depth on estimation of variance components in South African beef cattle", based on her Master's research. Her work received second

prize in the animal breeding, genetics and reproduction category, recognising the quality and relevance of the research within the South African animal science community.

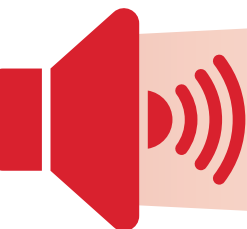
In addition to presenting her research, Hannah participated as an industry representative in the panel discussion "Where science meets practice: Unlocking industry-academia synergy". Representing SA Stud Book and the animal breeding and genetics sector, she shared insights on the skills and practical experience graduates require to transition successfully into industry, highlighting the value of mentorship, postgraduate training and stronger collaboration between universities and industry.





Hannah Kruger took second place in the animal breeding, genetics and reproduction category at the SASAS poster presentation.

Throughout the congress, delegates explored emerging research in genomics, climate resilience, livestock production, breeding technologies and sustainable agriculture. The event also provided valuable networking opportunities with researchers and industry leaders from across South Africa, reinforcing SA Stud Book's commitment to advancing scientific research and supporting innovation within the livestock industry.



LISTEN: [Click here](#) to listen to an interview (at 10:40) with a number of the panellists who participated in the industry panel "Where science meets practice: Unlocking industry-academia synergy".

ASSESSMENT and SELECTION of cattle for functional efficiency (Part 1)

Adapted, revised and updated from original articles by Danie Bosman

Selecting cattle for functional efficiency has shifted livestock judging from aesthetics to science. Generally, the focus is now on traits related to production, considering physiology, endocrinology, anatomy, and, in many cases, even genetic merit.

Selection allows animals with desirable traits to produce more offspring, changing gene frequencies in favour of adapted, productive animals. Since 1959, South African beef cattle have improved through performance recording and the visual appraisal of functional efficiency, mainly introduced by Prof Jan Bonsma in 1946 (Bonsma, 1979). Improvements in quantifiable traits, such as reproduction and growth, have been well documented, although most functional traits, such as coat type and hoof growth, remain unquantifiable, making it difficult to assess selection progress for these traits.

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Visual appraisal

Visual appraisal can be categorised based on its intended purpose, such as visual appraisal for:

- Breed standards.
- Show standards.
- Beef conformation.
- According to the norms of functional efficiency.

Traditionally, visual appraisal aimed at breed and show standards was generally not correlated with production and function.

While breed standards are essential for maintaining trademark value, show standards usually held little significance in the past. Fortunately, in South Africa, show standards have largely been superseded by standards of functional efficiency.

It is crucial to balance performance recording results and breeding values with all the mentioned categories of visual appraisal. Another key principle is that form must follow function.

In the show ring, there is often a desire for function to follow form, but this approach is rarely successful.

It is always sensible to identify animals that perform well in specific environments and to select for these types of cattle.

Visual appraisal does not assess an animal's production merit; thus, the show ring has historically failed to identify outstanding genetic material from a production standpoint. However, identifying exceptional genetic material through performance recording programmes and subsequently evaluating these animals visually in the show ring is a sound practice that all show societies and judges should adopt.

Visual appraisal, based on functional efficiency, plays an important role when:

- Attention is given to traits that are known to be correlated with production, especially reproduction.
- Adaptability to the specific environment is considered and evaluated, particularly when animals are inspected for registration for the specific breed.

- It verifies performance recording results. Animals may perform well but have a functional fault. Such animals should be culled irrespective of performance.
- A more accurate evaluation of an animal could not yet be performed and will only follow later in its productive life. For example, reproduction is evaluated after the animals have entered the herd. The assessment of functional efficiency, therefore, serves as an early reproduction prediction before animals enter the breeding herds.

Although linear classification for visually evaluated traits is common in dairy cattle, it has yet to be applied to beef cattle, if at all. This article therefore focusses on the functional evaluation of traits, rather than linear classification. Categories addressed are REPRODUCTION (including udder and teats), MUSCLING, ADAPTABILITY, FRAME (including skeletal and feet & leg deviations), HOOVES and some thoughts on TEMPERAMENT.

Reproduction

Traits influencing and regulating reproduction and survival (especially past puberty) are not only the most economically important but also have a distinct influence on the envisaged genetic selection progress for all other traits. If a calf is not born alive and stays alive, selection for any other trait falls by the wayside and is therefore hardly of any interest.

Reproductive failure can cause a major loss to any beef cattle enterprise. Although proper accurate recording of fertility traits is the point of departure for successful selection, evaluating cattle based on the norms of functional efficiency should be common practice for farmers to select highly fertile bulls, heifers and cows.

It is generally known and accepted that the complete genetic potential of the animal is laid down at conception. This is generally true in the possible absence of any environmental triggers for epigenetic effects.

The environment, including the uterine environment, determines the boundaries of ultimate reproduction and production, within which the individual can function, perform or produce.

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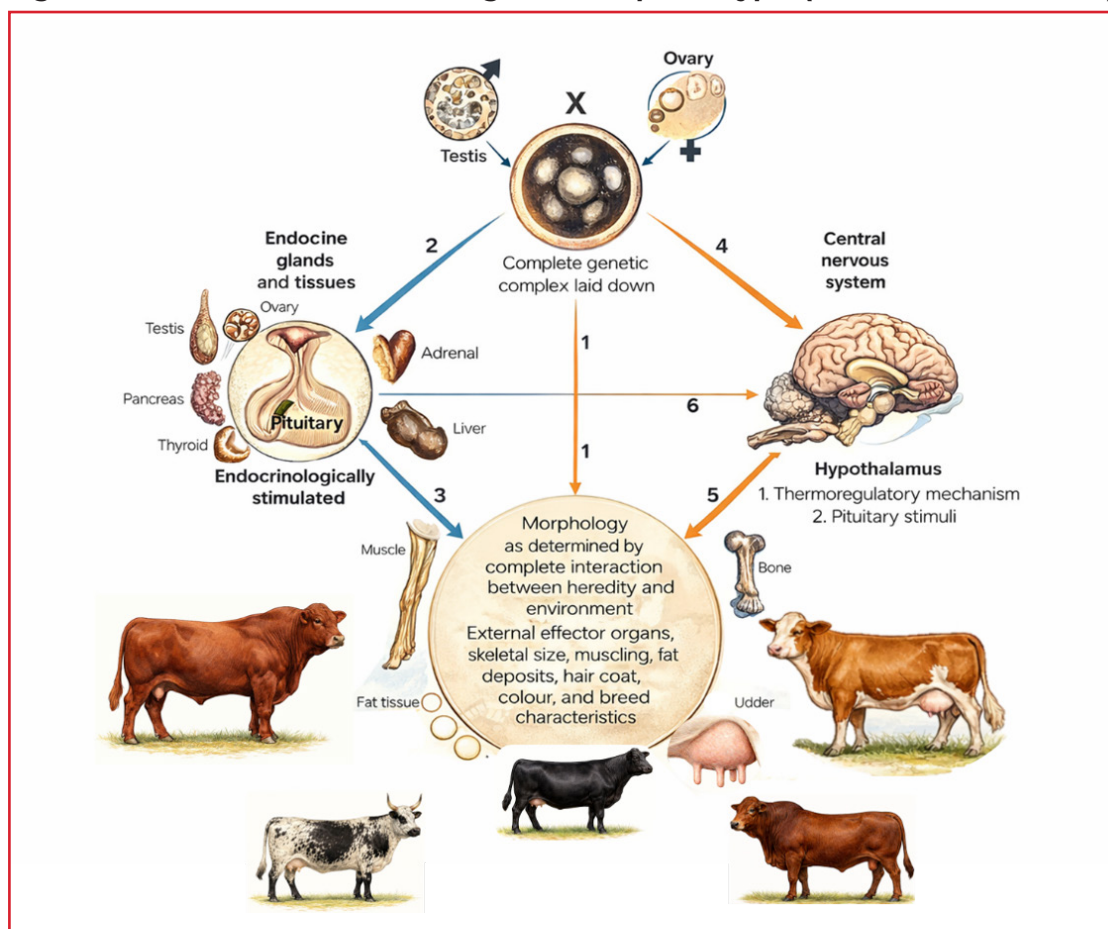
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Sometimes these limitations will result in a lack of or limit the full expression of an animal's genetic potential. Bonsma (1989) was one of the pioneers in documenting the different environmental effects on production animals (*Figure 1*).

Figure 1: The interaction between genes and phenotype. (Source: Bonsma 1983)



Interaction between the animal's genotype and the environment in which it must perform also results in endocrine responses. This, in turn, has a bearing on conformation and performance, including reproductive performance.

Hormones in cattle

The genetic blueprint and regulatory capacity of the endocrine glands (pituitary, thyroid, adrenal glands, ovaries, and testicles) (*Figure 1*) are established at conception, while their expression and functional output are modified throughout development.

Through recent scientific discoveries, it is now known that gene expression is not necessarily fixed at conception and might be subjected to epigenetic regulation (DNA methylation, histone modification) that is highly responsive to:

- Nutrition (prenatal & postnatal) (pre- and post-birth).

- Stress.
- Disease.
- Thermal environment.
- Endocrine disruptors.

The gene complex associated with Pathway 2 plays a crucial role in determining the functionality of endocrine glands. Modern systems biology consistently indicates that endocrine functions depend on:

- Developmental genes (organogenesis).
- Enzymatic genes (hormone synthesis).
- Transport proteins.
- Receptor genes.
- Feedback sensitivity genes.

Therefore, the hormones produced by these glands significantly affect the animal's phenotype as it progresses along Pathway 3. An imbalance is usually timing-related, relative to expected levels in certain hormones, but will manifest in the animal's conformation.

These effects can therefore be observed in practice in the animal as:

- Hypothyroidism causing delayed growth and poor muscling.
- Hypercortisolism leading to muscle wastage and therefore fat redistribution.
- Androgen deficiency resulting in poor secondary sex traits.

Furthermore, the entire developmental process, from conception to maturity, is influenced by the central nervous system, particularly the hypothalamus, located beneath the brain.

It is therefore no surprise that modern findings concur that the hypothalamus is the master integrator of:

- Nutrition.
- Photoperiod.
- Temperature.
- Stress.
- Reproductive status.

The hypothalamus secretes hormones that regulate the hormones released by the pituitary gland along Pathway 6. Additionally, the hypothalamus exerts a direct influence on the animal's phenotype as it follows Pathway 5. The very important roles are:

- Thermoregulation.
- Feed intake control.
- Energy partitioning.
- Stress responsiveness.

These directly affect growth efficiency and body composition, even without any changes in hormone concentrations. The anterior pituitary gland releases gonadotropins that stimulate the testes in males to produce testosterone and the ovaries in females to produce oestrogens, with LH being responsible for testosterone and ovulation, and FSH influencing spermatogenesis and follicular development in males and females, respectively.

All the pathways (1 to 6) determine overall development from conception to maturity. These pathways operate within sensitive developmental windows, during which nutrition, stress, and the environment can permanently modify gene expression and endocrine responsiveness through epigenetic mechanisms.

Recent epigenetic studies indicate extreme effects during the development of especially

foetuses and therefore:

- Critical windows of development.
- Epigenetic programming.
- Irreversibility of early insults.

Observers can therefore know that, in the light of this background, and especially its effects on the physical appearance of cattle, better adapted and productive animals will conform to specific norms.

Growth and development

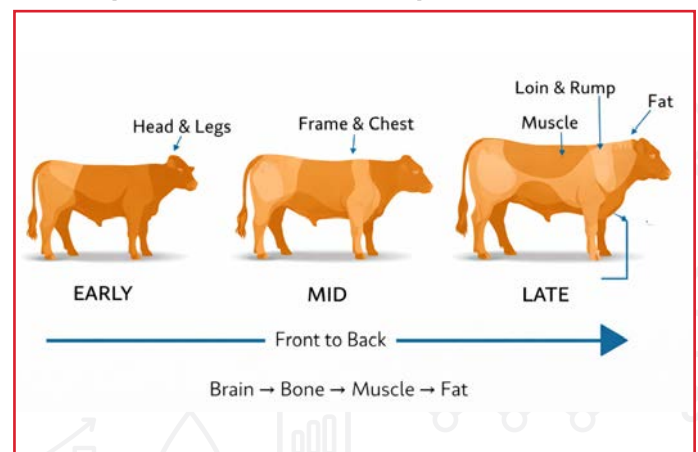
The classical description of growth and maturity patterns in cattle follows the work of Hammond (from 1932 to 1955), who showed that growth proceeds in a predictable sequence of tissues and body regions. Modern research has refined this model by incorporating endocrine regulation and developmental programming, while retaining the fundamental principle of growth priority.

Hammond found that the last part of the body to reach maturity was the rump and loin. This is true of the fertile animal; in the castrated or infertile bull or female, the front ribs, thorax, chine, brisket and head are the last parts of the body to reach maturity and will continue to grow until the animal dies.

Hammond described growth as following a front-to-back, top-to-bottom, inside-to-outside pattern, as illustrated in *Figure 2*:

1. Head and nervous system mature first.
2. Long bones of the limbs lengthen next.
3. Thorax and vital organs follow.
4. Loin and rump mature last.
5. Fat deposition as an indication of finishing.

Figure 2: Growth and maturity sequence in cattle. (After Hammond, 1955)





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Modern work in endocrinology, muscle biology, and developmental programming has refined this into a tissue-priority model, not just an anatomical one. Growth, therefore, happens by biological priority, not just location.

Priority order (most to least protected)

1. Brain and central nervous system.
2. Bone (especially long bones).
3. Vital organs (heart, lungs, liver, gut).
4. Muscle.
5. Fat.

When nutrition is restricted, it impacts animal appearance because of the way metabolic processes prioritise resources:

- Bone and organ growth are preserved.
- Muscle growth decreases.
- Fat accumulation is reduced first.

Evaluating cattle for functionality and suitability as replacements requires understanding their growth patterns. Their expected appearance at various ages is outlined in *Table 1*.

Table 1: Expected appearance at various growth stages.

Early growth (calf to weaner)	Intermediate growth (weaner to yearling)	Late growth (yearling to maturity)
• Head relatively large • Legs long (rapid long-bone growth) • Narrow chest and hindquarter • Little muscle definition	• Skeletal frame established • Chest deepens • Muscle begins filling forequarter and topline • Loin still narrow	• Loin and rump fill last • Muscle thickness increases • Fat deposition begins (breed and sex dependent) • Skeletal growth slows as epiphyses ossify

In the next issue of *Stamboek Times*, we will be addressing female and male fertility in the second part of this series of articles. – **Drs Japie van der Westhuizen & Helena Theron**

About

Danie Bosman

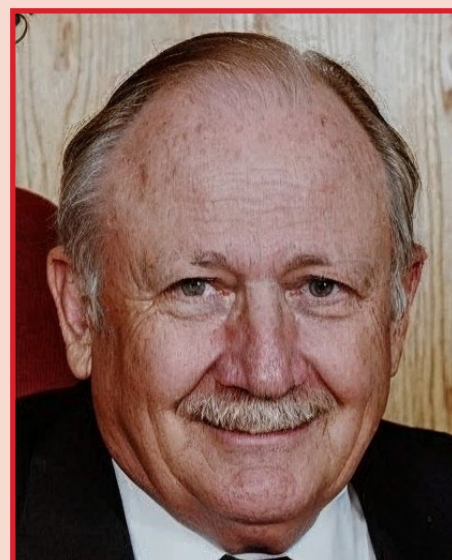
Danie Bosman was one of the most passionate Animal Scientists in the livestock industry. It is evident of his lifelong commitment and impact beyond the reach of his own life and his home country. As a young man, he already made a difference by applying the principles taught by his mentor, Jan Bonsma. He was not only focussed on the well-known motto “man must measure” but also on applying anatomical and physiological knowledge using visual assessment in judging the suitability of breeding animals. These bulls and cows considered replacements must thrive in the environments where they produce and reproduce.

He had a remarkable in-depth knowledge of the adaptation mechanisms and functionalities of farm animals, and how objective measurements can be used for breeding effective livestock.

In a class of his own

His gentle yet firm approach steered the breeding industry, especially for beef cattle, in the right direction. Through his endeavours, performance measurement became the norm and common practice in breeding programmes for farm animals. He also understood the balance between using performance figures and visual assessment.

Danie stayed attuned to the latest developments in animal breeding, even after his retirement. He kept fellow animal scientists, industry leaders and breeders



engaged in innovative insights, including data processing and interpretation, article and report writing, and information and farmers' days.

The SA Stud Book President's award was bestowed (posthumously) on Danie Bosman in 2022. His legacy in the livestock industry lives on.



17^{de} Bulveiling

16 Oktober 2026



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ROEDTAN

Learning together at the 2026 LARGE HERDS CONFERENCE

Suretha Francis and Thalia Brameld recently attended the 2026 Milk Producers' Organisation's (MPO) Large Herds Conference in Ballito, KwaZulu-Natal. It was a great opportunity to spend time with dairy producers, industry experts, and service providers who are all passionate about building profitable, sustainable dairy businesses. From practical herd management and milk quality to breeding, genetics, nutrition, and the latest technology and AI – every session focussed on helping farmers make informed decisions on the farm.

One of the biggest highlights was hearing directly from producers about what is working in their herds and the challenges they face every day. These conversations are invaluable and remind us that the best solutions are practical, simple, and focussed on improving profitability.

We returned to the office with fresh ideas, new connections, and a renewed commitment to supporting South African dairy farmers with reliable data, meaningful genetic information, and practical tools that help turn information into action. We find ourselves in a digital space and need to use all available tools to improve efficiency, but never forget the importance of getting our boots dirty.

Thank you to everyone who shared their knowledge and experiences. We look forward to putting these insights to work for the benefit of our dairy industry. – *Suretha Francis and Thalia Brameld*



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Read all about it

Die tweede fase van die Vleisbeesgenomikaprogram (BGP2) wat deur die Tegnologie Innovasie-agentskap (TIA) ondersteun word, verteenwoordig nóg 'n belangrike mylpaal vir die Suid-Afrikaanse vleisbeesbedryf. SA Stamboek en sy geaffilieerde telersgenootskappe het sedert die bekendstelling daarvan in April 2024 reeds die vrugte van die inisiatief begin pluk. Lees wat Johan Griesel en Jason Reding van SA Stamboek hieroor sê op bl.80 van die **Junie 2026-uitgawe van Veeplaas**.

Genomic testing is no longer a buzzword among goat breeders – it is reshaping the future of livestock breeding. At its core, genomics has the potential to unlock the secrets hidden in an animal's DNA. By understanding an animal's unique genetic blueprint, breeders can gain valuable insights into key traits, identify potential health risks associated with undesirable genes, and make more accurate predictions about the genetic potential an animal will pass on to future generations. Head to page 71 in the **July 2026 issue of Stockfarm** where Marike Hillocks unpacks the benefits of SA Stud Book's new goat genomics services.

In moderne melkboerdery word die werklike waarde van 'n koei bepaal deur haar vermoë om konsekwent, doeltreffend en winsgewend oor verskeie laktasies te produseer. 'n Elite-melkkoei lewer nie net baie melk nie, maar handhaaf 'n balans tussen reproduksie, gesondheid (veral uiergesondheid), funksionaliteit en genetiese meriete. Lees op bl.45 van **Veeplaas se Julie 2026-uitgawe** wat Suretha Francis en dr Japie van der Westhuizen oor 2026 se Elite-melkkoeie skryf.

Luister: SA Stamboek op die RADIO

 Christal-Lize Muller van Plaas Media het die BTB Simmentaler-veiling bygewoon waartydens SA Stamboek se IDTrax-naspeurbaarheidstelsel deur Rooivleisbedryfsdienste (RMIS) ingespan was om globale liggingsnommers toe te ken en die vee op die verkoping na te speur. **FRITZ BEZUIDENHOUT** van SA Stamboek het met haar gesels. **Klik hier** om na die gesprek op *RSG Landbou* te luister.

 Johan Gunter van *LandbouRadio* het in Junie vanjaar met **HERMAN LABUSCHAGNE** van SA Stamboek gesels oor die uitrol van hul opwindende IDTrax-naspeurbaarheidsplatform. **Klik hier** om te hoor (op 9:20) hoe hierdie program werk en hoe jy daaraan kan deelneem.

 **MARIKE HILLOCKS** van SA Stamboek het in 17 Julie se *LandbouRadio* met Johan Gunter gesels oor SA Stamboek se bokgenomika-dienste en wat dit alles behels. **Klik hier** om na die gesprek te luister (op 2:07).

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In the NEWS

Navorsingsprojek ondersoek inentingsbeplanning op plaasvlak

Dr Danie Odendaal, direkteur van Veearts Netwerk, het 'n nuwe navorsingsprojek van stapel gestuur om vas te stel hoe veeboere en veeartse inentingsprogramme op plaasvlak beplan, bestuur en ondersteun. Die projek volg te midde van die huidige fokus op bek-en-klouseer, maar die doel strek veel wyer as net die siekte. Volgens hom sal die navorsing 'n duidelik beeld gee van die bestaande inentingsbeplanning in die rooivleisbedryf, asook die vlak van samewerking tussen produsente en hulle veeartse.

Vir meer inligting oor die projek, [klik hier](#).

BEK-inenting en naspeurbaarheid skep nuwe standaard vir stoetveebedryf

Die stoetbedryf het 'n belangrike mylpaal bereik tydens die BTB Simmentalers-uitverkoop van Johan Styger en die Zinabos Bonsmaras-produksieveiling van Fourie Scheepers naby Fouriesburg. Met die regering se samewerking rakende die beskikbaarstelling van bek-en-klouseer entstof, Rooivleisbedryfsdienste (RMIS) en SA Stamboek se IDTrax-naspeurbaarheid srekordhoudingstelsel, is die diere op veiling op 'n verantwoordelike en gekontroleerde wyse verkoop en weggery na hul nuwe bestemmings.

[Klik hier](#) om meer te lees oor hoe naspeurbaarheid op 'n praktiese vlak in aksie was tydens hierdie veilings.

Cows forgotten on an island survived alone for 130 years

In the late 19th century, a small group of cattle was left behind on Amsterdam Island, a remote spot in the subantarctic region. Against the odds, the herd survived and adapted to the island's harsh conditions, becoming a rare case of feralisation. A detailed genetic study later revealed their fascinating evolutionary journey—but in 2010, the cattle were wiped out, sparking ongoing debate over the ethical and scientific challenges of preserving domestic biodiversity. [Click here](#) to read more.

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