SA STAMBOEK STUD BOOK

StamBoek Times

Gold Medal for former Stud Book manager

Dr Japie van der Westhuizen, former SA Stud Book general manager, received the 2026 Gold Medal from the South African Society for Animal Science (SASAS). The presentation took place at a gala dinner on 8 July as part of the 56th annual SASAS congress.

The Gold Medal is awarded “to a member of the Society who has served animal science and the Society honourably and in such a distinguished manner that his/her quality of scientific contributions, achievements, involvement and extended service to South Africa’s animal production industry has been recognised as exceptionally meritorious by many, both nationally and internationally”.

Congratulations Japie!



Professor Carina Visser, president of SASAS, with Dr Japie van der Westhuizen during the presentation of the Gold Medal.

Stamboek by 2026 Wagyu Wêreldkongres

Dr Bobbie van der Westhuizen van SA Stamboek het die Wagyu-ras se genetiese evaluasies tydens die Wagyu Wêreldkongres in Oktober buite Stellenbosch bespreek. Een van die tendense waarna hy verwys het was vrugbaarheids- en speenkenmerke. Die sterk positiewe genetiese tendens vir karkas en marmering is die gevolg van jare se seleksie in die ras.

Genetiese verslae word tans gepubliseer vir kalfgewig, moederkenmerke, groei, vrugbaarheid en karkaskenmerke. Laasgenoemde sluit onder meer in karkasgewig, ribvet en fynheid van marmering. Tot dusver is 4 595 Wagyu-diere reeds gegenotipeer. Hy het ook verwys na IDTrax, SA Stamboek se naspeurbaarheidsplatform wat onder andere met RMIS se platform gekoppel is.



Dr Bobbie van der Westhuizen tydens die Wagyu Wêreldkongres.



Current status of genomic integration in South African sheep registered at SA Stud Book

South Africa has a diverse sheep industry registered with SA Stud Book, with 15 sheep breeds currently registered and incorporated into BLUP evaluations. These breeds represent a range of production systems, breeding objectives and genetic resources that contribute to the country's sheep industry. Maintaining accurate pedigree and performance records across these breeds is important for monitoring genetic progress and supporting informed breeding decisions.

Genomics is becoming an increasingly valuable tool in South Africa, helping breeders make more informed selection decisions and to build on the genetic potential within their flocks. Genomics provides an additional tool that complements these established practices and supports the long-term improvement of registered sheep populations. By combining genomic information with pedigree and performance records, breeders can better understand their animals and the genetics they may pass on to future generations.

The current genomic picture

To date, 6 221 registered sheep have been genotyped, representing 11 breeds. Of these animals, 1 977 are males (31.78%), while 4 244 are females (68.22%). Of these genomic numbers, the SA Merino has the most genotyped animals (4 355), followed by Dormer (554) and Dohne Merino (495).

This breakdown provides insight into the adoption of genomic testing across South Africa's registered sheep population. Genotyping males can support the identification and selection of breeding sires, while testing females can contribute valuable information for breeding decisions and the genetic improvement of future generations. This also allows breeders to gain comprehensive insight into the single-gene mutations present in their flocks. With the adoption of genomic testing, the Stud Book team has identified 76 sires in the sheep population, correcting pedigree information. Furthermore, there have been 1 832 animals verified with their sires and 954 animals verified with their dams.

However, this still only reflects a small portion of the total numbers in the sheep industry. For example, in the SA Merino breed, there are almost 29 200 registered animals, with around 19 300 participating in production recording, but only 4 355 are genotyped, showing that only a small portion of the whole is being tested. As this technology becomes more widely used, the benefits can be reaped across South Africa in the different small stock breeds.

Die Noord-Kaapse Veldramprojek

Die Noord-Kaapse Veldramprojek is in 1985 gestig ná vroeëre pogings deur ’n groep telers wat reeds in 1959 besef het hoe belangrik rekordhouding en meting is om produktiewe, veldaangepaste kleinvee-teeldiere te identifiseer. Die eerste veiling is in 1986 in Griekwastad gehou, waar onder andere Dorper-skape, Boerbokke en Persieskape verteenwoordig is.

Die projek is ontwikkel met die doel om funksioneel-doeltreffende teelramme te identifiseer en beskikbaar te stel wat onder natuurlike veldtoestande grootgemaak en met behulp van prestasie-inligting geselekteer is. Die klem was op praktiese eienskappe wat vir kommersiële produsente belangrik is, insluitend aanpasbaarheid, groei, vrugbaarheid en die vermoë om onder ekstensiewe boerderytoestande te presteer, eerder as net voorkoms. Die doel was om kopers toegang te gee tot goed-geëvalueerde ramme, vergesel van betroubare inligting om hul teelbesluite te ondersteun.

Deur die jare het die projek uitgebrei vanaf Griekwastad na Kenhardt en Prieska, terwyl die rasse wat verteenwoordig is, verander het in reaksie op telers en kopers se belangstelling. Die projek het ’n belangrike rol gespeel in die bevordering van prestasiegebaseerde seleksie en die beskikbaarstelling van veldgrootgemaakte teelramme aan produsente in die Noord-Kaap en elders. Die voortgesette bestaan van die projek beklemtoon die waarde om praktiese veldaanpasbaarheid met objektiewe prestasie-evaluering te kombineer om die langtermynproduktiwiteit en winsgewendheid van kleinvee-ondernemings te verbeter.



Dr Bernice Mostert en Gerdus de Klerk van SA Stamboek het op 13 Oktober 2026 die Veldramklub-vergadering in Prieska bygewoon, waar vraagstukke rondom BLUP-teelwaardes bespreek is. Die rol van voeromset, die Kleiber-verhouding en RTU-meting van oogspierdiepte en rugvetdikte in groeitoetse is ook bespreek, asook die noodsaaklikheid van genetiese koppeling tussen kuddes vir die akkurate vasstelling van die genetiese rangorde van ‘n ras.



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What happened in the Jersey world?

The World Jersey Congress and Tour, held in South Africa from 4 to 12 September 2026, brought together members of the international Jersey community to celebrate the breed and exchange knowledge on its future development. Hosted in collaboration with Jersey SA and the World Jersey Cattle Bureau, the event gave international delegates the opportunity to experience South Africa's dairy industry, visit leading Jersey herds, and learn about the country's breeding practices and genetic progress.

The programme combined farm visits and technical discussions, creating a platform for breeders, researchers and industry representatives to share experiences and explore ways to improve the productivity, efficiency and sustainability of Jersey cattle. The event also highlighted the importance of genetic improvement and the role of modern breeding technologies in meeting the evolving demands of dairy production worldwide. Dr Bernice Mostert, Jason Reding and Hannah Kruger represented SA Stud Book.



Hannah Kruger and Dr Bernice Mostert at the World Jersey Congress.

Jason Reding delivered the following address at the congress:

The importance of using phenotypic and genomic data in unison in the South African Jersey population

Sustainable improvement of dairy cattle depends on identifying animals with superior genetic potential for economically important traits. For the South African Jersey population, this objective requires a breeding strategy that combines accurate performance recording, reliable pedigree information and modern genomic technology. Although genomic selection has transformed how breeders evaluate animals, its success depends fundamentally on the availability of high-quality phenotypic data.

Integrating phenotypic and genomic information provides an opportunity to improve the accuracy of breeding values, identify genetically superior animals at a younger age, shorten the generation interval, and accelerate genetic progress. These developments have important implications for the profitability, efficiency, health, longevity and adaptability of South African dairy cattle.

The central message is clear: genomics complements rather than replaces phenotypic recording. The greatest benefits are achieved when pedigree, performance and genomic information are used together in a comprehensive genetic evaluation system.

Foundation of the SA Jersey population

The South African Jersey population has a substantial history of pedigree and

performance recording, providing an important foundation for genetic evaluation. Pedigree records extend back to the 1930s and represent approximately 15 generations. Lactation records have been available since 1970, while test-day records have been collected since 1989. Somatic cell count records date back to 1990, and records for age at first breeding and inter-calving period extend back to 1964. On-farm data collection was introduced in 2018.

Currently, the accumulated information includes approximately 1.9 million lactation records, 10.3 million test-day records and 4.2 million somatic cell count records. Measurements have been recorded on more than 450 000 cows performing under South African conditions over many years.

This extensive database is a valuable resource. It provides information about how animals perform in local production environments and creates the opportunity to distinguish genetic differences from environmental influences. It also supports estimating genetic parameters, including heritabilities and genetic correlations, which are essential for reliable breeding value estimation.

The South African Jersey population is also well connected internationally. South Africa has participated in INTERBULL evaluations since 2000, and SA Stud Book introduced a new genetic evaluation system in 2012. South Africa has the seventh-largest Jersey population participating in INTERBULL Evaluations and has strong genetic links with other international populations.

The introduction of Single-Step Genomic BLUP (SS-GBLUP) in 2020 marked a further step in developing the national genetic evaluation system. Together, the historical performance database, international genetic connections and genomic technology provide a strong platform for continued genetic improvement.

Why phenotypic recording remains essential

Phenotypes are the observable characteristics of an animal, including milk yield, milk composition, fertility, udder health, conformation and longevity. These characteristics reflect both the animal's genetic makeup and the environment in which it performs.

Performance recording is essential because genetic evaluation aims to identify the inherited component of an animal's performance. An animal producing large quantities of milk, for example, may have superior genetics, but its performance may also be influenced by feeding, management, climate, health and other environmental factors. Genetic evaluation methods use appropriate statistical models and information from related animals to estimate breeding values while accounting for relevant environmental effects.

Phenotypic records are also required to estimate genetic parameters and monitor changes in the population. Without recorded performance, it becomes impossible to establish reliable genetic relationships between traits or to evaluate how selection decisions influence the population over time. Without phenotypes there can be no reliable genetic parameters, breeding values or genomic predictions.

This principle remains true even when advanced genomic technologies are available. Furthermore, performance recording allows breeders and genetic evaluators to identify changes in the population and determine whether selection objectives remain relevant. It provides the evidence needed to assess genetic progress and validate the predictions produced by the evaluation system.

Phenotypic information is therefore not merely historical data. It is the foundation on which accurate and sustainable genetic improvement depends.

The limitations of phenotypic information alone

Although traditional genetic evaluation has delivered substantial benefits, it has limitations that are particularly important in dairy cattle breeding.

Young animals have no or limited individual production records. A young heifer cannot be

evaluated directly on her own lifetime milk production, fertility or longevity. Similarly, bulls do not produce milk and must traditionally be evaluated through information from their relatives and, eventually, their daughters.

For traits with low heritability, many daughter records may be required before a bull's breeding value can be estimated with sufficient accuracy. Consequently, traditional progeny testing can take approximately five to seven years before reliable breeding values become available.

This delay increases the generation interval, which is the average age of parents when their offspring are born. A longer generation interval slows the rate of genetic improvement per year. It also creates practical challenges for breeders. By the time sufficient information is available, breeders may have already invested substantial time and resources in animals that ultimately prove to have limited genetic merit.

Genomic information offers a way to address these limitations by providing additional information about an animal's inherited genetic potential from an early age.

What genomic information adds

Genomics involves analysing DNA markers distributed throughout an animal's genome. These markers provide information about the animal's inherited genetic makeup and help estimate its genetic merit for traits of interest.

Unlike phenotypic measurements, an animal's genotypic information is available from birth and does not change throughout its life. This makes genomic information particularly valuable when evaluating young animals that have not yet produced performance records.

However, a genotype alone does not directly reveal an animal's breeding value for every economically important trait. Genomic predictions depend on established relationships between DNA markers and genetic merit. Researchers must develop these relationships using animals for which genomic information can be linked to reliable performance records and estimated breeding values.

Pedigrees describe expected relationships based on ancestry, while genomic information helps identify the genetic material an animal actually inherited. This provides additional information for distinguishing genetic merit among animals, including relatives.

The result is an opportunity to make more informed selection decisions earlier in life. Elite heifers can be identified before their first lactation, and genetically superior young bulls can be selected for breeding without waiting for extensive daughter performance information.

Earlier selection can reduce the generation interval, allowing favourable genes to spread through the population more rapidly. When combined with accurate genetic evaluations, this can increase the rate of genetic gain and improve the long-term profitability of dairy herds.

Single-step genomic BLUP: integrating the information

The South African Jersey evaluation system uses single-step genomic BLUP, commonly referred to as SS-GBLUP, to integrate phenotypic, pedigree and genomic information into a unified genetic evaluation.

Traditional BLUP evaluations use pedigree relationships to account for the expected genetic relationships between animals. Genomic evaluations introduce information derived from DNA markers. SS-GBLUP combines these sources of information within one evaluation framework.

The method integrates recorded measurements, pedigree information, genetic parameters and genomic relationships. This allows information from genotyped and non-genotyped animals to contribute to the evaluation, depending on the model and available data.

The approach is particularly valuable because genomic information does not have to be

considered in isolation from the existing performance-recording system. Instead, it builds on the historical data accumulated through generations of breeding and recording.

For the South African Jersey population, this means that the extensive national database can be used alongside genomic information to improve breeding value predictions. The value of the genomic component depends on the quality and quantity of the reference information available, while the performance database continues to provide the evidence required to establish and maintain accurate genetic predictions.

Benefits, challenges and future opportunities

Integrating phenotypic and genomic information offers several practical benefits to dairy farmers. These include earlier identification of elite heifers, more accurate mating decisions, reduced generation intervals, greater profitability, lower replacement costs and improved herd sustainability.

Nevertheless, the approach also presents challenges. Genotyping has a cost, milk recording must be maintained, and data quality must remain high. Adequate farmer participation and connected contemporary groups are important for reliable genetic evaluation. Computational requirements and regular model updates must also be managed effectively.

These challenges emphasise that genomic selection is not simply a technological investment. It requires a coordinated, long-term commitment from breeders, farmers, recording organisations and genetic evaluators.

The future also offers opportunities to expand selection objectives beyond conventional production traits. Methane emissions, feed efficiency, heat tolerance, disease resistance, resilience, hoof health and milk composition are potential areas for development.

The future success of genomic selection will depend on identifying important breeding objectives and establishing the recording systems required to support them.

Conclusion

Integrating phenotypic, pedigree, and genomic information represents a major opportunity to continue improving the South African Jersey population. The country's extensive performance database, established genetic evaluation system, and international genetic connections provide a strong foundation on which genomic selection can build.

Genomic information enables earlier and potentially more accurate selection, reduces dependence on lengthy traditional progeny-testing processes and creates opportunities to accelerate genetic progress. However, its effectiveness depends on the availability of reliable performance records that connect DNA information to economically important traits.

Phenotypic recording remains indispensable for estimating genetic parameters, developing genomic prediction equations, monitoring changes in the population and validating genetic evaluations. Without continued investment in recording, the long-term accuracy and usefulness of genomic predictions may decline.

Ultimately, DNA provides information about the genetic potential an animal has inherited, while phenotypic records reveal how that potential is expressed under particular production conditions. Pedigree establishes the historical framework, phenotypes provide the performance evidence, and genomics adds detailed information about inherited genetic differences.

For the South African Jersey population, the greatest opportunity for sustainable genetic improvement lies not in choosing between phenotypic recording and genomics, but in using both together. Continued investment in high-quality data, sound genetic evaluation and responsible breeding decisions will be essential to developing more profitable, healthy, efficient, long-living and resilient dairy cows for the future. – *Dr BE Mostert, Jason Reding and Hannah Kruger*

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Baie dankie vir nóg 'n jaar waarin jy, ondanks uitdagende mark- en klimaatstoestande, met deursettingsvermoë bly voortgaan het.

Dankie vir die lang ure, harde werk en opofferings wat jy maak – vir die kere wat jou eie behoeftes en dié van jou gesin tweede moes kom. Dankie dat jy, ten spyte van al die uitdagings, steeds doen wat net jy kan doen: om rooivleis te produseer en 'n belangrike bydrae tot ons land se voedselsekerheid te lewer.

Bo alles bedank ons jou vir jou volgehoue ondersteuning aan die Rooivleis Produsente-organisasie. Dit is danksy produsente soos jy dat ons kan voortgaan om vir produsente te werk.

Ons wens jou en jou geliefdes 'n geseënde Kersfees en 'n voorspoedige nuwe jaar toe. Mag ons in die komende jaar steeds saam die pad stap, uitdagings aanpak en met vertroue aan die toekoms bou.

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The Dohne Merino World Conference 2026

South Africa had the privilege to host the Dohne Merino World Congress in October 2026. The event took place in the Western Cape. The conference programme focused on the Dohne Merino's economic value as a dual-purpose breed producing both quality wool and meat. Key discussion topics included breeding strategies, genetic improvement, sustainable and ethical production, consumer expectations, and the future of Dohne Merino farming internationally. Presentations, panel discussions and farm visits provided opportunities to exchange research findings and practical breeding experience.



Dr Bobbie van der Westhuizen presenting during the Dohne Merino World Congress.

Dr Bobbie van der Westhuizen, Dr Bernice Mostert and Marike Hillocks represented SA Stud Book at the conference. Dr Van der Westhuizen presented the following at the Conference:

Integrated genetics and genomics for the Dohne Merino

The Dohne Merino has a long history of structured performance recording, with pedigree records dating back to the 1920s. The deepest pedigrees therefore trace back for nine generations. Currently 658 610 weaning-weight and 448 223 wool-trait records have been recorded for the Dohne Merino since 1998. Age-at-first-lambing and inter-lambing records are available since 1989. This extensive database provides the foundation for estimating genetic merit and monitoring the breed's long-term genetic progress for economically important traits.

In 2020, SA Stud Book introduced a newly developed multi-trait genetic evaluation for the Dohne Merino using MIX99 international software. More than 1 030 000 animals are currently included in the Dohne Merino National Genetic Evaluation to estimate breeding values.

Genetic progress in growth, wool and fertility

The Dohne Merino genetic evaluation covers three main trait groups: growth, wool and fertility. These are combined into the General Merit Index, which supports balanced selection across economically important traits.

Positive genetic trends in weaning weight, body weight, clean fleece weight and staple length, alongside a reduction in fibre diameter, indicating finer wool, can be seen, with the General Merit increasing by 51 points since 2000.

These trends demonstrate the value of sustained performance recording and genetic selection. They also show why breeders should evaluate long-term genetic trends rather than rely on individual animals' raw performance, which can be influenced by environmental conditions such as weather, pasture quality etc.

The introduction of genomics

The first genomic evaluation for small stock in South Africa was introduced for the Merino breed in October 2021 using SS-GBLUP. ICAR accredited SA Stud Book in 2025 as a parentage verification and parent discovery laboratory. The only laboratory of its kind in Africa.

Dohne Merino breeders recently started to genotype influential animals, with a total of 486 animals: 179 rams and 307 ewes, being genotyped. Genomic analyses indicate that the Dohne Merino forms a distinct genetic cluster compared with the other breeds examined. This supports the need for a dedicated Dohne Merino reference population rather than relying on genomic information from other breeds to predict its genetic merit.

Parentage verification and disease resistance

Genomic testing also provides opportunities for parentage verification, parent discovery, and identifying genetic variants relevant to breeding decisions.

Parentage verification resolved sire conflicts for three rams. It also identified carriers of horn-related and double-muscling variants, enabling breeders to make informed mating decisions.

Regarding disease resistance: 92.6% of the genotyped Dohne Merinos were classified as resistant or moderately resistant to scrapie, while 89.5% were classified as resistant or moderately resistant to the Lentivirus. However, because the number of genotyped animals in the population is still low, these results should not be considered representative of the entire breed. A representative genomic database could support further research into disease resistance, parasite resistance, footrot, dermatosporaxis, fertility, fecundity, adaptability, wool quality and carcass quality.

Why phenotypic recording remains essential

A central message is that genomics complements, but does not replace, performance recording. Phenotypic records are essential for estimating heritabilities and genetic correlations, monitoring the population and developing reliable breeding values. Without accurate measurements, breeders cannot develop and maintain genomic predictions effectively.

Genomics add value by providing information from birth, improving the evaluation of young animals with no performance records of their own, and helping to refine relationships that may differ from those assumed from recorded pedigree alone. Combining genomic information with pedigree and performance records can improve prediction accuracy and shorten the generation interval.

Traceability and future development

The presentation also highlighted IDTrax, a platform developed by SA Stud Book to support livestock administration, animal identification, movement tracking, health monitoring and transport records. Such systems can strengthen traceability and improve the availability of reliable information throughout the production chain.

Looking ahead, SA Stud Book aims to simplify data collection, automate integration processes and provide clearer dashboards and reports to help breeders make accurate, practical and sustainable selection decisions.

Conclusion

The Dohne Merino breed is well positioned to benefit from integrating traditional performance recording, pedigree information, and genomics. Long-term genetic trends show the value of sustained measurement and selection, while genomic technology offers new opportunities for earlier selection, parentage verification and breed-specific research.

The key message is that continued investment in performance recording is essential to unlocking the full value of genomics. By combining high-quality phenotypes, reliable pedigrees and genomic information, Dohne Merino breeders can improve genetic progress, strengthen disease resistance and develop more productive and adaptable sheep for the future.



Dr Bernice Mostert, Dr Bobbie van der Westhuizen, and Marike Hillocks of SA Stud Book at the Dohne Merino World Congress.


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2026 Trailblazer:

’n Fees van erkenning, inligting en sappige vleis

SA Stamboek se 2026 Trailblazer by Tuscan Rose in Bloemfontein het vanjaar weer eer gebring aan die organisasie se kleinvee- en vleisbeestelers. Die kleinveesessie is op dag een gehou, en die vleisbeessessie op dag twee. Lede word op word op verskillende vlakke geëvalueer, naamlik noukeurige data-aantekening, prestasie-evaluering, kuddebestuur en genetiese vordering. Die kategorieë waarin telers vir ‘n Logix-sertifikaat kwalifiseer is Meriete, Brons, Silver, Goud, Dubbelgoud en Platinum. Daaruit word die onderskeie streekswenners ook aangewys. Die nasionale wenners sal aanstaande jaar by die SA Stamboek Elite-toekennings aangewys word.

Vanjaar se Trailblazer-geleentheid was effens anders as die vorige jaar, aangesien dit afgeskop het met die Landbouweekblad Vee-akademie wat die oggend van die eerste dag plaasgevind het. Die kleinveesessie het die middag plaasgevind, en is gevolg deur ‘n bedryfskuier waar verskeie rasgenootskappe met hulle vleis gespog het.



Die streekswenners wat by die geleentheid teenwoordig was: Marius en Jan Eksteen en Janita Muller (Wes-Vrystaat); Danie en Marise Hattingh van Louise Dohne Merino-stoet by Heilbron (Wes-Vrystaat); HG Human (Noord-Kaap); en Chrizelle en Lodie van Reenen (Oos-Vrystaat).



Van links is Jan en Marius Eksteen saam met hulle kuddebestuurder by Eksteen Hatari Dormers, Janita Muller. Langs Janita staan Maria Human van JJ Human Witdorpers en HG Human Dorpers in die Noord-Kaap.



Wenners van ‘n dubbelgoud-toekenning: Hannes Stadler van die JG Stadler Van Rooy-skaapstoet by Kakamas, en Chriselle en Lodie van Reenen van Nova Barletta Dormers by Clocolan. Hulle vennoot is dr Carl Scholtz.

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Dubbelgoud-toekennings in die SA Stamboek Trailblazers Vleisbees-afdeling: Voor van links sit Kobus Marais van Marais Bonsmaras, Estelle de Kock van Hansu Bonsmaras en André Breytenbach van Maluti Angus. Agter staan Gerrit van Tonder van Kombuisland Angus, JM Steyn van Vansia Angus, Charl Uys van Marochel Bonsmaras en George Cronjé van Leewbult Bonsmaras.



Platinumtoekennings het onder meer gegaan aan, van links, Frik Roux van Rouxvus Drakensbergers, Izelle Steyn van Borderland Cattle Company Angus, en Christo Rothman van Bushmans Mountain Tulis.



Die twee sprekers tydens die Trailblazers Kleinveesessie was Charl Saunderson, bekende Dorperboer van Nooitgedacht in die Kenhardt-kontrei en Michelle Maartens, veterinêre tegnoloog en laboratoriumbestuurder by Assurecloud.



Dr Gerhard Neethling, algemene bestuurder van die Rooivleis-abattoirvereniging, en dr Bobbie van der Westhuizen, uitvoerende hoof van SA Stamboek, was twee van die sprekers tydens die Trailblazer-grootveesessie.



Die SA Stamboekspan wat die drade bymekaar moes hou, saam met Plaas Media se span.



Dr Japie van der Westhuizen, sy vrou Ria, en dr Frikkie Maré van RPO Nasionaal by die bedryfskuier.



Jan-Louis en Tharina Wessels van Patrysvlug Drakensbergers, by Henk Delport van Delram Drakensbergers.



Paulus Morake, Elizabeth Tsautse en Pierre Schutte het vir die Dormer-genootskap 'n skaap op die spit gebraai.



Riana de Beer en Magda Boukes van die Beefmaster-genootskap by Di Ford van Begelly Beefmaster.

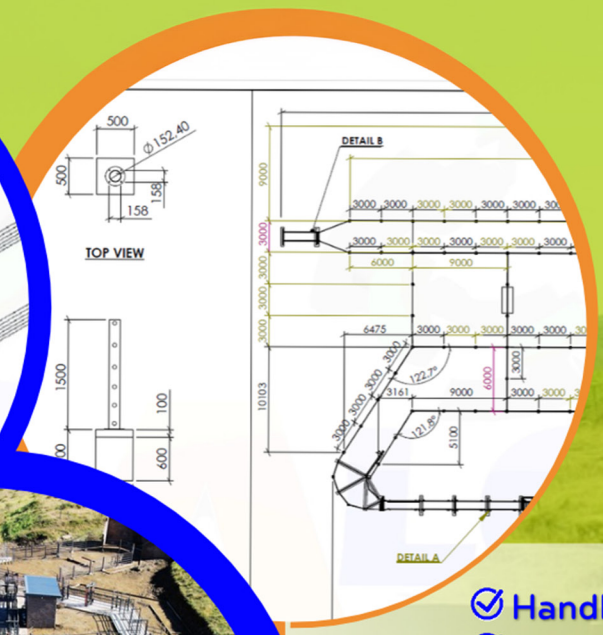


Die Wagyu-stalletjie is beman deur Marinda van Tonder, Yvonne van Tonder en Waldo Scheepers.



Sarina en Ben Raath, Yolanda Venter en Susan Neethling van die Santa Gertrudis-genootskap by SA Stamboek se Johan Venter en Andries Riekert.





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The new buzzword: Traceability

Is it really necessary for the South African red-meat industry?

By Dr RR (Bobbie) van der Westhuizen, chief executive officer, SA Stud Book

24,400	152,033	–26%	R13.1bn
FMD CASES IN 2025, VS THE PREVIOUS HIGH OF 7,700 (2022)	ANIMALS STOLEN IN 2024/25 (STATS SA), WORTH R1.27BN	BEEF EXPORTS IN 2025 AFTER MARKET CLOSURES	MODELLED FIVE-YEAR FMD COST IF UNRESOLVED (BFAP)

Traceability has become the word of the moment in South African livestock circles. Whether it is a fad or a necessity is the question the industry should ask honestly, and 2025 made it hard to avoid. Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) cases surged to 24,400, more than three times the previous 20-year high of 7,700 recorded in 2022. Several international markets closed to South African beef, and beef exports fell by 26%.

This article walks through six lenses on traceability, weighs the global evidence without hype, and describes the tool SA Stud Book has built in response.

Lens 1: Animal husbandry

Individual identification means individual records: health history, vaccinations, breeding and genetic history, all attached to one animal for life. Better records drive better decisions about which animals to cull, breed from or treat. None of this is new to stud breeders; it is the logic behind decades of performance recording and genetic evaluation (Logix, BLUP). Traceability extends that discipline from the stud industry to the whole commercial herd.

Lens 2: Animal theft

Stats SA recorded 152,033 animals stolen in 2024/25, valued by SAPS at R1.27bn, across 36,109 reported cases (+3.5% year on year). The Free State, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape are worst affected. An estimated 40–82% of thefts go unreported, so the true scale is probably far higher. An ear tag is an aid, but not enough: a proper identification system, in line with the Animal Improvement Act or the Animal Identification Act, supports deterrence and recovery.

Lens 3: Animal health

Without traceability, controlling an outbreak means blanket movement bans across entire areas. With it, authorities can trace contact animals and shared grazing or water, and target quarantines precisely instead of shutting down everyone (compartmentalisation). BFAP models the cost of an unresolved FMD crisis at R13.1bn over five years. That is a projection, not a realised loss, but R5.6bn in cumulative export losses since 2019, across three outbreak waves, has already been incurred.

THE OLDER, QUIETER THREAT: BRUCELLOSIS

Bovine (*Brucella abortus*): abortions and infertility in cattle, and a zoonosis: people are infected through raw milk and contact with infected animals.
Ovine (*Brucella ovis*): epididymitis and infertility in rams, cutting lambing percentages.

Control of both depends on testing, vaccination and tracing.

Lens 4: Local markets and consumers

A 2013 Stellenbosch University DNA study found undeclared species (donkey, goat, water buffalo) in 68% of 139 processed meat samples labelled as beef. The data is over a decade old, but it remains the clearest local evidence that traceability gaps have real consequences. Major retailers already require suppliers to provide verifiable information on product origin, supported by independent testing.

> **Traceability is not hype.**
> **It is risk management and market access.**

Lens 5: Export markets

China, the UAE, Jordan, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Qatar all require farm-to-abattoir traceability as a condition of market access, because South Africa lacks WOAH FMD-free recognition. The price of that gap is visible: in 2024 South Africa received roughly US$2.96/kg for prime cuts, the lowest among major beef exporters, against US$5.68/kg for similar cuts from the United States (BFAP).

SAME STORE, SAME SHELF: BEEF PRICES IN A QATARI STORE (QAR)



SA beef sells for 36% less than Brazilian and 47% less than US beef.
Source: BFAP case study, Qatar retail shelf prices.

In one Qatari store, South African beef sat on the shelf at QAR 57, against QAR 89 for Brazilian and QAR 108 for American beef: 36% and 47% cheaper respectively. BFAP's weaner-price series tells the same story over time. Between 2010 and 2025 the average annual change was +8.06% in the USA, +4.03% in Argentina, +3.88% in Brazil, +0.13% in Australia and –2.82% in South Africa. Traceability directly restores international market access and builds product trust.

Lens 6: Responsible trade

This is not politics and not a directive. If South Africa wants premium international prices for its quality red meat, traceability is not a negotiable extra. It is the price of entry.

SA Stud Book's answer: IDTrax

IDTrax is one platform for stud and commercial herds, with modules for administration, animal movement (RFID, QR or standard identification), animal health, and transport, supporting compliance with Section 10 of the Animal Health Act. It runs on a computer or phone in the field, and users can sign in with their Logix username or create an account.

- **For stud breeders:** pedigree, health and vaccination history linked to every registered animal, alongside Logix/BLUP genetic and performance records, as a single source of truth from birth to sale.
- **For commercial farmers:** movement tracking, plus vaccination and treatment records ready for market access documentation.
- **Vaccines:** FMD vaccine is ordered online, the vet confirms and the prescription goes to RMIS. Scanning the bottle's QR code records product, batch, expiry and the vet's name, and counts remaining doses.
- **Industry bodies:** the MPO has its own console for its members.

331,449 ANIMALS ON RECORD

1,735 FARMS ON THE MAP

1,491 PEOPLE USING IDTRAX

Coming soon: management reports on production, animal exits from the herd, genetics and DNA, and weighing taking place while in IDTrax, with results loaded straight to Logix.

So, is it really necessary?

- **Yes, for export market access.** It is already non-negotiable, and already costing South Africa billions.
- **Yes, for disease control.** It is the difference between a targeted response and a blanket shutdown.
- **Increasingly yes, for theft.** It brings deterrence and recovery in a country losing over 150,000 animals a year.
- **No, it is not a guaranteed profit lever on its own.** But it reliably narrows the downside when disaster strikes, and 2025 has already proved it.

The global evidence is honest, not magic: traceability is now a precondition for premium markets, but it does not guarantee a price premium by itself. SA Stud Book has built the tool. Register your herd at **IDTrax.co.za**.

Sources: BFAP; Stats SA; SAPS; Stellenbosch University (2013) meatspecies DNA study. Weaner-price trends and Qatar shelf prices as presented in BFAP case material.

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Taking hands across the value chain

How IDtrax, MeatMetrics and ASM Assured follow one animal from the farm to the plate

By Dr Bobbie van der Westhuizen, chief executive officer, SA Stud Book

331,449
CATTLE AND SHEEP ON RECORD IN IDTRAX

2,700+
ANIMALS SCANNED WITH MEATMETRICS SINCE FEBRUARY 2025

6
ASM ORGANISATIONS ON THE PLATFORM

1,735
FARMS ON THE IDTRAX MAP

A beef animal leaves a long trail of information behind it: where it was born, what it was vaccinated against, how it grew, what the scan said about its eye muscle and marbling, and finally what the carcass looked like on the rail. Too often that trail is broken into pieces, kept in different places by different people. SA Stud Book is building three integrated platforms to join the pieces together: IDtrax on the farm, MeatMetrics for measurement and ASM Assured for the plate.

The idea behind all three is simple: one animal, one record. What is recorded on the farm should follow the animal to the abattoir, and what is learned at the abattoir should find its way back to the breeder.

On the farm: IDtrax

IDtrax is one platform for stud and commercial herds, covering administration, animal movement, animal health and transport records, in line with Section 10 of the Act on Animal Health. It puts a farmer's whole herd on one screen: every farm, every animal and its health, on a computer or on a phone in the field. Farmers sign in with the username they already have. Open any animal and its story is there, from birth to the present: trips, treatments, vaccinations and new keepers, month by month for the whole herd. Click on any number and the animals behind it appear. Vaccines are part of the same record, and two systems work together to deliver them. The farmer orders on IDtrax, and the vet approves the order on RMIS with an automated prescription. Once payment reflects on the system, DHL dispatches the vaccine, which takes about two days. In the field the QR code on the bottle is scanned, the vet signs off, the farmer updates IDtrax, and the doses left in each bottle are counted automatically. The order status can be followed on IDtrax at any time, and the RMIS portal keeps the vet and farmer up to date through WhatsApp.



IDtrax on a computer and a phone: every farm, every animal and its health.

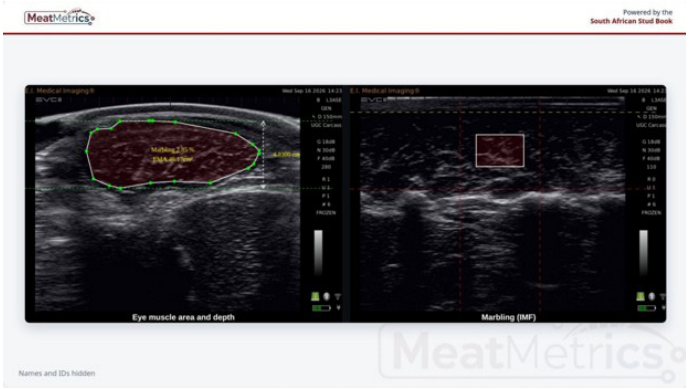
IDTRAX: WHERE IT STANDS

- **331,449** animals on record, cattle and sheep
- **1,735** farms on the map
- **1,491** people using IDtrax
- **694** vaccine orders placed online

> **Three platforms, one animal, one record.**

Measured: MeatMetrics

MeatMetrics measures meat quality on live animals and on carcasses, from ultrasound scans and abattoir photographs. On the live animal the eye muscle area is traced and turned into square centimetres, and marbling is read from the same scan. Every result stays with the animal and is ready as a PDF.



A MeatMetrics scan: eye muscle area and depth on the left, marbling on the right.

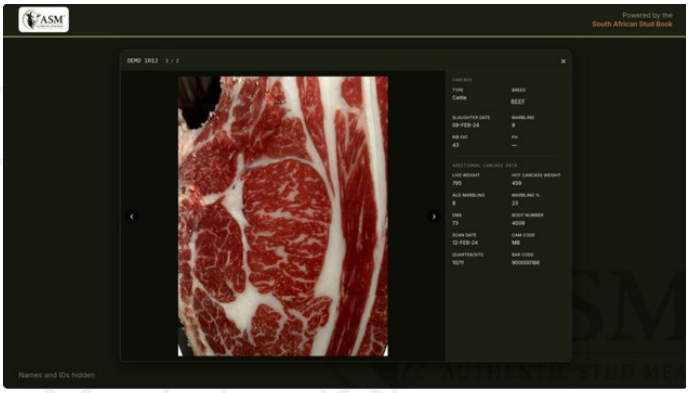
At the abattoir the Capture app photographs the carcass cut and outlines the eye muscle, and the photos and figures go straight into MeatMetrics. The app has been live since October 2026. Carcass photos can also be measured in the browser: click the eye muscle and it is outlined for you, and eye muscle area, marbling and meat colour follow in seconds, from an ordinary photograph.

MEATMETRICS: WHERE IT STANDS

- **2,700+** animals scanned since February 2025
- **1,100+** in the last year
- **13,000+** measurements stored

To the plate: ASM Assured

ASM Assured certifies South African stud meat from birth to plate. Each producer gets their own portal. Each carcass is linked to the animal from origin to meat properties; with the abbatoir camera's photo next to the grading: marbling, eye muscle, fat and weights.



An ASM Assured carcass record: photo, grading and weights together.

Before slaughter, every animal is checked against the ASM rules. The check reads the owner, Logix and IDtrax records, and members download their ASM certificate afterwards. Six ASM organisations are already on the platform.

The programme is a two-way partnership. Breeders commit to a stud bull, genomic testing, verified parentage and records of health and welfare. In return ASM delivers genomic verification, independent carcass grading, a traceability record visible to the consumer, and carcass and genomic data back on the herd dashboard. Three independent scores (environment, meat quality and meat classification) combine into the eating-quality grade, shown as five grade marks: Commercial, Select, Choice, Prime and Prime +.

ASM will not succeed without collaboration with industry role players like SAMIC, RPO, RMIS and DOA, and especially not without the ownership of the farmers and breeders' societies within this programme.

Closing the loop

The next step is to send the carcass result back to the farm. Three pieces are on the way: herd analysis in IDtrax, carcass figures stored with the animal's scan results in MeatMetrics, and carcass camera results emanating from ASM Assured.

COMING SOON IN IDTRAX: HERD ANALYSIS

- Every production trait, set against the breed
- Breeding values, herd exits and DNA per herd
- Every weight ever taken, per animal

When the carcass result reaches the herd analysis, a breeder can see not only how an animal grew, but how it finished, and use that to choose the next generation. That is what taking hands across the value chain means in practice.


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Read all about it

In the November issue of *Stockfarm* Dr Japie van der Westhuizen wrote about genes and meat quality, explaining how the meat we consume is affected by an animals' genetics – which means the road to good quality meat starts long before the animal is slaughtered. **Click here** to read more.

Met vanjaar se Trailblazers nog vars in die geheue, bring ons graag hulde aan voorloper-bulle in die Jersey-ras. Dr Bernice Mostert kyk in *Veeplaas* se November-uitgawe na twee Jersey-bulle se genetiese profiele en verduidelik waarom hulle so 'n impak op die ras gehad het. **Klik hier** om meer te lees.

Die Merino Landskaap het 'n ryk geskiedenis in Suid-Afrika en is veral bekend vir sy gesogte wol, maar ook vir sy veelsydigheid in uiteenlopende produksietoestande. In die Oktober-uitgawe van *Veeplaas* gesels dr Bernice Mostert oor 'n paar geneties meerderwaardige ramme in dié dubbeldoelras. **Lees hier** meer.



Luister en *Kyk*

DR BOBBIE VAN DER WESTHUIZEN het op 8 Oktober se *LandbouRadio* met omroeper Johan Gunter gesels oor rassamestelling en hoe dit objektief bepaal kan word. **Klik hier** om na dié gesprek te luister.

Boerboelgenetika is 'n interessante onderwerp wat op 10 September se *LandbouRadio* bespreek is. **DR BERNICE MOSTERT** het met luisteraars gesels oor die geliefde Boerboel-honderas in Suid-Afrika, spesifiek vroulike Boerboel-genetika. **Luister gerus.**

DR BOBBIE VAN DER WESTHUIZEN het tydens die afgelope Trailblazers in Bloemfontein met Plaas Media se Izak Hofmeyr gesels oor die ontstaan van die geleentheid en die toekennings wat tydens die geleentheid gemaak is. **Kyk hier** na die gesprek.


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