SA Braford Newsletter

The South African Braford are bred for Fertility, adaptability and efficiency

Upcoming events

23 May	Annual General Meeting, Bull ring
24 May	National Auction, Bull ring PM: 083 948 3345
27 June	Hoëveld Cattle breeders group, Bull ring Herman: 082 852 7210
27 June	Meaker Brafords, 6th production Auction, Draaihoek, Warden Jan: 079 883 9760

SA Braford workshop

The SA Braford Breeders Society held a workshop on the 24-25 April 2018. The event was hosted by Jan and Carla Meaker. Two guest speakers, Kobus Bester and Hennie Snyman, highlighted and explained a few practical elements of the Braford and how to improve on the breed.

Practical aspects of the Braford

Highlighted by Mr Kobus Bester and Mr Hennie Snyman

The event was held on the farm Sardaville. Jan Meaker was kind enough to allow us to examine some of his cattle from his Braford herd. The first Brafords to view and discuss was a group of pregnant heifers, approximately 30 months old.

Kobus Bester was the first to speak. Bester said that one has to focus on the natural aspects that can lead to a greater profit. He further said that the SA Braford Breeders' Society should have a look at how we can improve the breed for the future.

Marketing, Bester pointed out is something that each breeder should focus on to promote the breed as a whole.

Mr Hennie Snyman was next to speak. Snyman stated that one should look at the genetic component and the physical appearance of weaned calves to create the ideal breed. Genetics accounted for only 25% and environment (nutrition) 75% of the final product. Management is a very important aspect when trying to create the ideal herd. Some people do a brilliant job while others struggle to achieve this. Mr Snyman emphasized that the management of summer and winter licks is critical. He further emphasized the importance of grazing management.

Any cattle breeder wants their herd to be fertile. This is the ultimate goal. The heritability of fertility, however, is very low – only approximately 10%. So what makes up the other 90%?

According to Snyman nutrition and environment, is responsible for the other 90%. Genetics modifies itself to adapt to the environment around it.

(From left: Jan Meaker, Hennie Snyman, Kobus Bester and Jaco Storm)

What does everyone want to achieve?

As beef producers our goal is to produce the maximum amount of beef for the meat market at the most cost effective price.

However, beef producers should always bear in mind that there is a negative correlation between meat and milk. The more you select for milk the more you lose on meat, or put in another way "Form follows function".

One characteristic that is often forgotten is adaptability. But what is really meant by the word "Adaptability"? It is when on a herd basis, the fertility rate is consistently high and cows producing healthy calves every year weighing at least 50% of the cows weight at weaning. Obviously this is only possible if the farmer maintains a high level of managerial skills.

A concerning aspect is that milk production in the Braford has declined over years. The question may be asked if this is due to selection or poor management (farmer)?

What are the identities of the Braford breed?

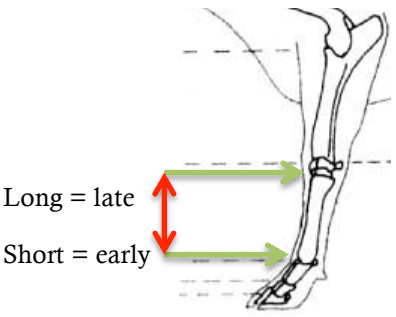
The SA Braford Breeders' Society has a strong and strict outline of how the breed should look, but should this maybe be reviewed? Mr Hennie Snyman pointed out a

The Braford is one of many synthetic breeds comprising of a combination of two breeds of cattle - the Brahman and the Hereford. The Brahman is known for being hardy against high temperatures and a rugged environment, while the Hereford is better known for its ability to withstand a colder environment, ideal animal for feed lotting, excellent eating qualities and has got a larger build. The ratio of the two breeds for the SA Braford is Brahman 3/8 or 5/8 and Hereford is 5/8 or 3/8.

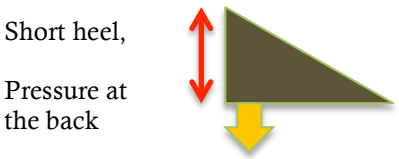
A point was noted during the 2-day workshop that the Braford lacks muscle in the hind quarters. It was debated that the cows should not become too muscular as this might have a detrimental affect on milk production. Ideally one would like a Braford cow to stay feminine as they produce the most robust bulls.

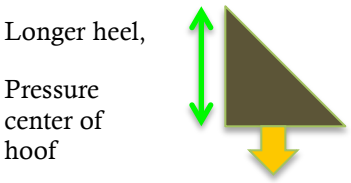
The Brahman plays a large role in the adaptability of the Braford. For example, the Brahman is known for its prominent head, hump and loose hide. This helps the animal regulate its body temperature. Therefore if the animal has a neck and belly hide that is within regulations it simply means that the animal is better adapted to a warmer environment. One should well be careful for a belly hide that is too large as this results in a longer sheath on a bull. This can cause problems for the bull and should be carefully considered when selecting bulls.

Mr Snyman mentioned a few points that are related to each other. Should one look at the cannon bone, this can determine whether the animal is early or late maturing. A short cannon bone is an animal who reaches maturity early and a long cannon bone is indicative of late maturity. An animal that reaches maturity early is generally stockier and those that are longer on the leg are more later maturing.



Stefan van Wyk pointed out that the Braford breeders need to pay attention to the hooves of their animals. Hooves that grow out carry a strong hereditary gene. With a hoof that grows out the heel depth needs to be increased. This will make the animal stand on the center of the hoof and not the back. Hooves that grow out are mostly found in bulls at the age of 3 years.





A number of these aspects were discussed the following morning to establish if they should be implemented in the breeding guidelines.

Meeting highlights

Everyone enjoyed a few drinks and a lovely visit at Sardaville for the night

Enjoying drinks and snacks before starting the workshop

A Special thank you to Jan and Carla Meaker for organizing the workshop and for the catering.

The meeting that took place on the 24th was an informal discussion on points that should be discussed at the Annual General meeting.

The first point that was put to discussion is the amount of white that appears in the head of the animal. Jaco Storm suggested the bar be lifted from 15% to 25% white in the head. Martin Tromp added that from experience he had, the market is not looking for an animal that has too much white. The market wants animals that are red. Stefan van Wyk suggested that F1 and F2 animals be allowed the 15% white in the head, but from F3 upwards the animals should have 25% white. The F1 and F2 animals would be earmarked for the more commercial market while the F3, F4 and SP cattle will be for the Stud breeders market. The selection of the 25% white will be selected according to strict guidelines.

Another point highlighted by what Mr Snyman witnessed is that the Braford as a breed needs to improve the hind quarters. Currently there are no bulls available for AI (Artificial Insemination) that have this characteristic. Stefan was asked to create a list of potential bulls for AI as he does classification at breeders.

Stefan again highlighted the point of the hooves and suggested that this be taken seriously.

Jaco Storm suggested that a classification course be offered for young people who would like to attend. Stefan seconded the point, as there are a number of people who are interested.

Marketing was then discussed. The website, Facebook page and Newsletters would be done by Megan Tromp along with the clothing and help of Carla Meaker.

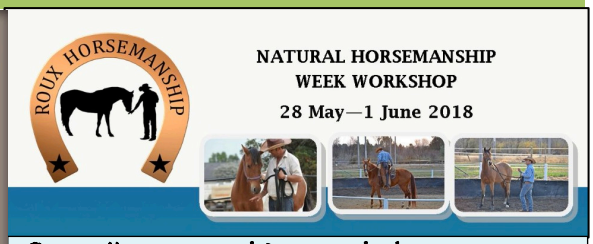
PM Swart suggested that the registered buyers receive a form before the auction and requested to identify the 5 best bulls as a way to draw the buyers in. He also suggested that a Braford Farmers Day be held to promote the breed just before the auction. He further suggested that the buyers of the highest priced bull, most female animals bought, etc receive a special gift.

A point was raised that the breeders consider a Phase D test. This test measures the length, height, skin thickness and how the bulls grow over a period of time. Jaco Storm asked Martin Tromp how this Phase D differs from the Veldbul Club test. In reply Martin stated that the major difference was that the young bulls in the Veldbul Club test were not given any concentrate feeding, (only a mineral supplement during summer and a protein supplement in winter), during the test period.

These points will all be discussed further at the AGM the day before the National Auction.

We look forward to seeing everyone again at the auction.

Classifieds



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Contact Megan should you like to place an advertisement in the monthly newsletter

Middelveld Bull auction

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VBSA

Sulphur Spring,
Piet Retief

Braford bulls available

28 August 2018

Ralf Rodewald: 083 661 0465

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