

THE SIMMENTAL IN SOUTH AFRICA AND NAMIBIA

Simmentalers, that are what we call them here, have been in South Africa for a hundred years and in Namibia since 1893. It has been well documented that our pioneer breeders were the first in the world to utilise this European dual purpose breed as a beef breed under extensive conditions.

The results of the well known Namibian Interbreed Beef Production Comparisons from the 1950's was the main reason for the first Simmental-Fleckvieh imports from Europe by Brazil (formation of a breed association 1963), Argentina(68), USA (68), Canada (68), UK (70), Ireland (70), New Zealand (71), Uruguay (71) and Australia (71).

Industry Leader

Today the Simmentaler Association is third after the Bonsmara (local synthetic) and Brahman (Zebu) in number of registered females amongst the 30 non-dairy breeds. Within the group of 16 non-dairy British and European breeds, Simmentaler has more recorded animals than 2nd (Angus), 3rd (Limousin) and 4th (Sussex) **together**. We maintain an open membership and have breeders from South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Australia and Canada as members. The association's main objective is to provide its members with a comprehensive advisory service and every member receives an annual advisory visit by one of our accredited breed experts.

Registration system differs from other Simmental countries.

Registration certificates are only issued to animals that pass an inspection for general appearance by one of these experts. Out of every 10 bulls recorded at birth out of stud parents only three are registered. Structural soundness, a smooth hair-coat, sloping rumps and medium size are some of the aspects we like in our animals. From the Beginning we only used the early maturing well muscled Fleckvieh type.

Just under 80% of the population is under performance recording and the well known BREEDPLAN International from Australia handles our genetic evaluations.

Also leader in showing

The first Simmentaler-Fleckvieh show ever outside Europe, was staged in 1899 in Namibia (then German South-West Africa). We are also fortunate to have staged the first ever Simmental-Fleckvieh World Congress-show in 1976 in South Africa as well

as the largest Simmental-Feckvieh show in the world in 1996 in Pretoria with 1200 entries.

Thirty years ago already we moved away from the sole appearance approach in showing to a system where reproduction plays an important role in the final placing of cows. After all reproduction should always be the most important part in stud and commercial breeding. We developed Simdex, a reproduction index which incorporates age at first calving, intercalving period and even flushings in one figure.

(Sim)sational Performance

How does the breed perform compared with well known performance tested breeds (*more than 2 500 performance tested females according to Beef Breeding in SA*):

- Reproduction index (ICP and age first calving) = 1st
- Weaning weight = 1st
- Year old weight of heifers = 1st
- Feedlot growth (bull testing intensive conditions) = 1st

Reasons for continuous popularity in South Africa and Namibia:

1. Simmentaler is successfully used in cross breeding for both (i) suckler cows with optimal milk production and (ii) rapid growing weaners/steers. Our motto is : “You can produce milk without beef but you cannot produce beef without milk.”
2. The outstanding performance amongst the top tested beef breeds.
3. Functional correctness as pre-requisite for registration. The registration certificate of an approved Simmentaler is proof that the animal as well as its ancestors have passed appraisal for conformational standards.

(C P Massmann)