

Kruisfontein celebrates first embryo calves

The Kruisfontein Emerging Cattle Farmers Co-operative is on track to become one of the nucleus herds for livestock improvement in the Eastern Cape. This has been made possible through the most impactful technology available to bovine agriculture, in vitro fertilisation.



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The first batch of calves from high-quality embryos were born between 4 and 12 November 2018, resulting from in vitro procedures, of which 28 pregnancies were confirmed in June this year.

"We are very happy with the results of this programme, considering that 195 cows were confirmed in calf, to the new bulls in July, showing an improved conception rate under structured management and the results from the first round of embryo transfers show the conception rate of between 50% and 60% for the in vitro fertilisation programme," explained Vaaltyn Felix, chairman of the Kruisfontein Emerging Cattle Farmers Co-operative.

Getting to high-end breeding

The long-term goal is to get this 100% black emerging farmers co-op to the level where it is one of the high-end breeding farms supplying bulls and cows to the provincial livestock improvement programme, which is a long way from the original low-quality herd. It is widely believed that livestock should be considered as one of the most valuable resources in the province taking into account the economic and cultural importance, especially to the rural people in the Eastern Cape.

"The importance of agriculture and the emerging farmers of the rural communities to our national economy is well known and their contribution to the alleviation of poverty, food security, employment creation and the sustainable management of natural resources is critical," explained Hlengiwe Radebe, economic development director for Jeffreys Bay Wind Farm, the financial supporter of this programme.

Underpinning social relationships

Livestock ownership in the rural areas has long been associated with prestige and status or for stores of wealth and reasons associated with utility provision such as household milk, draught power, manure and less frequently for meat. This makes it important to take into account that cattle in the rural areas underpin social relationships between individuals in the community and do not only reflect the market value associated to ownership in commercial agriculture.

The Livestock Improvement Programme seeks to increase the value of ownership of cattle in the rural community while ensuring that the improvement of quality and productivity of their livestock does not disenfranchise the traditional norms.

It's been just over a year since the Kruisfontein Emerging Cattle Farmers Co-operative welcomed their first superior genetic bulls, funded by Jeffrey's Bay wind farm's enterprise development programme, and already they are reaping the rewards. The results achieved from the first crop of calves, from the introduction of the new superior bulls as implemented in year one, are now reaching weaning weight. These calves have shown a rapid increase in quality and vigour, and weigh substantially more than their counterparts from the other inferior bulls.

All eyes on the future

"This programme has already boosted our co-op and taught us a new way of thinking about cattle farming, which we can pass on to future generations. What's more, it is already having an impact on our community and creating jobs," added Felix.

With the explicit intention of converting this 100% black emerging farmers co-ops overall herd from that of poor genetic quality, low value animals to superior quality, high value animals, Jeffreys Bay Wind Farm began funding the Kruisfontein Emerging Cattle Farmers Herd Improvement Programme in 2016, which included the provision of superior bulls.

The Kruisfontein Emerging Cattle Farmers Co-operative comprises both male and female farmers, who have been running a herd for over 12 years.

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