

MASHONA SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER



APRIL 2019

“The Mashona Breed originates from some of the most harshly selected genetics in Africa-no dipping, no supplementation, no vaccination, no treatments. As a result the breed is ideally suited to survival in the harsh conditions of the Mashonaland Sourveldt.”

For years the breed has been overlooked and discriminated against for it’s relatively small carcass size.

However there has always been a small but hardcore group of dedicated Cattle Men and Women who have stood by their beloved Mashonas. Today we have 2 registered breeders, namely

FERTYLINE STUD Carmen Stubbs,

BLUE GUMS STUD Maree Osborne

In the process of becoming registered are Colin Langton, Divine Ndhlukula, Henderson Research Station and Makoholi Research Station.

In addition to the pedigree breeders there are several pure breed and composite Indigenous herds, (Mashona, Boran, Tuli and Angoni) all producing exciting results.

The Mashona Family would like to pay tribute to our hardcore breeders who have had to fight hard to preserve their herds and genetics. Also to the Committee ably led by Doug Bruce. Maree Osborne who has put in many long hours keeping us all in the loop, setting up the Mashona Facebook page and a very vibrant Whatsapp Group. Carmen Stubbs who has been a bottomless pit of information and ideas



THANK YOU Guys for the hard work and dedication from which we all benefit. May the Mashona Breed go from strength to strength.

EVENTS

1. AGM

A very successful AGM was held end of last year at Henderson Research Station with a record attendance. Followed on with a viewing of their Mashona Herd. Well done Guys for keeping going through hard times.

Milton Makumbe Acting Head of the Institute put out an invitation for suggestions for Research Topics. Please give this some thought.

2. CATTLE APPRAISAL COURSE. Feb 19

Presented by Doug Bruce together with Maree Osborne and the Blue Gums herd.

This was a very comprehensive course, simply presented and reinforced with an excellent practical session. Maree's herd was in superb condition and a great advertisement for the Mashona Breed. Thank you to all concerned.

These courses will be run on a regular basis and well worth attending



3. REGENERATIVE FARMING Jan19

Organized by BVG Doug Bruce and Percy Sharp (ex Zim) NZ

Looking at new ways to look after our veld and improve our soils has become an increasingly hot topic world wide

Dr Sharp speaking from personal experience and several very stimulating videos, emphasized the importance of intensive grazing, effect of many hooves, dung and urine, species diversity and increased levels of humus, in improving our soils and pastures.

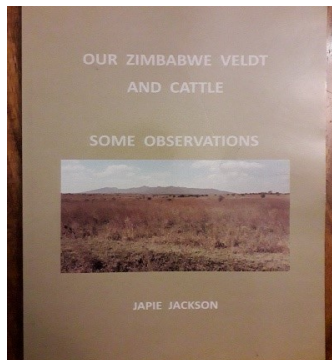
Another stimulating day challenging us to look to new ways of handling our cattle and managing the veld.

4. MASHONA WHATSAPP GROUP

This has been a stimulating and challenging forum for all cattle producers.

Input from Johann Zeitsman[Zambia] and Jamie Elizondo[USA] has promoted much thought to the way forward for the Mashona breed. Their involvement and ideas have stimulated us to think outside the box.

Jamie thank you for exposing us to your Mashona herd in Texas and highlighting the importance of our genetics worldwide. We appreciate all your input and hope the renewed interest in our cattle will be reflected in our herds going forward.



DR JAPIE JACKSON

It is fitting to mention Oom Japie who is arguably one of the most experienced veterinarians and cattleman in Zimbabwe. He has done over million PD's all over Zimbabwe, has a vast wealth of experience of all aspects of livestock and written many papers and articles pertaining to the industry.

His vast experience and acute understanding of the Zimbabwe veld is invaluable. Especially in these times of reduced land holding, climate change and new research towards regenerative agriculture.

He has recently published a new book

“OUR ZIMBABWE VELDT AND CATTLE SOME OBSERVATIONS” This is an easy read and an invaluable ‘go to’ resource book for the industry.

Available from BVG Dr Doug Bruce, Borrowdale Rd US\$ 40.

When asked what grass to plant under a pivot for cattle he replied “A good place to start would be to collect seed from all the surrounding plants “ forever practical and a man ahead of his time!

Thank you Dr Jackson.

An article contributed by Dr Percy Sharp

Is Embryo Transfer Worth Doing?

It depends on your circumstances and what you are wanting to achieve. The huge variation in results and unpredictability of this costly technique often makes it not worth doing. The best way to ensure a positive outcome is to spread the risk over a larger number of embryos than those often produced by only 1 or 2 donors selected by a breeder. The overall average result of ET worldwide is good enough to make it worthwhile, whereas collections from 1 or 2 donors, quite often fails and is therefore potentially uneconomic. Despite this, most of the work performed is on small programmes and large numbers of superior cattle have been produced, mostly at considerable cost per animal. Furthermore, not all calves from a superior cow are going to be as good or better than her, despite using a top sire. An experienced ET practitioner aids good results, but management and feeding of the cattle, has the most effect on results once the practitioner has acquired enough skill.

My most effective and rewarding achievements doing ET have been establishing new breeds in locations where live cattle or semen importation has been prohibited or too costly. Over 200 Boran calves were born in Zimbabwe from embryos collected from 100 donor cows in Kenya and 150 calves were born in Texas from Mashona cows flushed in Zimbabwe. In both cases a good representative nucleus of a new breed was established without spreading disease and laid the foundation for breeding more of these cattle using other conventional and cheaper methods.



**WEAVER RANCH
MASHONA HERD FOR SALE**

Our entire herd of approximately 500 head of registered and commercial Mashona cattle is being offered for sale. The price is US 1.2 million dollars.

This is perhaps the largest herd of its kind in the world — and therefore a most valuable repository for unique genetics derived from a truly grass-based breed. Our herd originated in Zimbabwe in 1995 with genetics selected from the best available stock by Mashona expert and researcher, Dr. John Tiffin. Embryos were collected and imported directly to the US under the strict USDA protocols, the first such importation of its kind.

This is truly a unique opportunity for progressive cattlemen seeking heat tolerance, moderate size, easy calving, high fertility — and perhaps most of all unsurpassed heterosity and higher quality grade in outcross calves. Cattle are all at the ranch in Eastern New Mexico, 50 miles south of Clovis, NM or 90 miles west of Lubbock, TX.

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Jaime Elizondo now owns a lot of these cattle and is doing wonderful things with them.

A smaller version of the above is when a breeder wants to get involved in a new breed and goes out and either buys a group of these cows or buys a batch of embryos of the desired breed. The Limousin breed

made its appearance in Zimbabwe mainly from 30 heifers that were flown in from the UK by a syndicate of breeders. Many of them were successfully flushed numerous times while being managed by one breeder experienced in ET programmes, producing considerable numbers of offspring.



A lot of ET work is instigated by AI companies wanting to breed new bulls for semen production and sale. A superior cow in any herd is identified through production records or genotyping and the AI company offers the breeder a contract to breed bulls for them. Economic return from this type of programme is easier to achieve and justify despite the possibility of only getting smaller numbers of calves produced. A New Zealand farmer has had close to 500 embryos made from his top cows this spring and had them implanted into the bottom 2/3 of his herd. When asked if it pays, he said the bulls he contracts to the AI companies more than pays for all this work. Most of his replacement heifers come from these implants. In most cases, the breeding of commercial production cattle, whether beef or dairy, using ET is not feasible unless it done on a huge scale where fees can be reduced because of the volume of work performed, as in the previous paragraph. Convenience, efficiency and economy of scale. The success of ET also depends hugely on the provision and use of suitable recipient cows to implant the embryos into. Even a top-quality embryo implanted by an experienced practitioner into a substandard recipient, is not going to produce a calf. Recipient provision, management and preparation is probably the costliest part of any ET programme and requires considerable experience. Nothing is worse than producing quality embryos and then getting no pregnancies. If ET results were more consistent, simple and cheaper to do, there would be a lot more done and more significantly, there would be a lot more ET practitioners involved in the industry. We are relying on cows to do un-natural things so one needs to accept the times when it does not work and do enough to also benefit from the exhilarating times when great results are achieved. It does work, and I have made a living out of doing ET for the past 35 years.

Thank you Percy

Editor Helen Lock

MAY WE WISH YOU ALL A VERY HAPPY EASTER