



Drakensbergers perform well on the Highveld

By Marike Brits

The Talman Drakensberger herd is situated in the Ermelo district. The owner, Petrus Taljaard, farms with stud and commercial Drakensberger cattle, among others.

After completing his military training in the early 1990s, he joined his father in the mixed farming enterprise which included crop, cattle and sheep branches. "Early in my life my father taught me the value of mixed farming, where your risk is spread by several branches," he says.

The Talman Drakensberger stud was officially registered in 1996. Bulls are selected from the stud at the age of two years for use in their commercial herd, after which they are made available to the market at the age of three. Buying tested bulls offers the buyer greater peace of mind.

Talman Drakensberger bulls are put on auction every year at the Eastern Transvaal all-breed bull auction, as well as the Eastern Transvaal Drakensberger Club auction.

A real South African breed

"It is a privilege to farm with a real South African breed and to promote it. To farm with a breed you are fond and proud of, is very satisfactory," Petrus says.

He says there are several reasons why they prefer working with the Drakensberger. The breed's good temperament means that they can handle a large herd with only a few workers, without the animals becoming stressed.

The breed fares especially well in his region, because the animals perform well under extreme weather conditions. "In summer, the cow gains weight on the veld with a suckling calf right next to her. In my view it is one of the best maternal line breeds in South Africa."

Heterosis is used in the commercial herd, by selectively using *Bos Taurus* type bulls. In this way the potential of the animals is unlocked even further. This also emphasises the importance of balance in the farming enterprise. "It is important to keep in mind that too much focus on any trait will impact negatively on other traits. In keeping with nature, we try to focus on

follow the most profitable path for your conditions. Whether it is weaner calves for the feedlot, an ox farming system or weaner calves that are finished on the veld, the animals perform well. If you look after them, they will look after you."

According to Petrus the progress made by the Drakensberger breed can be attributed to the fact that the breeders



A group of Drakensberger weaner calves that were freeze-branded at an early age.

each key trait in a balanced way."

Petrus adds that good balance in respect of key traits is also a trait of the Drakensberger breed and one that they select for. "A rule of thumb that we apply in the herd, is that a heifer should already have calved by the age of three. With that as our focus, we select in a natural way for fertility and fewer calving problems. Most Drakensberger cows make the cut."

Numerous possibilities

Another advantage of the breed, says Petrus, is that farming with Drakensbergers provides one with various options. "The breed allows you to

increasingly focus on breeding broader animals – with not only more muscling and better spring of rib, but which will also wean a high-quality calf every year. "Wherever producers decide to farm with the Drakensberger, they are sure to find that the animals are well adapted and meet current requirements."

For more information, contact Petrus Taljaard on talmanpt@gmail.com or 082 493 4173. Alternatively contact the Drakensberger Breeders' Society on 051 410 0974 or visit www.drakensbergers.co.za for more on the breed.