A SMOOTH, TICK-RESISTANT COAT

According to Schoeman, adaptability is one of the most important aspects a farmer should consider when choosing a beef cattle breed. “Climate plays an essential role in this decision: can the chosen breed perform optimally in extreme heat or cold?”

Schoeman advises farmers to pay special attention to the breed’s coat type, which ideally should be smooth and relatively loose-skinned. “In South Africa, this is of utmost importance. External parasites, such as ticks, can lead to major losses.”

On a recent visit to Botswana, Schoeman was surprised at how many local farmers were using European cattle breeds in their livestock operations. “These breeds are definitely not ideal for Botswana’s climatic conditions,” he stresses.

ANIMAL SIZE

He says the size of the animal is usually determined by rainfall. Limited rainfall tends to result in sweetveld, which produces big animals; heavy rain usually favours medium-sized animals. Schoeman advises farmers to select the ideal breed for their environment, and to give special attention to the breed’s coat type, which ideally should be smooth and relatively loose-skinned.

In the Kalahari, heifers grazed on sweetveld can easily be weaned at seven to eight months at about 300kg. When they’re mated at 15 months old, they weigh 360kg to 375kg. And they weigh around 450kg to 470kg at calving. A problem with producing animals on sweetveld is that it is difficult to predict their ultimate size if they grow at the rate seen in the Kalahari, he says.

‘ADAPTABILITY IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF BEEF PRODUCTION’

In the Kalahari, heifers grazed on sweetveld can easily be weaned at seven to eight months at about 300kg. When they’re mated at 15 months old, they weigh 360kg to 375kg. And they weigh around 450kg to 470kg at calving. A problem with producing animals on sweetveld is that it is difficult to predict their ultimate size if they grow at the rate seen in the Kalahari, he says.

“While the Beefmaster may not be perfect, I can assure you that breeders are trying to ensure that it ultimately becomes the ideal cattle breed. The Beefmaster is currently one of the most popular beef cattle breeds in South Africa, and its numbers are growing rapidly. The breed is also popular for use in crossbreeding programmes and feedlots, Schoeman adds. “I have no doubt that the Beefmaster is the breed of the future.”

“Farmers who use Beefmaster bulls in crossbreeding programmes amongst the Beefmaster, and amongst the most popular breeds, are achieving high returns. The Beefmaster is not only fertile but also has a high growth rate.”

FERTILITY

Fertility is one of the cornerstones on which the Beefmaster breed was developed, and it remains as important to breeders today. A cow that does not produce a calf is inefficient and loses the farmer money. “This is why Beefmaster breeders insist that cows wear one good calf every year,” says Schoeman. “To ensure this, farmers should determine what percentage of their animals they want to sell — for example, 10% of the weakest calves and their mothers — and get rid of them. In this way, the profitability of the herd should improve every year. This is a simple concept, but delivers exceptional results. While the Beefmaster may not be perfect, I can assure you that breeders are trying to ensure that it ultimately becomes the ideal cattle breed. The Beefmaster is currently one of the most popular beef cattle breeds in South Africa, and its numbers are growing rapidly. The breed is also popular for use in crossbreeding programmes and feedlots, Schoeman adds. “I have no doubt that the Beefmaster is the breed of the future.”

“Farmers who use Beefmaster bulls in crossbreeding programmes amongst the Beefmaster, and amongst the most popular breeds, are achieving high returns. The Beefmaster is not only fertile but also has a high growth rate.”

FERTILITY

Fertility is one of the cornerstones on which the Beefmaster breed was developed, and it remains as important to breeders today. A cow that does not produce a calf is inefficient and loses the farmer money. “This is why Beefmaster breeders insist that cows wear one good calf every year,” says Schoeman. “To ensure this, farmers should determine what percentage of their animals they want to sell — for example, 10% of the weakest calves and their mothers — and get rid of them. In this way, the profitability of the herd should improve every year. This is a simple concept, but delivers exceptional results. While the Beefmaster may not be perfect, I can assure you that breeders are trying to ensure that it ultimately becomes the ideal cattle breed. The Beefmaster is currently one of the most popular beef cattle breeds in South Africa, and its numbers are growing rapidly. The breed is also popular for use in crossbreeding programmes and feedlots, Schoeman adds. “I have no doubt that the Beefmaster is the breed of the future.”

“Farmers who use Beefmaster bulls in crossbreeding programmes amongst the Beefmaster, and amongst the most popular breeds, are achieving high returns. The Beefmaster is not only fertile but also has a high growth rate.”