



# Emerging dairy farmers on the road to success

by Louw Pretorius

**Artificial insemination (AI) and official milk recording are the fastest, easiest and cheapest ways for developing farmers to enter the commercial dairy industry. The aim of Taurus's involvement with emerging farmers is to play a supporting role in their education and walk the road with them, so the farmers can experience the value of technology first-hand, according to Schalk Greyling, manager at Mbisi.**

They experienced that empty promises tend to close the door on communication with emerging farmers. On the other hand, better quality animals, better production and quality products, or just more money in the bank, can really do wonders for your communication.

"Taurus is committed to livestock improvement all over the country, based on their policy of continual support. This includes education, guidance and sustained service on entry level" says Greyling. The Co-op's involvement with emerging farmers in Qua-Qua and the Eastern Free State is a very good example.

"It is also a misperception that all small-scale and emerging farmers are poor and without money. In contrast, they are willing to pay if they receive good value for their money. The farmers pay for their products in cash. Synchronisation and AI of cows only take place after the money was banked. These farmers therefore budget for worthwhile services that will have a positive effect on their bank balances, and they are proud of it," says Joël Kotzé, Taurus manager: beef semen.

Joel Nkuna is posted at Taurus, Irene, with the responsibility of country-wide liaison with communities, as well as local and provincial government. He organises and establishes projects as the need arises. In Qua-Qua and the Eastern Free State, he is supported by Peter Ncubuka of Witsieshoek, a full-time agent of Taurus in this area.

Willie Jacobs of Hazeldene, Ladybrand, was a teacher for more than six years. He has been farming for the last 2½ years on 239 ha that he bought with the help of Land Bank. He is a committed dairy farmer who plans and manages his dairy to milk between 40 and 50 cows per day from the field, with an average production of 12 litres/cow/day. In mid-February, after he provided for own use, his milk buyer could collect 1 380 litres of milk from 43 cows every second day for the fresh milk market of Gauteng. A dairy concentrate additive is given in the parlour and the winter grazing is supplemented with green feed and hay.

Jacobs converted an old horse stable on his farm into a hygienic milk parlour. He installed a milk tank, but continues to milk by hand and weighs the milk of each cow with a spring type scale. He plans to invest in a modern milking parlour, “but the cows must earn this one by one,” he says.

He says the combination of AI and official milk recording is the only way to manage a dairy effectively and successfully. It is also the only way to progress in the industry – no matter what the entry level is. He summarises it as follows:

- It is too expensive to buy a good bull
- The cost to maintain an average bull can be converted into profit by buying a good cow instead
- With AI, you do not have to buy a bull, you buy genetics and get the bull as a bonus
- Because you buy genetics, you can make use of the semen of more than one bull on your farm
- Milk recording is a bargaining tool in the hands of the farmer with respect to the quality of his product. Without it, verification is impossible.

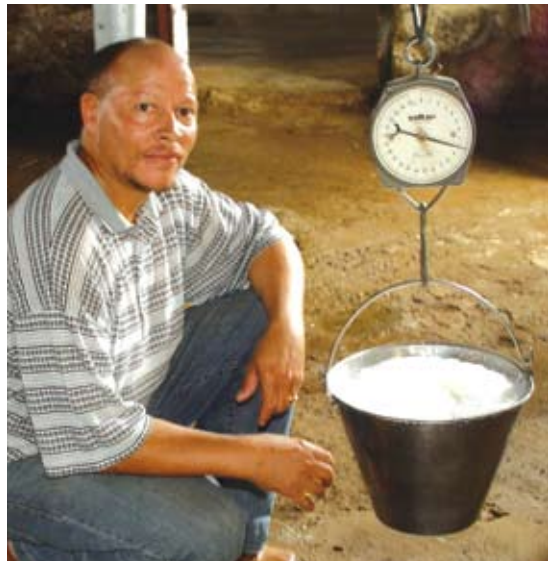
Alfred Tsetetsi of Elandsrivier, Harrismith, has been farming on 661 ha for the last ten years with beef cattle and also milks 45 cows. He started practising AI ten years ago but problems with heat detection forced him to stop for a while. But thanks to synchronisation, he has been back on track for the last two years.

Tsetetsi is a hands-on farmer and you will find him in the parlour twice a day when his cows are milked with a 4-point milk machine. He also milks from the field, and supplements with dairy concentrate in the parlour. During winter months, he adds stook maize meal and eragrostis hay to his feeding programme.

With the high rainfall earlier this year, his production went up to 650 litres/day in mid-February, from which his milk buyer could collect 450 litres/day. The rest was sold as fresh milk in shops. He already owns a bigger tank that just has to be installed, so that his milk buyer can take all his milk. Alfred will also start with official milk recording soon. **UM**



Peter Ncubuka, full-time Taurus agent in Qwa Qwa in the Free State and Alfred Tsetetsi, a Qwa Qwa cattle farmer from the Harrismith district. The combination of synchronisation, artificial insemination (AI) and official milk recording enables Tsetetsi to manage and extend his dairy herd of 45 lactating cows



Willie Jacobs, an experienced dairy farmer, never tires to talk about the advantages AI and milk recording for his farm, even though his dairy is operating in a very fundamental manner. He milks from the field, by hand and measures every cow's production with a spring type scale