

Training for tomorrow

by Ramona Baijnath, communication officer, Working for Water Programme

Working for Water (WfW) has made significant strides to eradicate poverty, develop skills and empower gender. WfW is recognised as one of government's most successful expanded public works programmes. To date, the programme has spent over R2,3 billion and in 2003/4 created over 33 000 job opportunities.

When Julia Mpebe from Mooiplaas squatter camp near Pretoria joined WfW as a general worker in 2000, she knew little about Invasive Alien Plants (IAPs). A lot has changed since then, Mpebe is now a WfW contractor with her own team. "When WfW came to Mooiplaas and recruited people for poverty relief, I knew nothing about IAPs, but I was very interested. However, today when I'm driving and I see IAPs, I just want to stop and get rid of them from our country, because they rob our land of its agricultural productivity and steal our water," she says.

"Before WfW, I was living at Mooiplaas squatter camp with my sister, because I was unemployed. When I started earning money as a general worker, I bought materials to build a house. But then the camp became too dangerous. Women were raped and people were killed. I decided to move to nearby Olivenhoutbosch settlement. I am now planning to build my own house. I am a breadwinner, supporting my father and three children. Before I started with WfW, I didn't have the basics like a bed, blankets and food. Now, through WfW, I have a better life," said Mpebe.

According to Mpebe, WfW has helped to fight poverty in Mooiplaas. "Now the people are working and can take care of their families. It really is a programme for the poorest of the poor. I think if WfW didn't come to my community, we would not have been able to make progress. We wouldn't have money for our families and we wouldn't have the knowledge of IAPs and indigenous plants, and the impact of both. I don't know if I would even have a job," says Mpebe.

The WfW training unit oversees the training of contractors such as Mpebe in task-related fields, business and life skills. The training unit has embarked on the Training for Trainers Programme, aimed at equipping previously disadvantaged individuals with the skills necessary to manage their own training business.

Theresa Macheke, a Working for Water (WfW) field worker and Julia Mpebe, a WfW contractor, hard at work

"I have been to so much training and development programmes, and have learned new skills that have changed my life and given me greater opportunities", said Mpebe. "I want to be a private contractor for the industry. I want to be a businesswoman and WfW has given me the skills I need to start up," she added.

Contact Ramona Baijnath, communication officer, Working for Water Programme at 021 441 2703 or 082 888 9657, or e-mail baijn@dwaf.gov.za for more information. **UM**



Fight stock theft with **Lidcat**

by Ben Greyling, senior researcher, Animal Genetics and Forensics Division, ARC

They say that the easiest way to make money is to stop losing it. Because of stock theft, farmers lose a lot of money every year. Stock theft hurts all farmers, whether you are a commercial, stud or small-scale farmer. Stock theft is very bad for small-scale farmers who have only a few animals. They do not always have the money to buy new ones.

One of the biggest problems when animals are stolen is that you cannot tell which one is yours. The law says that you must brand mark animals older than six months so you can see which animals are yours. But some people do not do this. Stock thieves also often try to change the brands that were made. This makes it very difficult to see what animals are yours. It is very important to be able to identify animals so that the police can find the real owner.

The Animal Genetics Division of the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) has been helping the stock theft units of the SA Police Service for many years. They make use of DNA to see what animals are yours. Then they can help the police find stolen animals.

DNA is found in the blood, skin, meat, bones, intestines and even hair roots of animals and it can be used to identify an

“Because the DNA ‘fingerprint’ of the animal stays the same throughout its life, and because no one can change it, police can use it to find animals”



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animal. DNA is almost like your fingerprint. No one's fingerprints look the same. In the same way, no one's DNA is the same. The DNA of the animal is not something you can see with your eyes. This makes it impossible for thieves to change the DNA of animals. Police all over the world have been using human DNA in the courts for a long time. Now it can also be used when animals are stolen. Animal Genetics has a new product called Lidcat (Livestock Identification Catalogue) that helps the police catch stock thieves by using the DNA of animals.

Because the DNA "fingerprint" of the animal stays the same throughout its life, and because no one can change it, police can use it to find animals. The DNA of an animal can still be used, even if it is dead. Even a drop of blood or a hair can be used to identify a stolen animal.

When you use the Lidcat system, they take a hair sample of each of your animals. This hair is then stored with your name. When someone steals your animal, they take a hair or blood from the animal you think is yours. If it is your cow, the DNA will prove it.

Animal Genetics saw that there are many small-scale farmers in the country, and that their cattle often get stolen. They started a project to help these farmers by using the Lidcat system. They send out a team of their people, together with the stock theft units of the police, to take hair samples of all your animals. They also brand mark the animals, and give them ear tags.

Then each animal gets a special number, almost like your ID number. When people then fight over an animal, or if an animal gets stolen, they can simply take a sample of that animal and check to see if it is the same as the one that they have saved under the special number.

By using this method, one can easily tell which animals are yours. Police say that there are already less cattle thefts where people use the Lidcat system. This shows that the Lidcat system can stop cattle theft. This way you will save a lot of money by not losing it to replace stolen cattle. **UM**



This picture shows how an animal is hurt when thieves try to change a brand mark



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