



Passionate about animal improvement

by Izak Hofmeyr

Ask Joel Nkuna what his ambition in life is, and he is very clear in his answer: "I want to help farmers to improve the quality of their livestock so that they can make a better living." As project development officer and artificial insemination (AI) technician at the Taurus Livestock Improvement Co-op, this dynamic man is placed in exactly the right spot to achieve this ambition.

How does he make a difference in the lives of emerging farmers? "We want farmers to see after their first AI calf that they can make a significant difference in the quality of their cattle herd by using superior bull semen. To achieve this we as a private co-operative try to co-operate with the State. In my case, I immediately tried to make contact with the extension officers of the Department of Agriculture and to join them in their programmes."

Joel has been with Taurus his whole working life – first as assistant in the Taurus semen truck and later as driver of the truck. "This is actually where my consulting role started, for as I went to the various drop-off points, more and more people started talking to me and wanted to know what I was doing. As I started explaining to them about semen and artificial insemination, they wanted to know if they could also do it."

When he realised that this was a possible opportunity for Taurus to reach developing farmers, he approached the Taurus management. The result was a new programme to reach developing farmers and to assist them in animal improvement.



Taurus



For all your **DEVELOPING**
farmers' needs contact:



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Today Joel is involved with groups of farmers in all parts of the country, but especially in Limpopo and Gauteng. “What I find most satisfying is to see the improvement of the calves over time. There is no doubt that our approach of using the best possible bulls is having a very positive effect on the quality of the cattle of the farmers that participate in our projects.

“As a project development officer, my duties are to consult with emerging farmers and to share with them our expertise at Taurus – how we can help them achieve their goals.” The process starts with the selection of appropriate cows for AI. Joel tries to select a farmer’s best cows for AI. Then a time frame is decided on, in terms of which the project will be managed.

“Taurus, says Joel, “is geared to give support to anybody who is interested in improving the quality of their cattle through AI. All they need to do is contact us. We will then make an appointment to come and meet with the people in that area and work out a plan of action.”

Joel assists farmers in selecting their best cows for AI, after which those cows are synchronised so that they come on heat at the same time. They are then inseminated. “One of the big advantages of synchronising cows is that all the calves are born at the same time. This helps with the management of the calves, and one can also see which cows are genetically superior by the rate at which their calves grow in comparison to the weaker cows’ calves.

Contact Joel Nkuna at 012 667 1122 or 082 807 1557 or e-mail: farmdev@taurus.co.za **UM**

Royal Show Champion



Wayne
Southwood

Ephraime Mbele of QwaQwa, picture here with his Shorthorn cow, Tugela Contess. Tugela Contess was crowned Senior and Grand Champion Dairy Shorthorn Cow at the Royal Agricultural Show held recently in Pietermaritzburg. Mbele is living proof of what emerging farmers can achieve when they use superior semen