



Beef Simmentaler under intensive Dairy Farming in Southern Africa

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Southern African Simmentalers are often regarded to be „Beef Simmentalers“, however, many farmers here also milk them. Almost 90% of all South African and Namibian Simmentalers originated from Germany. Farmers know that the growth of the calves mainly depends on the milk production of their mothers and therefore milk production always was a very important selection criterion, even if the cows were not milked. In the following we would like to present you two farms where „Beef Simmentalers“ are used as dairy cows. Both herds are mainly based on the same genetics, but the two farming systems are totally different. On one of the farms, located in the North of the country, a TMR-ration is fed and on the other, located in the Southern coastal region, the cows are grazed on dry land pastures.

„Beef“ Simmentaler producing milk on TMR

The milk production of the cows of Mr. Awie Coetzee of Ermelo/Transvaal, can easily compete with the production of Fleckvieh cows in Europe, even though the herd started with „beef“ genetics. In 1974 Mr. Coetzee bought his first 5 Simmentaler cows from the Dan Jaco stud for his 4 ha farm in Brakpan. The cows were milked by hand and the milk was marketed by himself. In 1975 Mr. Coetzee joined the Simmentaler Society of Southern Africa and his herd was

Table 1

Awanzaas massie daughters 2003/2004 Lactation (305 days adjusted)

Name	Age (Years)	Milk kg	% Fat	% Protein
Awanzaas Erma	6,8	11 417	3,81	3,12
Awanzaas Marina 2	7,0	10 575	4,38	3,30
Awanzaas Mina	6.6	12 368	3,99	3,28
Anwazaas Nonna 2	4.4	10 478	4.02	3.05
Awanzaas Jolene AJC9616	6.6	13 261	4.05	3.07



Type of suckler cow for dairy ranching in Southern Africa.

registered under the name Awanzaas. At the beginning he used semen from the German bulls Hadrian, Perutz, Benz, Baret, Dirin, Zeus, Streif, Half, Metro, Baldo and Medur to improve milk and beef production.

In 1983 Mr. Coetzee moved to a 30 ha farm near Balfour in Transvaal where he milked 120 cows. Today Mr. Coetzee owns a farm near Ermelo where he milks his cows three times a day and feeds them a TMR-ration. The ARC (Agricultural Research Council) is doing all milk recording on this farm. The average weight of the cows in milk is 630 kg. One of Mr. Coetzee's own bulls, Awanzaas Massie AJC9411 (Father: Jahdal Massie) out of Dan Jaco Erma 2nd (F: Benz 28568 FF: Bernheim) sired daughters with outstanding production figures. The ARC 2003/2004 lactation figures for these daughters are shown in table 1.

„Beef” Simmentaler on dry land pastures

The Kykso Simmentaler herd was started in 1965 (4th oldest Simmentaler herd in SA) when Mr. Matthys Swart of Swellendam, South Western Cape imported his first Simmentaler cows from Germany. The animals were bought from Hans Häckel, Anton Deutinger and some other farmers and were carefully selected for milk and beef production. All animals imported were out of cows that had a production of more than 5.000 kg milk. Further imports were made in 1972 and 1974.

In the early days semen of the following bulls was imported: Bernheim 47169, Herodus U5290, Helias, Pronco, Probleem, Hospie U6320, Hospan, Dirko12356 (F:Dirigent 47505), Dirin 48312 and Hafke. Also living bulls were imported: Hansjorg (Harp U5100, Harnisch U4260), Heros (Helmes U4692), Kaiser (Kater 50007), Milan (MisterU5333), Hadon (Hadrian U6565), Hagen (Hero,Horex) and Dior (Diebach). After that, only own bred bulls were used until recently.

For the first 15 years, until 1980, all cows were milked. Then new milking parlour regulations and a serious drought forced the business to stop milking and to use the cows as suckler cows. In 1998 part



Samurai-daughter out of a pure beef cow with excellent milk production in the Southern Cape. There is no difference in beef production compared to pure suckler cows but you have milk in addition.

of the herd was milked again. The rest followed somewhat later. The results were astonishing: In the second lactation the cows already produced 16 kg milk average during the winter of 1999. This is quite high if one considers the following situation:

1) Dryland pasture grazing. (The annual rainfall is only 300-350 mm – mainly in winter).

- 2) Summer temperatures are up to 40°C.
- 3) Cows have to walk sometimes up to 15 km per day.
- 4) Cows are fed only 1,5 kg concentrate per milking.
- 5) Only recently (since 2000) semen from top German bulls was used to improve milk production.

The herd now is divided into two groups. One is milked about 135 days after the calves were weaned at an age of three months. The rest of the cows is milked for 305 days. The income realized per cow can easily keep up with that earned with other intensive dairy breeds in the same area as you can see from table 3.

Conclusion

Simmentaler all around the world have an amazing potential to produce milk and beef on a very high level. One of the reasons for that is their good feed conversion. Southern African „beef” cows under TMR feeding that are milked three times a day can produce up to 10.000 kg milk per lactation. On the other hand, if you keep them under extreme dry conditions and feed them only 1,5 kg of concentrate per milking they still produce enough milk to ensure a good income that can easily keep up with that of intensive dairy breeds of the same area.

Table 2

Lactations of other cows

Name	Father	Milk kg	Fat %	Protein %
Awanzaas Narda 4	Dan Jaco Benz	11773	3,81	3,32
Awanzaas Karen 1	Awanzaas Gunar	10953	3.73	3.16
Awanzaas Karlientjie	Metro	9837	3.96	3.49

Table 3

Income per cow per year: Central South Cooperative (SSK) study group figures 2002/2003 averages

Breed	Days in milk	Beef Income	Milk Income	Total
Dairy breeds	305	R210.44	R6887.00	R7097.44
Kykso Simmentaler (1)	135 (after wean)	R3311.05	R2160.33	R5471.38
Kykso Simmentaler (2)	305	R3311.05	R6060.95	R9372.00