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or 076 176 7392

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PRINT ADVERTISING RATES

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Full Page - R7 920

Half Page - R4 900

Quarter Page - R2 725

1/8 page - R1 440

Smaller sizes: R110 per col cm

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Booking discounts

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Circulation

Distributed free through outlets in the agricultural smallholding settlements of Gauteng and adjoining provinces.

By Mail

To receive the *Smallholder* by mail subscribe for only R210 per year. See coupon in this edition.

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FRONT COVER

Learn about what to feed your poultry, and how to start with broilers, in this edition. See page 13.

COMMENT, by Pete Bower

The plastics crisis



Here are two statistics which, even if they are a bit exaggerated, are scary. The first is that 100% of all plastics ever made still exists. The cumulative total production of plastics worldwide between 1950 and 2015 has been estimated at 7,82 billion tons (with total annual production currently at 386 million tons coupled to a rate of increase annually of some 20%). That aggregates to about one ton of plastic that has been produced for every human being on the planet.

Plastic development and manufacturing only really took off after World War 2 from about 1950, and plastics have been shown to be virtually indestructible by normal processes of decomposition such as the ultra-violet rays of the sun, wind action, water and sand abrasion, or microbial or insect digestion.

So that ton-per-head of plastic is out there, somewhere, and growing every year.

The second statistic is that only 9% of all plastics ever made have been recycled. That is considerably less than a billion tons.

If that is the case, where is the remaining 91%, or about 7,2 billion tons?

A lot of it is in your home, car, office, etc, and when you're finished with it, all over the place, in parks, on sidewalks, along railway lines and up against fences, as litter.

A lot of it is in landfills.

A lot of it clogs up drains, rivers and waterways ~ just take a look at the regular photo updates on social media of the sterling efforts of volunteers trying desperately to clean up the rivers in Gauteng, such as the Hennops through Centurion.

But a lot more of it is in the sea, either as stuff that has attracted sufficient barnacles and other heavier detritus to sink without trace to the ocean floor, or which has been washed up by waves and tides upon the world's shorelines, or which has coalesced into one of the huge "garbage patches", called gyres that have formed in the past quarter century in the centres of the world's oceans.

Estimates of the amount of plastic of all sorts in the ocean vary, as do estimates of the size of the major gyres, in the latter case because they are constantly changing shape according to the currents and winds that form them, because they are very difficult to detect by satellite; because much of the plastic that they are formed from is invisible in that it floats a few centimetres below the surface, and because the density of the gyres, ie, number of bits of plastic per area, varies according to wind and wave.

What we do know is that, currently, there is absolutely no way for this plastic ever to be viably recaptured and recycled. The technology doesn't exist and the economics don't add up either. There is thus only one place that the stuff in these gyres is going, and that's downward, eventually, to the bottom of the ocean.

Yet, while we know that plastics are not good for the environment, we also know that they have been very good for manufacturers, distributors and retailers, and have also made consumers' lives much easier. The latter in two ways ~ firstly in the convenience of single-use utensils, packaging etc, and secondly by the myriad new products that have been developed, refined and often miniaturised through the use of plastics.

But, plastics can be recycled, so what's the problem? people ask. Well, only certain plastics can be viably recycled. Often, the costs of setting up a recycling plant and sourcing sufficient flows of suitable raw material greatly outweigh the revenue achievable. Costs which can be greatly increased by having to separate out the recyclable stuff from that which isn't. For example, plastic colddrink bottles are eminently recyclable and can be readily re-extruded, but not their caps.

Many types of plastic bag can't be recycled; they can only be re-used or repurposed (and then what?)

The fact is that the plastics manufacturing industry has hoodwinked the public into believing that their use of plastic products and packaging is acceptable by blatantly overselling the recyclability of its products.

With the use of plastics on the increase, and their overall recyclability not cut-and-dried, the only way to prevent the world and its rivers and oceans from drowning in the stuff is to massively tax it at source. The revenue thus generated should go to establishing research centres into re-use and recycling of those types of plastic that currently aren't, and to fund properly-run waste collection, sorting and separating operations, as well as public education campaigns against plastics use and disposal. But, ultimately, it won't be until consumers start to feel the increased cost through heavy taxation of the plastic product or its packaging in their pockets that they will start to demand alternatives less damaging to the planet.

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The community that is the planet

Sir ~ I wish to thank you for editing and "caring" for the *Gauteng Smallholder* month after month. I am always looking forward to it. Allow me to respond to the last two paragraphs of the editorial in the February edition. I agree that "growthmania," in other words our present

economic system, ie, neoliberal capitalism, is one of the major causes of the destruction of not only the environment, of our national food and seed security, but also of our very humanity and therefore of real culture. It fosters selfish greed; a greed that leaves little space for love and care for others and especially for the air, water, soil and myriads forms of life.

These forms of life in and above water and soil form one community. Our very existence depends on the good health of this community and therefore on the care and the love we bestow on all members of this "earth community" we are part of. Another cause of the collapse of the environment, also a

result of the present economic system, is the growing inequality between rich and poor, forcing the poor to behave in ways harmful to the environment and making the rich live and consume in non-sustainable ways. I want us NOT to give up. Our trust in God who loves the whole creation ~ people,
Continued on next page

What to do with chicken carcasses ~ a response

Sir ~ Being a small chicken farmer on a smallholding I suggest to

contact your closest animal sanctuary for removal of dead chicken carcasses (see *Smallholder* mailbag, February). In our area, from

dog shelters to wild animal shelters, everybody is grateful for the smallest donation! In return donation letters can be obtained.

Gabriele Doherty
By email

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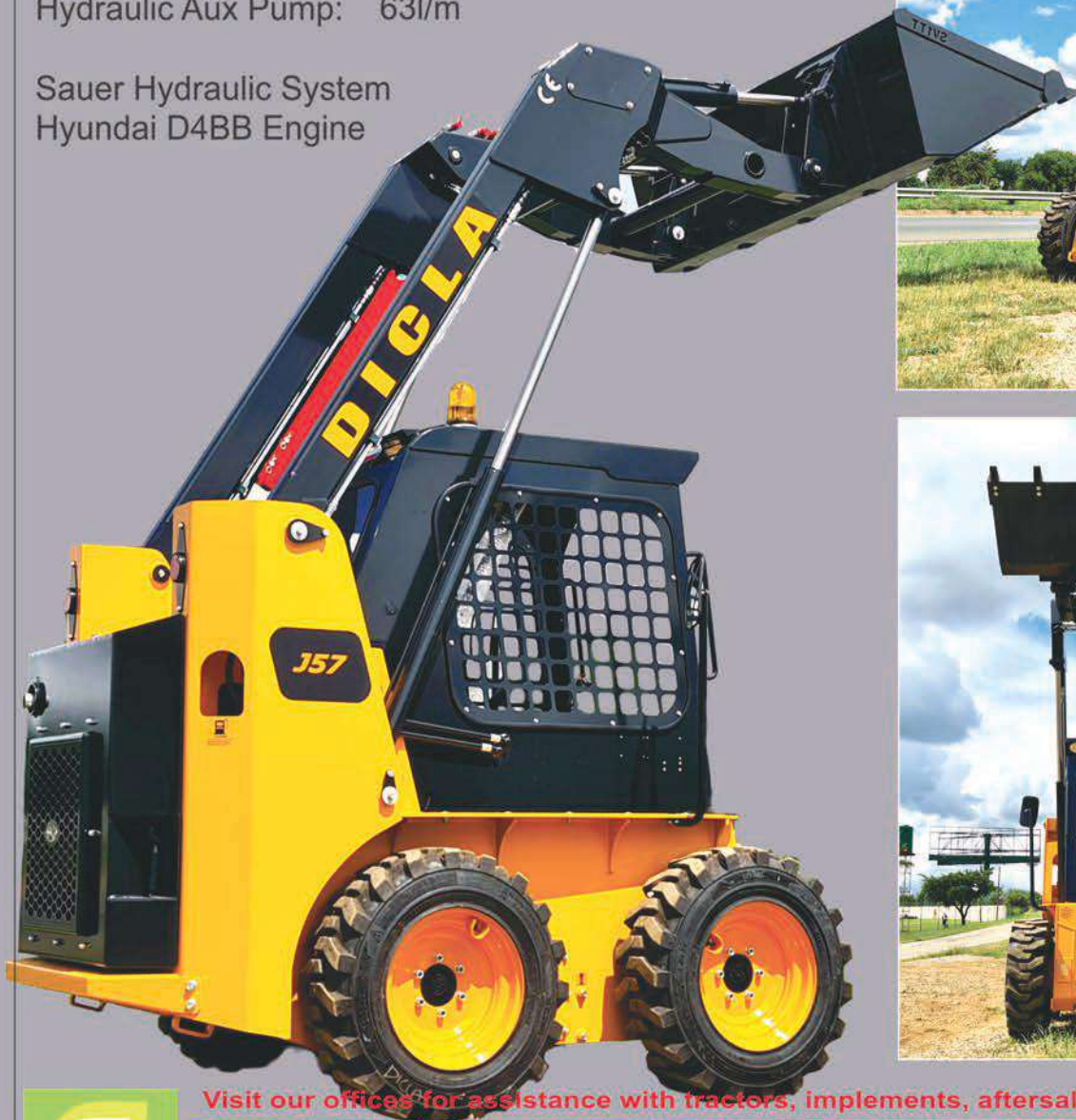
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Vaccinate against rabies to prevent sure-death

Rabies is on the rise in South Africa this year. An often-fatal disease, there have been 33 reported cases of rabies in the country, and one human fatality so far this year. The disease affects all mammals, and is transmissible from animals to humans through the saliva of the infected animal through licks, bites or scratches. All pet owners, according to the Animals Diseases Act, are required by law to vaccinate their pets against rabies. The virus affects both domestic and wild animals, and people are encouraged not to approach suspected

rabid animals ~ particularly stray dogs or cats. According to the Dept of Agriculture, Land Reform & Vaccinating against rabies Rural Development as well as the SA Veterinary Council, suspected and known rabies cases must be reported to the nearest State Veterinarian. Animals that have rabies secrete large amounts of the virus in their saliva, so the disease is primarily passed through a bite from an



infected animal. It can also be transmitted through a scratch or when infected saliva makes contact

and chew at the site where they were bitten. A fever may also be present. As the virus progresses, an infected dog may become hypersensitive to touch, light and sound. They may eat unusual things and hide in dark places. Paralysis of the throat and jaw muscles may follow, resulting in the well-known symptom of foaming at the mouth. Disorientation, unco-ordination and staggering may occur, caused by paralysis of the hind legs. Other classic signs of rabies include loss of appetite, weakness, seizures and sudden death. The virus can incubate from two to eight weeks before symptoms are shown. However, transmission of the virus through saliva can happen as early as ten days

Continued on next page

MAILBAG

From previous page plants, animals and the many different ecosystems ~ needs to be accompanied by active involvement, whether through our personal care and asceticism, through sharing and mobilising others to help restore or (through) political action demanding our governments to stop

behaving in greedy and dishonest ways towards all people and our shared environment. Justice demands care for people and for our abundant and precious ecosystems that constitute our country, South Africa.

Sr Angelika Laub
By email

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Agricultural shows in upheaval due to Covid-19

The ongoing coronavirus pandemic continues to wreak havoc with events, indoor and outdoor, of all sorts. Of the three agricultural exhibitions of most interest to Gauteng's smallholders, namely the annual Walkerville Show, the Nampo Harvest Day at Bothaville and the Kragdag expo near Rayton, one has been cancelled outright for this year, one has been postponed to August (from its usual dates in May) and one was still in limbo as this edition went to press. Cancelled for the year is the Walkerville Show, partly because a major feature of the show, namely the Giant Pumpkin Competition, can't

be postponed (because the pumpkins will go rot after they stop growing), and partly because the social distancing protocols required would make restrictions on visitor numbers unviable for the show's stallholders, particularly those who provide the wide variety of take-away food which has become such a feature of the show. Last year's well-attended show was

held literally days before the commencement of the first lockdown was announced. This year's Nampo show is currently scheduled to be held, physically again, from 17 to 20 August at the showgrounds outside Bothaville. After an early postponement announcement, last year's physical show was cancelled and replaced by a Virtual Nampo during

the middle of the year which many viewers thought was a stout effort on the part of all concerned, although acknowledging that it was nothing like the size of the physical event. There appears to be no talk of a Virtual Nampo this year, although various remotely-held seminars and discussions are being offered by Grain

Continued on next page

RABIES

From previous page
before symptoms appear. Once symptoms appear, there is no treatment or cure and the disease is fatal. Humans that have had contact with rabies-infected animals must wash the wound well with soap under running water and immediately contact their doctor to receive preventative treatment. This treatment must be administered immediately, or the virus will become fatal in the human, too. Dogs and cats must be vaccinated at 12 weeks old with repeat vaccinations every three years. The vaccine is a single-dose injection. 🌿

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ARC Pretoria offers soil course in March

The Agricultural Research Council (ARC) is offering a short course entitled Basic Soil Properties, Soil Analysis & Interpretation of Results. Course content will include soil forming factors; soil classification; soil survey and

mapping; land evaluation; soil water management (irrigation); soil interpretations; soil fertility and soil analysis; soil degradation and pollution. There will also be a practical field demonstration. Dates are 13 to 15 April. The course will be presented

at the ARC-Soil, Climate & Water Campus in Arcadia, Pretoria and the practical work will take place at the ARC-Vegetable & Ornamental Plants centre at Roodeplaat. The cost is R4 025 per person, which will include VAT and lunch.

For the course to go ahead, however, there must be a minimum of ten participants. The course is not accredited. To book contact Adri Laas before 26 March. Tel 012 310-2518 / 082 445 6269. E-mail adril@arc.agric.za.

Research Council restructures vegetable and crops units

To make itself more viable and sustainable, the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) has combined the ARC-Vegetable & Ornamental Plants (ARC-VOP) with the ARC Industrial Crops (ARC-IC) research campuses. The new business entity is called the ARC-

Vegetable, Industrial & Medicinal Plants (ARC-VIMP) research campus. The organisation says this will enable it to continue to make an impact on the food and agricultural sector through improving productivity of agricultural value chains, which contributes to

improved skills for the sector. The research mandates of the two campuses have been integrated into a new research strategy, as well as a new business and management model for the newly-established research campus. The focus will continue to be on research into vegetables,

industrial crops and medicinal plants, in order to assist the agricultural sector with development and commercialisation initiatives. The ARC-VIMP will operate as a single entity, with one management and support team from the Roodeplaat campus as the main campus.

Continued on next page

TRADE SHOWS

From previous page
SA, Nampo's owner.
Finally, after having been

summarily told to cancel its already-postponed Kragdag event at the end of last year,

the owners of the Sakeliga Kragdag franchise have not yet announced whether a show will be held during the course of 2021. They, too, are holding various topic-specific virtual seminars and discussions during the course of the year.



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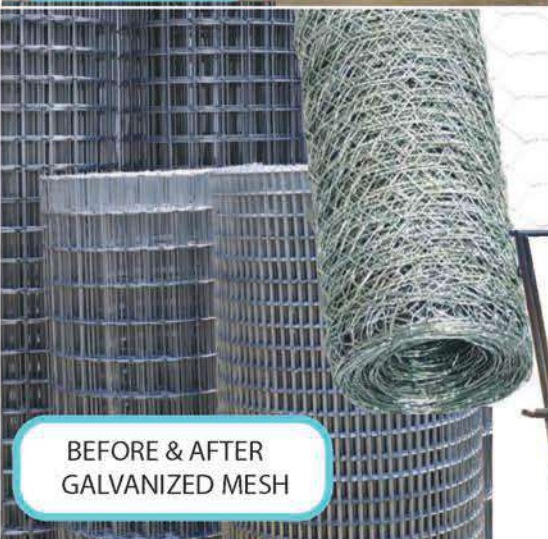
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Understanding what to feed your chickens...

Beginners in the field of keeping chickens are sometimes confused by the different names given to various types of chicken feed, and although the names are pretty self-explanatory, it helps to know what to feed when for the best outcome, both on your pocket and for the chicken. The first set of terms to know is the difference between

“mash”, “crumble” and “pellets”. Although mash conjures up a mental picture of something wet, such as mashed potato or mashed pumpkin, in poultry terms it is simply feed in dry, almost powdered form.

...and when



Crumble is coarser than mash, but the pieces are nevertheless only a few millimetres in diameter and are suitable for feeding to young birds. Pellets are cylindrical particles smaller than 5mm in diameter and typically about 10mm in

length. To achieve these, the feed formulator simply adds a minute amount of moisture to the powdered feed and compresses the mixture in a pelletizer, a machine not unlike a giant meat mincer, before drying the result. Unlike other species of animal, where the quantity of feed is rationed according to the size and purpose of the

Continued on next page

NEWS

From previous page
All other campuses of the entity will continue to function as facilities for research and development, training and technology transfer and commercialisation. Key research focus areas have been identified as commodity value chains, which will each be supported by a multi-disciplinary team:

- Non-food crops research (medicinal plants, industrial crops and ornamental plants);
- Root, tuber and bulbous crops research (potato, sweet potato, cassava, onion, garlic, amadumbe, etc);
- Fruits, seeds and leafy vegetables research, for example indigenous vegetables (amaranth, cowpea, bambara ground-nut, etc), tomatoes, green peppers, lettuce, etc, and;
- A fourth research team focused on farmer support, training and commercialisation. 🌱

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POULTRY



Crumble.

From previous page animal (eg, more for active animals such as busy horses or working dogs, and less if they are becoming fat), poultry feed is generally given *ad lib*, the idea being to get as much feed into the bird and possible to maximise its growth. The converse being, of course, to feed without

unnecessary wastage or spoilage. For a small flock of home-kept chickens it is a matter of personal preference whether to feed mash or pellets, at least to adult birds, as the formulations of the feed are the same in any feed class. In practice, one feeds poultry according to the purpose of the bird,

and its age. Thus, very young chicks, from hatching up to 18 days in the case of broilers (and later in the case of layers) are fed starter mash (or, less commonly, crumble as they gain a bit of size so that their little beaks can handle the particles).



Pellets.

This is a high-protein formulation developed to give the birds the very best start in life in terms of nutrition, vigour, bone density etc.

Thereafter, broilers are fed grower mash or pellets, a high-strength

formulation designed to make them grow as quickly and as vigorously as possible. This feed is given from Day 19 to Day 26 after hatching.

Next comes a stage on broiler finisher, which is formulated to grow a nice, plump chicken which will have a good carcass weight at slaughter.

Finally, some feed manufacturers add a fourth stage to their broiler feed programme, namely a post-finisher formulation, fed from Day 35 to the date of slaughter.

Layers, of course, live far longer lives than broilers, and have different nutritional needs, not the least because they need calcium and other minerals to lay eggs with strong shells. For this, layer mash or pellets is the right feed, which can be started as the hen is due to come into lay at about 35 weeks.

Again, some manufacturers differentiate between early, mid-lay and end-of-lay formulations, which make sense in an intensive egg-production operation, but which is unnecessarily complicated in a home chicken, free-range environment.

Another factor to consider when feeding commercially formulated animal feed (and



Mash.

poultry feed is no exception) is that the feed may contain growth hormones and medications of various descriptions, although all feeds must conform to the formulations laid down in the Fertilizers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies & Stock Remedies Act, No 36 of 1947, and the bags thereof must carry a label clearly showing the formulation and the feed's registration number. Thus, if you decide against using a carefully-formulated commercial feed, and opt instead for your own formulation, or simple crushed maize (often called "chick-chick No ..." according to the size it is crushed to) you may need to supplement with minerals (eg calcium for layers) and medications. 🌿

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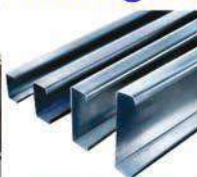
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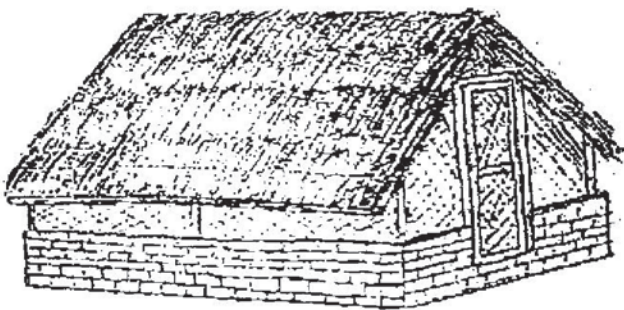
How to start with broilers

If you secure a market for your finished birds before you start, procure quality day-olds, house them in conducive surroundings, and keep a careful watch on their health and nutrition, it is possible to earn some extra pin money, or at least feed your family and friends cost-effectively, with a small-scale broiler operation. Small-scale, even to the extent of doing it in a

converted garage or suitable outhouse. Raising broilers is, essentially, the process of converting feed into chicken meat, for feed will be your biggest input cost over the production cycle. In most cases you will start with day-old broiler chicks, which require heating and careful protection from draughts, damp and vermin such as rats, at least for the first four weeks of their lives.

Heat is most easily provided by overhead incandescent lights (the newfangled energy-saving lights such as LED globes don't give off sufficient heat for the task) or gas or paraffin heaters. For only a few chicks a "jam-jar" light fitting containing a 60W incandescent globe can be laid at the bottom of the enclosure. Do not use a 100W globe as it will be too hot for the chicks and will possibly heat the bedding to the point of setting it on fire. In addition, some form of draught protection, called a brooder guard, is required when the chicks are very small. This can be nothing more elaborate than sheets of flattened cardboard, erected around the assemblage of a light, feeder, waterer and some chicks. The cardboard

barrier should be high enough to provide adequate protection to the birds, but not so high as to make it difficult for you to step over it and into the enclosure. The chicks need to be kept warm, but not too warm. This can be achieved by lifting and lowering the light. You will know when the chicks are too warm in that they will have moved away from the light to the perimeter of the enclosure. Conversely, they are not warm enough when they are huddled together, unmoving, under the light. Ideally, they should be scampering about, under and away from the light, moving regularly between the feed container and the drinker. A good concrete floor is ideal for your broiler house as it



Sketch of a simple broiler house showing low walls brick, topped by chicken wire and a simple thatched roof..

Continued on page 19

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From page 15

can be easily scrubbed clean and sterilised after the batch of birds has been moved out. If concrete is beyond your purse to begin with, a large sheet of plastic (PVC) can form the floor, over clean, dry soil. This too is easy to clean and sterilise upon completion of each cycle. Litter should be provided, in the form of shredded newsprint, dry wood shavings or some similar absorbent material, which should be discarded completely between batches. An alternative to starting with delicate day-olds is to buy in pullets aged about four

weeks, by which stage you can also do away with the cardboard surrounds. How big your housing should be will depend on the breed of bird you choose, but as a basic calculation you can work on 500 day-olds in a 2,5m² enclosure. If a more permanent operation is what you desire you can build a simple broiler house out of brick, treated poles, some timber for a door, chicken wire and thatch. A low brick wall will provide sufficient protection from wind and wet, and predators can be kept out by filling the space between the top of the wall and the roof with chicken wire, carefully joined to ensure no gaps. The thatched roof can be high enough for a human to comfortably work under it, but need be no higher than that, but it should have good overhang front and back and on both sides, to ensure that driving rain cannot enter. See

the diagram on the previous page for an example. For very cold weather roll-up tarpaulin, or heavy gauge plastic can be lowered from the eaves to the top of the brick wall over the chicken wire. The structure is completed by a simple, lockable door at one end and a concrete floor. The necessary infrastructure, such as drinkers, feeders and



A simple brooder guard can be made from cardboard or cloth.

lights, can be suspended from the rafters, so that they can be raised and lowered as necessary. And, the drinkers can be connected to a flexible piping system, booster pump and storage tank in such a way

Continued on next page

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From previous page that they operate automatically. The ideal starting temperature is 35°C, and the temperature should be decreased by 1°C every three days, so that between Day 35 and Day 42 the temperature should be between 13° and 21°C. For each 50 chicks allow a drinking space of 330mm long by 100mm wide, which can be served either by straight troughs, or round automatic drinkers. It makes sense to test your

temperature, drinkers etc for 48 hours before installing your first batch of chicks. When you receive your first batch of chicks they must be inoculated against Newcastle Disease. This is most easily done by placing a drop of vaccine on the moist membrane of the chick's eye as you lift it out of the transport carton before placing it under the brooder light. Although this process may seem time-consuming (and it is) it will additionally give you the chance to examine the

chick for deformities, and general wellbeing. Once installed and vaccinated your chicks should start to examine their surroundings and begin eating and drinking

immediately. Remember you are trying to get them to eat as much as they can, to convert as much feed as possible into meat, so that you sell the biggest, plumpest birds you can at the end of the cycle. Anything that stands in their way to prevent this process, therefore, will mean diminished weight gain. Thus, keep the lights burning for 23 out of every 24 hours, so that they stay awake as long as possible. Sadly, you will face mortalities among your young birds, even with the best care and hygiene. If your mortality rate is above 2% of your total stock, however, you have a problem that might need expert help. The birds should be ready for sale at seven to eight weeks,

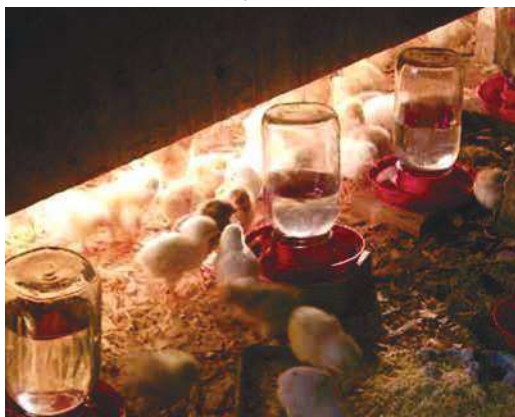


Your broiler house must have a flat floor, making it easy to wash. Use cardboard as a brood guard, pictured here.

when they should weigh between 1,8kg and 2kg. Keeping them (and feeding them) after eight weeks merely eats into your profits. 🌱



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LIVESTOCK

Choosing the right livestock for you

Many new smallholders choose to live in the country so that they can keep poultry and some form of livestock, often in an attempt to revisit their own childhoods and to provide similar country experiences to their own offspring.

However, keeping animals takes commitment. They have to be fed and watered, taken out into the field and cared for every day. They need

adequate accommodation as well ~ which is the best place to start when deciding what kind of animals to keep.

Do not think of buying anything before you have considered your grazing and fencing. Smallholders often



over-stock their limited grazing and then have to bring in fodder and

supplementary feed. Do you know what grass is preferred by sheep or goats or cows or horses? Do you have sufficient? Are your fences stock-

proof and are the gates in good repair and suitable for the size of animal you are thinking of?

Then you will need to accommodate them at night. Your municipal bylaws will state what is required for housing each species of animal, in terms of floor space per head, flooring etc. If you do not already have buildings that can be used for these purposes, conduct some research on what you will need to construct before spending money on materials etc.

Avoid buying some animals on impulse and thinking you can put together something with baling string and old pallets, "just for now". A "boer maak 'n plan" is not fair to the animals.

You also need a clean, dry room where the feed can be kept.

You might already have a preference for a certain kind of animal. It is important that keeping livestock is a pleasure for you. If in doubt, seek out neighbours who won't mind if you spend some time on their plots to observe and have hands on experience of dealing with different species. More formally, there are many short courses available through various institutions which will prepare you with the basics of keeping livestock.

Your physical strength and fitness might also affect what kind of animals you choose.

If you have little experience with livestock then buy hardy,
Continued on next page



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LIVESTOCK



You must be prepared to supplement grazing in winter when grass is short.

From previous page

commercially bred animals, rather than highly pedigreed stock. You might consider

something that's been crossbred, as a novice will not need to have uniformity in the flock or herd. However, that does not mean you should buy animals of poor quality. Remember, it costs just as much to feed a poor quality beast

as it does to feed a good quality one. Start with a small number of better standard, if only because it is unlikely that you will breed better-quality progeny from poor quality parents.

Buy healthy stock from a reliable small-scale source, where the beasts will hopefully be docile and used to human contact.

Visit the place where they have been bred. Ask to see the breeding stock as well as their offspring and look at the conditions in which they are kept. Animals that are healthy

and thriving will be clean, bright-eyed, alert, active and inquisitive, with decent looking pelts.

Apart from the purchase cost of the animals, consider the monthly feeding and supplementary costs, which will include supplementary feed, veterinary visits, medication and inoculations, marking, hoof trimming, dentistry and slaughtering, among other expenses.

Most smallholders have to pay staff to tend to the needs of the animals, at least on weekdays. You may also need to buy feeding equipment, drinkers, portable crushes for the administering of medication, or spray races for spraying insect repellents. Another possible cost is insurance of your livestock. In the early days, you are unlikely to make money out of your livestock. Only once you have acquired some experience might you

consider that and even then, there is a very narrow profit margin in keeping animals for slaughter, for example.

Sheep are the most popular species on smallholdings, with most choosing dual-purpose breeds or meat breeds, rather than wool breeds. They are also the most stolen of livestock, so security at night is particularly important.

Goats are similar to sheep in the way they are kept.

However, they are notorious

Continued on next page

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In praise of sickle-bar mowers...or not

Because they are more sturdy, easier to maintain, and a lot safer, hay these days is generally cut worldwide using slashers or drum mowers. The old-fashioned way of doing it, using a sickle-bar

cutter, has largely been consigned to the mists of time.

To anybody who has battled through maintaining a sickle-bar cutter, sharpening blades (and cold-riveting replacement blades in place when

old ones become worn, bent or broken), and endlessly fashioning replacement wooden Pitman arms (see below for an explanation of this vital component) this is a pity, because for all the tender care the implement requires,

both in maintenance and in emergency field repairs, there is nothing quite as sweet as the clatter of a sickle-bar cutter, leaving behind in its wake a neatly shorn, unshredded, swathe of

Continued on next page

LIVESTOCK

From previous page
escape artists, so you will need goat-proof fencing and housing. Indigenous Veld Goats are hardy and many are beautiful. Goats are generally



Indigenous veld goat.

kept for their meat, milk, skins, for controlling bush encroachment and for ceremonial purposes. Both sheep and goats can be successfully housed and bred for stud purposes on smallholdings, but this requires an in-depth knowledge of the characteristics of the breed ~ not something for a beginner. (An important consideration in this regard is that the quality of most small stock on Gauteng's smallholdings is not good, and a breeder who sells quality

animals into the smallholder market will enjoy a premium on his sales). The regulations for how pigs should be housed ~ at least the commercial breeds ~ should prevent most smallholders from keeping them.

Cattle pose the challenge of needing a lot of grazing and keeping a cow for her milk requires serious commitment, as she needs to be milked twice a day. A small breed such as the Dexter is practical given the relatively limited space on most plots. Keeping

a horse has its own set of challenges. Horses spend their days and half their nights eating, so only keep them if you are sure that they are going to be ridden, to justify the expense. 🌿



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IMPLEMENTS

From previous page

severed hay.

If sickle-bars are so great, why doesn't one see more of them? Well, one does, in certain cases. For example, they are far preferable when cutting soft species such as lucerne, that doesn't improve by having its stems shredded or crushed by the tractor's wheels.

And, because they are old technology (although they are still manufactured by some), they have largely been



Sickle-bar in raised position for transporting.

supplanted in both of these cases by offset drum mowers, which combine the offset nature of the sickle-bar (hence not squashing the material being cut) with the neat cutting action of small sharp blades, hence not shredding much of the stem. And, drum mowers are very much safer than sickle-bars. But. They are very much more expensive, and certainly overkill on anything but the largest smallholding.

So, if you have a small field or two of lucerne to harvest, the sickle-bar is what you seek, regardless of the work you're going to incur to keep it going.

To know how finicky they are, you need to understand how they work.

The cutting action

is achieved by a pair of long blades, in reality two long flat metal bars to which a series of small triangular blades are cold-riveted. The bottom bar is fixed, and forms a base over which the top bar slides, with the cutting action being the scissor-like passing of the top blades over the bottom ones.

The height of the cut is achieved by adjusting two skids situated at either end of the cutting bar. Setting these right down will achieve a cut as low as a lawnmower (and will guarantee that the blade becomes entangled with any small obstruction, stone, stick or piece of wire in the field.)

Adjustment of the clearance between the blades is achieved by a series of very thin metal shims bolted between the two bars over their length, which ensures the top bar can slide with ease, while the blades maintain a contact which is

light enough not to cause overheating, but close enough to ensure an efficient cut.

It is therefore not hard to see that, once all the triangular blades are tightly riveted in place, and sharpened, a lot of time is spent removing and adding shims along the 1,8m length of the cutting bar.

But how does the top bar move over the bottom bar? By transferring the rotary motion of the tractor's PTO into an out-and-back (reciprocating) motion of the top cutter bar, in exactly the opposite way that a railway steam engine works (where

Continued on next page

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IMPLEMENTS

From previous page the wheels are made to turn by the out-and-back motion of a piston in a cylinder. In the case of the sickle-bar cutter this motion is transferred by a sturdy wooden pole named a Pitman bar. Why wood? Because it is designed to break, the thinking being that it is far easier to replace a broken wooden Pitman bar than it is to replace a cutting bar, or gearbox, in the event of the implement hitting an obstruction that abruptly stops the reciprocal action of the cutter.

"Oh, but that won't happen to me," neophyte sickle-bar users say, "my field has no obstructions."

Ha! Your field could be as clean and smooth as they come, but any experienced sickle-bar user will vouchsafe that the cutter will seek out and find obstructions to stop it. And so bolting and unbolting broken Pitman bar ends becomes one of the regular tasks of the sickle-bar user's life.

But wait, there's more! If you choose to buy properly-made

imported (because they are) ash-wood Pitman bars, cash in a Kruger Rand or two before doing so, and keep a stock on hand. Or you can make your own from, for example, cut lengths of thick thatching lath.

And still, there's more. As any engineer will confirm, any machine than has a reciprocating motion will vibrate, and the faster that reciprocating action the more the vibration.

And when a sickle-bar cutter is working, the blades are moving at a speed just about faster than the eye can see.

So the entire machine shakes worse than a jelly in the hands of a drunkard.

And as a result, things come loose, and fly off. At speed.

Thus, if your Pitman bar, for example, isn't bolted on with, at least, nylon bushed locking nuts or, better still, double nuts, it will come loose.

Advice: Have a store of spare bolts and nuts along with your spare Pitman bars.

So, with all the bits and pieces properly bolted in place, and properly adjusted, how easy is it to use?

In theory, dead easy. One cuts a 1,8m swathe, in a clockwise direction around the field (because the cutting bar hangs off to the right).

And simply moves to the right with each pass, thereby ensuring that the tractor is always moving in a cut strip, rather than over the hay or

lucerne still to be cut.

If one has a tractor with a double clutch one has the advantage of being able to slow down the speed of the tractor while maintaining the same speed of cutting action, which enables one to cope better with heavier, denser patches of material without straining the cutter.

Conversely, with only one clutch the tractor moves forward regardless of the thickness of the material, and if the cutter starts to strain it puts extra wear on the Pitman bar, causing it, at least to loosen, if not to snap. Stop. Remove the broken bit. Fit a new one. And restart.

Finally, there's safety. Sickle-



Pitman bar made of wood, so that it CAN break.

bar cutters are lethal, in the same category as chainsaws for causing severe injury. Thus, it is vital that wives, kids, pets and livestock be kept firmly out of the field to be cut, lest you risk amputating the feet of your loved ones.

So, with all that, are sickle-bars worth the effort? You'll only know when you've set one up yourself, so that it runs sweetly and you can savour that divinely-loud clattering sound. 🌱

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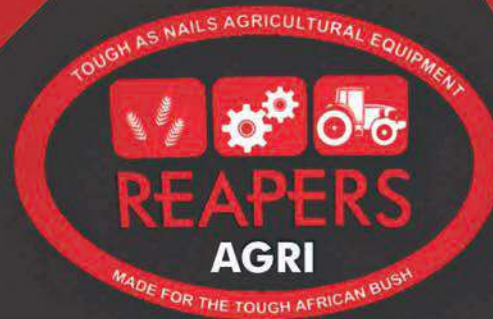
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New Quick ID books for the bush enthusiasts

Struik Nature recently added three titles to the useful Quick ID Guide series.

Skullduggery, Avian Architects and **Flying Mammals** are all written by Mathilde and Chris Stuart.

Skullduggery enables the identification of the most common skulls one is likely to encounter in the wild ~ from easily recognisable species to the more challenging family groups. Each entry features:

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CHRIS & MATHILDE STUART

Skullduggery

Quick ID guide to southern and East African mammal skulls



One of the new Quick ID Guides, **Skullduggery**

- and, where available, upper and lower jaws;
 - ☐ Pointers to diagnostic features;
 - ☐ Average measurement for skull length;
 - ☐ A short description of main features of each skull and tooth structure;
 - ☐ A dental formula for teeth in upper and lower jaws.
- A brief introduction, with labelled photographs, covers anatomy as well as dentition; and a quick-reference photographic key to the main animal groups appears on the inside front cover.

Avian Architects is a guide to the nests built by southern African birds. It is arranged according to nest type, with photographs and illustrations showing the ingenuity of the designs, the birds that built them and the eggs that are laid in them.

The text ~ matched to the

photographs ~ describes:

- ☐ Nesting site and nest structure;
- ☐ Building materials used to construct outer and inner layers;
- ☐ Nesting habits of the architects;
- ☐ Clutch size.

A simple key to nest types on the inside front cover directs readers to the relevant section in the book.

Flying Mammals, Quick ID guide to the Bats of Africa covers Africa's twelve bat families, touching on evolution, flight, echolocation and reproduction, demystifying an animal that is often misunderstood. The text describes the facial characteristics and wing shapes common to each family and points out features that can help to distinguish between them.

Photographs and annotated line drawings include bats in

flight, roosting sites, and close-ups of facial structures and wings that highlight key diagnostic attributes.

These new books join **Behaviour Briefs, Scatalog** and **On Track** in the Quick ID series. 🌿

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NOTE: FARMERS' & CRAFT MARKETS. For a listing of REGULARLY HELD markets and fairs please see the separate section on page 31. Only markets that are held infrequently are now listed in this calendar section.

Every Sunday

SA Lipizzaners weekly display at 11h00. SA Lipizzaner Centre, Dahlia Rd, Kyalami. Go to www.lipizzaners.co.za / call Lizelle on 079 716 4792 for details of special shows.

Cattle drive with City Slickers breakfast, Diamond X Cowboy Ranch, near Rayton. Call Rudan on 082 410 3180 / visit <http://www.diamondxranch.co.za>, R500 per person.

Mnandi Methodist Church, 09:00, Mnandi Centre, cnr Tulip and Short Streets, Jen 083 709 3235 or Gail 072 477 0708, a small community who worship together. We have a Youth and Children's church.

Premier Mine Presbyterian Church, Lower Oak Ave, Cullinan. Garden of Remembrance (Columbarium), 079 060 9990 or 012 734 1640, Worship and Sunday school. Holy Communion for all on the 1st Sunday of every month.

Every Monday

Alcoholics Anonymous. 'Courage to Change' Group meeting, 19:30, NG Kerk, 8 Canadair Ave, Impala Park, Boksburg, call Warren 082 335 0049 or Tony 082 443 4425, if you want to drink – that's your problem! If you want to stop – that's our problem! No fees; no dues; just concerned fellowship.

2021

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 18: Global Recycling Day
 21: Human Rights Day
 22: Human Rights Day spillover
 23-27: Beef Cattle Management course at ARC, Irene Campus. R3 0200,00 excl transport and accommodation. Contact Mpho Makhanya, makhanyam@arc.agric.za or 012 672 9153.
 27: Earth Hour. 20h30-21h30.
 27: Snake Awareness, First Aid for Snakebite and Venomous Snake Handling

at Cradle Moon Lodge. From R990. Contact 073 186 9176 or admin@asiorg.co.za
 28: Full Moon
 31-5 April: Rand Show at the Johannesburg Expo Centre, Nasrec.

April

2: Good Friday
 5: Easter Monday
 12: New Moon
 13-15: Basic Soil Properties, Soil Analysis & Interpretation of Results course at ARC, Arcadia. R4 025 per person, incl VAT and lunch. To book contact Adri Laas before 26

March. Tel 012 310-2518 / 082 445 6269.

E-mail adri@arc.agric.za.

22: Earth Day

27: Full Moon

27: Freedom Day

30: Arbor Day

LIVESTOCK AUCTIONS

Tuesdays: Bronkhorstspruit

Wednesdays: Belfast

Thursdays: Ermelo

Fridays: Standerton



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Regular Gauteng Farmers' Food Markets

This is a listing ONLY of markets held weekly. Markets held less frequently (eg 1st Saturday of each month) are listed in the DIARY section of the magazine and we urge readers to check each month for dates and events of interest.

If you know of farmers' food markets that are not listed here, please email us the contact details of the organisers, and details of the market. Only FOOD markets are included.

If you know of markets in this list that have CLOSED please inform us so that we can delete incorrect or outdated information. We invite you to tell us of your experiences when visiting these markets so that we can better inform our readers. Were they as advertised? Was the produce on sale plentiful, well-priced, well-presented and fresh? Email your comments to gautengsmallholder@gmail.com

SPECIAL NOTE: Due to regulations related to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, some of these markets may have restrictions on numbers of visitors and other protocols in place.

DAY	WHAT	WHEN	WHERE	CONTACT	WHAT TO EXPECT
Thursday					
Every Thursday	Bryanston Organic & Natural Market	09h00 – 15h00	40 Culross Road, Bryanston (off Main Road)	011 706 3671 enquiries@bryanstonorganicmarket.co.za	Quality hand crafted goods, unique art and fresh organic and naturally grown produce.
Saturday					
Every Saturday	Pretoria Boeremark	04h30 – 09h30	Moreleta Street entrance, Krige Street ext, Silverton	012 804 8031 or 079 987 1025	Fresh produce, traditional bazaar treats like jaffles, kaaings with pap & boerewors rolls.
	The Hazel Food Market	08h00 – 14h00	Greenlyn Village Centre, Cnr Thomas Edison & Mackenzie St, Menlo Park, Pretoria	078 593 7716	Fresh produce straight from the producer, coffee, eats on sale.
	Waenhuiskrans Plaas / Farmers	08h00 – 13h00	Cnr of Veda & Enkeldoorn Ave Market opposite Montana Traders and next to Kollonade Centre	Marius 084 505 3393 or office 012 567 6076 to book a stall	Stalls: Food, arts and crafts, fresh produce, eggs, chicken, meat, fruit & veg, kiosk, Maders pies, coffee.
	Glenfresh Farmers Market Midrand	08h00 – 12h30	30 Olifantsfontein Rd (opposite RMM Builders), Glen Austin (Cor Allan & Olifantsfontein Rds)	Stefan: 082 829 0185 market@glenfresh.co.za	Local naturally grown produce, hand crafted goods, home baked treats, raw honey, biltong.
	Bryanston Organic & Natural Market	09h00 – 15h00	40 Culross Road, Bryanston (off Main Road)	011 706 3671 enquiries@bryanstonorganicmarket.co.za	Quality hand crafted goods, unique art and fresh organic and naturally grown produce.
	Niche Community Market	09h00 – 14h00	Walkerville Showgrounds	071 521 6547	Fresh produce, crafter's market, food court, craft beer, play area, pet friendly.
	Midrand Circles Market	09h00 – 14h00	118 Allan Road, Glen Austin	Margaret 079 394 5054	Freshly locally grown produce, raw honey, indigenous flowers & trees, food stalls, fresh meat stalls, cheese, eggs, coffee, books, gallery, and paint your own ceramics.
	Pretoria Noord Boeremark	08h00 – 14h00	Hillside Golf Club, Rachel de Beer Street, Nina Park.	Githea: 081 304 2070	Baked goods, traditional pap & kaaings, vetkoek, pancakes, jewelry, plants, fresh meat, cheese, woodwork, art, live music.
	Fourways Farmers Market (New venue)	08h00 – 16h00	Taroko Farm, Modderfontein Reserve, Norfolk Lane.	010 534 6622 (Mon-Fri) www.ffmarket.co.za	Farm fresh produce, organic produce, food stalls, baked goods, live music.
Sunday					
Every Sunday	Waterfall Estate Farmers Market (Will open when more than 50 visitors are allowed)	09h00 – 15h00	Waterfall Estate, Midrand	064 759 6154	Fresh produce, pickles, preserves and home industry & craft, food, etc. Enquire about stall prices.
	Fourways Farmers Market (New venue)	08h00 – 16h00	Taroko Farm, Modderfontein Reserve, Norfolk Lane.	010 534 6622 (Mon-Fri) www.ffmarket.co.za	Farm fresh produce, organic produce, food stalls, baked goods, live music.
	Vaalbank Country Market	10h00 – 15h00	Kakiebos on the R515 near Rayton	081 271 2300	Wide variety of community stalls and even art classes!

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We should have called him 'Sir'

There's a common bit of doggerel that goes "how do you know when a fellow went to Boys' High? (referring to Pretoria Boys' High School)" Answer: "Because he'll tell you." And while a Boys' High old boy will proudly trumpet the fact, just about anybody else will need to be asked. And the answer to the question will invariably be the name of their high school.

But here's the thing: few people outside the education sector realise, or care, that a pupil spends much more time at primary school than he (or she) does at high school. In my case, for example, I spent eight years at primary school and only four at high school, granted because my primary school went up to Standard 6 in those years, one more than the usual last year of Standard 5. (No, I don't know what those are called in the system that pertains today...)

It's also true that much more of one's character, behaviour, morals, beliefs, et cetera, is shaped at primary level than later on in one's youth.

And it's also true that an awful lot of what one learns at school ~ both at primary and high school ~ is learned outside the classroom, on the playground, on the sports fields, through interactions with one's peers, and the adults, either teachers or support staff, around one.

One such person, at my primary school in Pretoria in the 1960s, was Mr Jim Manala, a remarkable man nicknamed ~ and known to all as ~ Jim Fish. An earlier generation of boys than mine gave him the nickname because, when asked what was for lunch on Fridays he would cry out (correctly, for this was a school with Anglo-Catholic pretensions) "fiiiiisshhh".

I have no idea in what capacity he joined the staff in 1928. It must have been as a gardener, cleaner or handyman.

And he would probably have been forgotten by us all except for one remarkable development. In the early-1950s post-World War era of remembrance and commemoration the school constructed a Memorial Gate out of stone with a thatched roof, which became the main entrance to the school.

It was through the Memorial Gate that the pupils entered early each morning and through which the school disgorged its pupil body into waiting mom's taxis at the end of the school day.

The problem was that this gate opened on to one of Pretoria's busier suburban streets, and Jim quickly realised that the hundred-or-so little boys, filled with pent-up energy following a morning meekly behaving themselves in class, could get into

serious trouble if left unattended which could, he foresaw, end up in death or serious injury if they were to run into the street after, for example, a wayward ball or something.

He therefore took it upon himself to police the gate, thus ensuring, apart from their safety, that the kids climbed into the correct vehicles upon departure.

By my time at the school in the early 1960s Jim Fish had been at his post at the gate daily for more than ten years, dressed always in his khaki "flatboy" uniform of long baggy shorts and a loose short-sleeved tunic.

Discipline was maintained by a combination of good humour and the fact that Jim Fish always carried a thin bamboo stick, about 50cm long, which he would firmly but with a playful gentleness wield to the back of errant boys' legs, providing a stinging accompaniment to the process of learning manners and good behaviour.

But quite apart from the sting of Jim's stick on the legs of the unruly and misbehaved, he had remarkable empathy and patience with the more timid kids, and many of us looked forward to the daily time we spent in his gentle, good humoured care, not only because it signalled "home go time". I have no doubt that those of us who passed through his hands every day became better human beings as a result.

One of the sadnesses of the passage of life, and time, is that one often doesn't realise who one has to thank for the person one became. And often, when that realisation dawns on one, circumstances have intervened to render that simple gesture difficult or even impossible to make.

Jim Fish retired in 1980, after a remarkable career of 52 years. Looking back, it is cringeworthy today that little boys of six or seven could address such a fine influence on their lives by his first name, for in truth he had a far greater effect on us than many of the teachers in the classrooms did.

Given his influence on us, privileged little white boys that we were, we could have addressed him better. As "Sir".



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