

# **SOUTH AFRICAN SMALLHOLDER**

**OCTOBER 2021**  
**EVERYTHING A SMALL FARMER NEEDS**



**In this edition:**  
**Success with Boergoats**  
**Poultry biosecurity**  
**Grazing in spring**  
**...and more!**

# SOUTH AFRICAN SMALLHOLDER MAGAZINE

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## Front Cover

Boergoat buck. Image courtesy: Patriot Boergoats

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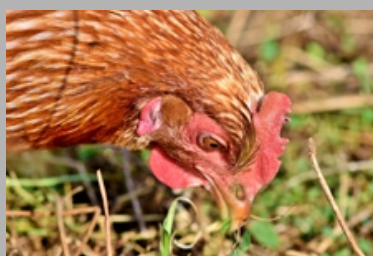
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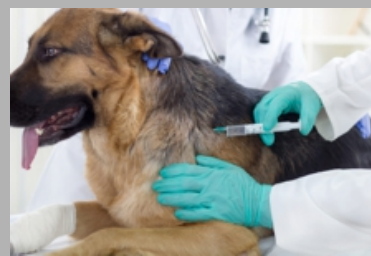
Growing nightshades vegetables

### RECENT POSTS



How to deworm poultry the natural way

### NEWS



Increased rabies in SA cause for concern

# The Cabbage Bandit

Officers from the Tshwane Metro Police clearly need an educational trip to Malawi where they will see first-hand how residents go about ensuring local food security.

For Malawians grow vegetables in every possible available space, verges and traffic islands included. That's a far cry from the Tshwane approach where, it is reported, officers descended on a resident of Pretoria North, Joe Nkuna (now nicknamed the Cabbage Bandit), who planted cabbages and onions on the verge outside his house. Bra Joe posted that one afternoon no fewer than 16 of the Metro's Finest served two papers upon him. One was a notice of an infringement of municipal by-laws ("thou shalt not plant stuff on the sidewalk that obstructs pedestrian traffic") and the other a spot fine of R1 500 for the same infringement. Both the fine and the infringement notice are arguable in court.

And thus Bra Joe will soon present himself before a magistrate in the Wonderboom Court.

So here are some points which may be salient to Bra Joe's case.

Firstly, and most obviously, Bra Joe's efforts are a small contribution to alleviating a little of the abject poverty and hunger that stalks our

land. One would have thought that ensuring access to food for the poor, even cabbages and onions grown on a sidewalk, should be a priority of every citizen in the country, let alone a policy priority for every municipal authority.

One of the Tshwane Metro's difficulties with Bra Joe's cabbage patch is that it forces pedestrian to walk in the street, because the sidewalk is obstructed. But many suburban properties have flower beds, patches of ivy, rockeries and other beautification which obstruct the sidewalk as well, forcing pedestrians to walk in the street. In Bra Joe's case, the notion of obstruction could be alleviated simply by leaving a small path between the cabbages to allow pedestrian to pass along unhindered. But if keeping verges clear to allow for the passage of pedestrians is the Tshwane Council's responsibility it is failing miserably. Pedestrians tend to prefer the safety of walking in the streets rather than risking breaking an ankle on the sidewalks. This sorry episode is a storm in a municipal teacup. Bra Joe should be praised, and the practice encouraged throughout the country.

**Pete Bower**  
*Editor*





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## NEWS

# Nampo opens bookings for 2022 exhibitors

Bookings are open for prospective exhibitors at next year's Nampo Harvest Day to be held near Bothaville from 17-20 May. Past exhibitors have first option to renew their stands for this event. Bookings close at the end of January, and successful applicants for stand space will be informed in March. A 16m<sup>2</sup> stand in one of the exhibition halls costs R27 258,45 and included in the price



is provision of carpets, a shell scheme, a fascia name, one light and one plug point.

Outdoor stands are cheaper. A 100m<sup>2</sup> space costs R10 516,75, while a 900m<sup>2</sup> stand costs R23 356,50. All prices include VAT.

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## BEEKEEPING

# Farmers must support beekeeping industry

In 2020 South African export of deciduous fruit such as apples, pears and table grapes topped R40 million, and at the very heart of this figures is the important and necessary service of pollination by bees and the efforts of the beekeepers.

There is no doubt that the bee industry is suffering, being depleted as a result of the use of insecticides, drought, the destruction of foraging areas, shortage of bee forage, air pollution, urban development and climate warming.

As a result, the pollination of farming and garden ventures is at risk if they depend entirely on bee pollination. It is important to overcome these problems, to support developing farming ventures in the soft fruit industry.

From 2011 to 2020 citrus fruit exports increased by 257%, lemons and limes alone by 180% over the



same period.

There is overwhelming export demand for high quality South African fruit and other agricultural products.

The latest forecast for the demand of macadamia nuts, citrus and avocados will increase by more than 100% by 2030. The export market for blueberries, still in its infancy, outstrips these figures by even greater volumes. Exports of blueberries in 2015 totalled 1 792 tons, increased to 15 636 tons in 2020/21, and in 2024 the aim is to produce 62 000 tons, of which 40 000 tons will be for export.

It cannot be over-stressed that the performance of the bee industry to provide pollination of all crops, especially export fruits, plays a very





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## BEEKEEPING

important role in the overall economy. Due to the sparse existence of indigenous bee forage plants, there are no natural established swarms to provide the required pollination, and the farmer is forced to employ beekeeper pollinators to provide the required number of swarms, just for the flowering periods.



Bee on a fruit blossom.

Because of high costs of maintaining hives for pollination, the beekeeper-pollinator is forced to charge between R700 to R1 000 per pollinating hive unit. Adding to the limitations of the bee industry, there is insufficient remaining foraging areas for the beekeeper to place his hives for the periods when pollination is not required. This shortage alone

restricts the ability of beekeepers to increase their hives.

Funds must thus be made available throughout the farming industry, and particularly in the fruit growing areas, to plant vast areas of indigenous and other supporting plants for the future development of the bee industry.

In this way a beekeeper becomes resident, and establishes permanent sites on these farms or nearby areas within reach of the fruit-growing areas for the foraging bees.

This will eliminate the need for beekeepers to have to move their bees after the pollination periods.

At least one major bank recognises the importance of beekeeping in the greater economy. Nedbank, concerned and aware of the benefits of natural environments, entered into an association with Bee Effect and Green-pop forests to plant 36 000 indigenous trees by 2025 in the Boland and Western Cape.

The purpose of the project is to re-establish the failing environment, reduce threatening climate change,

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## BEEKEEPING

prevent water shortages and provided habitat for bees and other uses on the environment.

The Nedbank Green Trust, working with Living Lands to re-establish fynbos and honeybee foraging, critical habitat for indigenous animals, is concentrating in the Langkloof areas of the Eastern Cape, an important farming area for citrus, apples and pears destined for the export market. The initiative also helps other farmers in the area connected with beekeeping and the production of honey-related products for export. The economic advantages of the bee industry must not be overlooked. In 2016 the South African bee industry and honey production contrib-

uted R16 million to the economy and provided employment for 180 000 workers.

However over the past decade growth of the industry has been too slow, with the result that South Africa imports 3 000 tons of honey annually, to meet consumer demand.

❑ If you are interested in learning more about beekeeping, or would like to keep a few hives on your property, you can approach one of the many regional associations in SA, attend their periodic meetings and take part in their training courses, exhibitions etc.

A list of beekeepers' associations and their contact details can be found [here](#). 🌸



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## LIVESTOCK

# Curiosity got him started with Boergoats

Curiosity about his neighbour's inquisitive escape-artist Boergoats led farmer Johan Steyn on a 30-year-plus goat farming career that has developed into one of South Africa's leading Boergoat farms. Steyn, who has built up the Patriot Boer Goat Stud on his farm near Graaff-Reinet explains: "I used to farm with cattle and horses near Rustenburg, and also baled eragrostis which I sold to feed suppliers in Honeydew and Muldersdrift.

"However, I noticed that my neighbour's Boergoats were forever coming onto my farm, and I grew curious about their obvious intelligence and wiliness. As a result I bought ten goats from him to see what they were like to keep." That was 30-odd years ago and Steyn made the switch from cattle and horses, moved to the Karoo and set about expanding his current operation.

"Good fencing, clearly, is vital if one



Good fencing is vital when keeping goats.



is to prevent one's goats from escaping," says Steyn.

When one puts goats into a new camp, he observed, they often patrol the perimeter looking for a way out. "If they find one, they're gone! Only once they have checked the boundary will they settle down and begin grazing."

Steyn, who also runs goat farming courses in Potchefstroom, says there is a vibrant demand for goats in South Africa, pointing out that the proliferation of North and West African restaurants catering for the burgeoning immigrant community are keen buyers of quality goat meat, not to mention a healthy market among South Africans.

But, he warns, anybody tempted to believe goat farming is a road to instant riches is approaching it incorrectly.

"Goat farming, as with most all agricultural activities, is a long-term proposition, and improvements in one's flock and profitability are incremental over many seasons, not overnight."

He says there are three legs to successful goat farming:



## LIVESTOCK

- ☐ Genetics,
- ☐ Nutrition, and
- ☐ Health.

“These are like the legs of a three-legged stool: neglect any one of them and the stool will fall over.” To ensure good genetic make-up in the flock, he urges prospective farmers to buy the best animals they can afford at the outset, and to improve from there by careful selective breeding. Next, although Boergoats are renowned for their hardiness and ability to survive on sparse, dry veld, paying attention to the animals' nutrition, and supplementing at certain crucial times in the breeding season, will ensure stronger mothers, and bigger, healthier babies, as well as encouraging consistent

multiple births. Finally, pay attention to the overall health of the flock, ensuring inoculations are correctly done, attending to sick or injured animals, and making sure pens and camps are free of pests, parasites, poisonous weeds etc. Naturally, Steyn sings the praises of the Boergoat as a breed. “The breed has five core strengths,” he says:

- ☐ High fertility,
- ☐ Good mothering instincts,
- ☐ Hardiness,
- ☐ Adaptability, and,
- ☐ Rapid growth.

These are the characteristics that a Boergoat farmer should be looking to develop in his flock, says Steyn. However, he sees a trend among

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# LIVESTOCK

some modern breeders who have concentrated their efforts on only certain characteristics currently deemed desirable by buyers, at the expense of others, leading to animals that no longer perform optimally under the conditions often expected of the breed. He gives an example of a champion buck with magnificent looks and, on the face of it, a perfect pedigree, that when put to work in the field among the does quickly loses condition and under-performs as a result. Steyn sells goats both for stud purposes as well as a small percentage for slaughter, and has been exporting for 15 years to countries in Africa, the Middle East, as well as, recently, to Asia. He is very particular



All images: Patriot Boer Goat Stud about how his animals are handled as they leave his farm and insists that they are transported in safe and as-stress-free-as-possible conditions. For more distant destinations he uses air freight. He is outspoken against transportation by sea of slaughter animals under often appalling conditions. For more information on Steyn's Boergoat farming training courses visit [www.boergoats.co.za](http://www.boergoats.co.za). His stud farming website is [www.patriotboergoats.co.za](http://www.patriotboergoats.co.za) or email [info@patriotboergoats.co.za](mailto:info@patriotboergoats.co.za). 🌸

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## LIVESTOCK

# How to run a successful goat-breeding operation

**H**ere are some of the key points to successful goat farming given by Patriot Boer Goat Stud's Johan Steyn, who also runs courses in Boergoat production in Potchefstroom.

### **Fencing**

Steyn recommends a proven combination for a goat-proof fence.

Over a 1,2m high eight-strand barbed wire fence he lays 90mm-high jackal fencing, burying the bottom under a layer of boulders.

Jackal fencing is similar to common diamond-mesh fencing, only with a thicker, stronger wire strand and smaller aperture.

In smaller camps designed to contain very small kids and their lactating mothers Steyn uses the smallest aperture jackal-fencing he can find, saying that if the aperture is too large the kids push their heads through and can't get back out.

### **Nutrition**

If the breeding doe is to have the best possible chance of producing healthy babies she herself must be in top shape nutritionally, must be able to produce multiple viable ova for the buck to fertilize and must be able to provide adequate nutrition to the



foetuses until delivery, and adequate colostrum and milk through the lactation period.

As a result, Steyn embarks on a programme of supplementary feeding, starting four weeks before the does are put to the buck, and again six weeks before the kidding season and running through the lactation cycle for a total of three months. At both times the supplementary feed comprises a ration of between 350 and 400 grams per head of a blend of a proprietary supplement and coarse maize meal.

### **Multiple births**

Twin and triplet births are the cream on top of any stud farmer's activities, and are encouraged at every step of the way by a careful breeder. This is achieved over many seasons by careful genetic selection, both of the buck and of the does. In Steyn's case, many years of effort now see his Patriot Boer Goat Stud achieving kidding rates approaching and exceeding 200% (for example, 206% in 2019 and an estimated 258% this year).

## LIVESTOCK

(The kidding rate is the number of viable kids born from the breeding does put to the bucks. Thus, a rate of 100% would imply the same number of kids born as there are breeding does, while 200% would imply an average of two kids per doe, where in reality some might be single births and some triplets).

### Flock composition

After ensuring the best possible genetic makeup of the flock, the breeder needs to ensure the correct balance of age to get maximum results. Bearing in mind that maiden (first time) breeding does may only carry a single kid, a good multiple birth rate will be achieved in does that are a bit older. However, after a certain stage their multiple birth rates begin to decline. Thus, one should strive to ensure that 65% of the flock are in full production, ie, are on to their second or later breeding seasons. A further 15 to 20% should be first-time does, and ten to 15% should be coming out of production

(six tooth and beyond) and ready for sale as slaughter animals. Steyn does not recommend keeping a breeding buck for more than three years, by which time its genetics will be well-bred into the flock.

### Record keeping

All of Steyn's animals are tagged, in both ears (in case one tag is ripped out by accident). Initially Steyn compiled his records by hand, but now uses a locally-developed small stock management program called BenguFarm. This enables him to keep complete control of every aspect of his farming activities, from animal identification to purchase and sale details, input costs etc, as well as enabling him to monitor individual and flock production, animal health, fertility rates etc.

"When we changed from the manual system I picked up that we had a doe that had missed out on birthing for three seasons. In other words she was just costing us money, without earning us any. Out she went!" 🌸

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## LIVESTOCK

# Learn the basics of sheep and goat health

Sheep and goats are relatively easy to keep healthy. Owners need to observe their animals regularly to ensure that they are in good health.

Signs of an unhealthy animal include lack of attention, isolation from the rest of the flock, abnormal eating habits, depression, scours or diarrhoea, abnormal vocalization, teeth grinding or any other abnormal behaviour.

### Nutrition

The basis of good health lies in good nutrition and plenty of clean water. Sheep and goats need to spend six to eight hours daily grazing or browsing. In addition they benefit from concen-



Image: Patriot Boer Goat Stud

trated hard feed to ensure that they get the energy and protein that they require.

In the dry season they might also need supplementary forage. In winter a urea-molasses block for the animals to lick provides them with a good source of nitrogen and energy, which helps them digest forage better. Do not give limitless access to the lick however, as they can have too much and it becomes expensive.

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## LIVESTOCK

can afford and store it carefully.

Place the feed in a trough or a tyre that has been cut in half, to ensure that there is no wastage.

Check the amount of muscle and fat tissue over the lower back area. If the animal is bony, it will need supplementary feeding. However, they can also get too fat, when the feed should be cut down.

### Deworming

Livestock become infected with worms when they graze. Worms are present in the pasture in their immature larval form and these are consumed by the animals. The larvae develop into adult worms and lay eggs inside the animal's digestive tract. The eggs are then excreted and hatch in the veld. The larvae emerge and the cycle starts all over again. There are two schools of thought when it comes to deworming. The older method was to plan a regular programme throughout the year, irrespective of whether there were



Dosing gun.

signs of worms or not.

A newer method is to treat animals individually when they show signs of not coping with the parasite burden. This more sparing approach is thought to prevent the worms themselves from building up immunity to the dewormers.

The effect of worms on their hosts will also depend on the species. Some such as wireworm and hookworm are bloodsuckers, which cause anaemia, weakness, and even death. Others, like brown stomach worm, cause damage to the stomach lining which leads to poor digestion, diarrhoea and massive protein loss. Bottlejaw is a symptom of roundworms and of liver fluke.

Many dewormers are available and it is best to rotate the application of two or three different makes, ensuring a good mixture of the active ingredient among those chosen.

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## LIVESTOCK

There are four classes of ingredients, numbered 1 to 4 (look for these numbers in the top corners of the labels), so select the dewormer based on the different active ingredients, as listed on the package insert supplied with the dewormer.

Each time you dose choose a different ingredient number. Keep records of what anthelmintics you have used. Most dewormers are administered orally. This need be neither expensive nor difficult. Although you can buy a purpose designed dosing gun, you can also use a large plastic veterinary syringe fitted with a 15cm length of flexible plastic or rubber tube in the place of a needle, particularly for a small flock.

### Vaccinations

Many vaccinations apply to both sheep and goats.

☐ Heartwater: Kids and lambs should be vaccinated in the first week of life. However, the ticks that carry the disease are not found in all areas, so check with your veterinarian or farmers

in your area if you are in a heartwater area.

☐ Pulpy Kidney: Annual inoculation is recommended.

However, unfortunately for the smallholder, the vaccine is supplied in 100-dose measures, making inoculation of a small flock an expensive affair. Many vets will, however, provide syringes containing just enough doses for one's flock.

☐ Pasteurella 'Bont Long' Pneumonia: The bacteria *Pasteurella multocida* and *Mannheimia haemolytica* cause pneumonia when the animals are stressed and their immunity is compromised.

☐ Blue Tongue: Prevention of blue tongue involves good management and vaccination. Stable animals in the late afternoon where possible,



Checking health of goat.

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## LIVESTOCK

and do not let them graze in the areas where midges are present.

❑ Tetanus and Anthrax: Both tetanus and anthrax can also be vaccinated against.

Anthrax is a notifiable disease.

❑ Enzootic abortion (chlamydiosis): This disease is caused by an organism called *Chlamydia psittaci* and is one of the biggest causes of abortions and stillbirths in sheep and goats.

If you have a large flock of sheep or you are running a serious breeding operation, get advice from your veterinarian on vaccinating against mastitis, orf (which is also called vuilbek), redgut and botulism.

Goats also need to be vaccinated against brucellosis.

## Stress

The ability of the immune system to fight and kill disease-causing agents is impaired by stress.

Stress is the effect of change on an animal. It increases the susceptibility to disease and decreases the vitality or life force of the animal.

If animals aren't fed well, are too crowded, have dirty places to sleep, are too pulled down from lambing/kidding or the weather is too stressful, then they won't be healthy. Access to food and water will also alleviate stress.

How they are handled, and weaned, parasite management and how new animals are introduced are also important. 🌸

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Husqvarna claims that, used with the new Husqvarna BLi200X or Husqvarna BLi300 batteries, the new chainsaws are a match for professional class petrol chainsaws, making them suitable for tree removals and smaller felling tasks. In fact, they equal the power of 40cc petrol chainsaws but with reduced emissions, noise and vibrations.

The new top-handle T540i XP® saw offers superior cutting power for drop cuts of thick trunks and branches, while being fast and nimble enough to take on smaller tasks as well. The 540i XP® rear-handle version has the same power and is a perfect all-round saw for any kind of ground-work.

The saws start and stop at the press of a button and battery status is easily visible. Depending on the charger, they can be recharged to 80% in around 30 minutes and to full power in under one hour.

(Canny users of rechargeable battery-



powered equipment will always have more than one battery; one in the machine and one on charge as a replacement).

To cope with tough operating conditions premium light-weight materials and durable components were used in the saws. For example, the 540i XP features a magnesium alloy crank case, clutch cover and bar mount as well as an aluminum front handle.

Both chainsaws are weather resistant (according to IPX4 classification).

Both saws use Husqvarna's new SP21G X-cut chain, a semi-chisel 0.325" mini pixel chain with a 1.1mm gauge and low kick guard. The chain has been tailored specifically for the new. The chain produces less vibration, has low kickback and makes a fast and easy bore cut.

The T540i XP® saw weighs 2.5 kg without battery, chain oil and cutting equipment. The 540i XP® is 2.9 kg without battery, chain oil and cutting equipment.

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## POULTRY

# Your birds' feed is medicated

Most smallholders or small farmers who are growing chickens for the table are probably feeding them broiler feed which, if it is one of the popular commercially produced brands, will contain certain medications. Indeed, the *SA Smallholder* was unable to find commercially prepared broiler starter and grower feeds that are not medicated.

Sometimes the label simply refers to "stock remedies". Stock remedies are given to poultry to prevent, treat and cure unhealthy conditions, as well as to maintain, grow, produce and improve the health of the broiler. At minimum you will find that the feed contains a coccidiostat, which ensures that your poultry will not develop the common fowl disease of coccidiosis.

Where newly hatched chicks are kept in a confined space, there is a strong probability that in their pecking they might be eating their droppings. This can cause an infection in the gut. This is why you will find low grade doses of antibiotics in starter broiler feed.

Newly hatched chicks have an undeveloped gastro intestinal tract (GIT), as well as what is essentially a sterile gut, and they need to develop



healthy GIT microflora for both digestive and health reasons.

Additives can be used that will stimulate GIT development, aid digestion or enhance the development of the microflora ecology.

Small farmers and their feed manufacturing partners are experimenting with yeast cultures to encourage the microflora in the gut, with varying degrees of success.

Some feeds contain phytase enzyme which improves feed conversion.

The European Union phased out all antibiotic growth enhancers by 2006, mainly to bring about lower levels of antibiotic resistance in animals.

However, the thinking in South Africa is that antibiotic growth promoters help growing chickens digest their food more efficiently, get maximum benefit from it and allow them to develop into strong and healthy individuals.

The antibiotics suppress sensitive populations of bacteria in the intestines, which allows the bird to digest all the nutrients in the feed. This in turn makes them grow quicker.

All this can be understood in the context of commercial broiler production, which involves literally



## POULTRY

millions of birds. But what about small scale broiler farmers? The medications are only found in starter and grower broiler feed. Medicated feeds must, according to law, be stopped seven days before slaughter. The broilers are then fed a finisher or a post-finisher which is free of any medication. For consumers who are anxious that the chicken that they eat might be affected by these medications, legislation stipulates maximum residual levels of medication in meat and commercial producers regularly test meat and liver samples to ensure safety standards. Medication for use in animal feeds is regulated by the Fertilizers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies & Stock Remedies Act of

1947. There are also regulations for the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics & Disinfectants Act. These regulations state the maximum limits for veterinary medicine and stock remedy residues and feed manufacturers adhere strictly to them. There are a few smaller feed manufacturers who make chemical-free feed, but they are rare. Smallholders need to check that they are registered feed makers. And the smallholder who has a cockerel and a handful of hens scratching around in his garden? Afgri produces a feed called One Step, which has been developed to simplify feeding, so the same feed is fed from day old until slaughter. That does not seem to contain medication. 🌸



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## POULTRY

# How to establish a biosecurity plan

**I**n your poultry production system adequate biosecurity is your first line of defence against disease.

Biosecurity is the preventative measures you put in place to reduce the risk of the transmission of infectious diseases to your crops, livestock and poultry.

In poultry production, biosecurity measures will be vital to ensure the health of your chickens, eggs and meat, and sound biosecurity is particularly important when large numbers of birds are housed together in intensive production conditions.

Your poultry management should include a comprehensive biosecurity plan, vaccine schedule, high quality diet and adequate housing.

Biosecurity should entail a combination of cleaning and disinfection, traffic and pest control and adequate carcass disposal.

To begin with, establish a written biosecurity plan and go over it with



Overalls, hairnets & gloves must be worn when working in your chicken houses.



all your staff. Ensure they are aware of all the steps required, and keep them up to date with any changes. If you farm free-range chickens, this system will be more complicated. Vital in free-range farming is to ensure your poultry are kept away from wild birds which may carry diseases. Your chickens' food and water should be provided indoors to ensure wild birds are not attracted to the area.

### ***Cleaning and disinfection***

Everyone entering your chicken houses must wash their hands thoroughly before and after working on the property. This includes workers, delivery people and other visitors. Clean clothes must be worn in the houses to prevent the spread of disease. This includes making use of disposable hairnets, gloves and plastic boots (PPE). These items must be disposed of in a dedicated area of your property, away from the chicken houses and before anyone leaves your property. This will avoid the spread of anything from your property to another.



## POULTRY

If you or any of your staff live on your property, you must have dedicated clothing to be worn in and around the poultry housing area. This includes footwear. Those staff living off the property should also have clothing designated for farm-use, which should be removed before leaving the property.

A footbath with disinfectant should be placed at the entrance to each chicken house. Ensure that this is big enough for a set of large boots and that the liquid is at least 2-3cm deep to ensure it penetrates the grooves in the soles of your shoe. This bath must be used on entry and exit, every time. Your footbath should be placed on a tarpaulin if your entrance is on a patch of bare earth or sand. If your bath is outside, it should be covered with a tarpaulin as well to ensure no rainwater or other foreign matter mixes with your disinfectant liquid. The liquid should be changed daily and the bath cleaned regularly. Cleaning should include a thorough scrub with a strong bristled brush



Clean all equipment used during transport.

using a disinfectant soap. When disposing of the contents of your



Footbath.

footbath, do so away from your production area and water sources. Pay special attention to the disposal instructions on the label of your disinfectant.

An alternative to a footbath is dedicated footwear. These can be gumboots hung at the door of your chicken house that are put on just before you enter and removed as you leave. This prevents the carrying of any harmful material away from your house. However, even these boots should be cleaned regularly with a disinfectant.

The equipment in your chicken houses should be disinfected regularly. This includes your cleaning tools. If you have purchased equipment from another farm, it should be cleaned and disinfected very well before you introduce it to your property.

A high-pressure washer will be vital in your biosecurity plan. Ensure you have a good quality one.

If vehicles are driving near your poultry houses, they should be disinfected before and after.



## POULTRY

Delivery and transport equipment should be cleaned before and after each journey. This includes vans or trucks (inside and outside), crates, containers and any other equipment used in your travels.

### Isolation

Visitors to your farm should sign a book in which they indicate possible exposure to other birds. A 'no entry' sign should be posted at each house, preventing unauthorized entry. This sign should be in the most commonly spoken languages in your area.

If you suspect illness in your flock, visit the sick flock last.

In general, your work routine should be to move from youngest flocks first to oldest.

### Pest Control

You must limit exposure to rodents and flies. Do this through rigorous rodent and fly control programs. Keep the doors to your chicken houses shut and locked, and block holes where rodents or wild birds might enter your house. Always be on the lookout for evidence of rodents or wild birds ~ rodent faeces and foreign feathers are a good indication. Do not allow wild birds to nest in the eaves of your houses. Outside your chicken houses, you must keep the grass low and the areas clear of rubble and other debris that may be attractive to rats. Also ensure your feed stores are kept secure and clear of rodents. Any feed accidentally dropped on the ground



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## POULTRY

should be cleaned up right away, even outside. Stagnant water around your property, such as ditches allowed to fill with rain water, can become a breeding ground for mosquitoes and other insects so this should be prevented. In general, your poultry houses should be for poultry only. Do not allow other animals such



Use a high-pressure washer to clean.

as pets or other livestock into the houses.

### Dead bird disposal

Unfortunately, you may lose some birds. This is a crucial time to employ adequate biosecurity measures. Remove dead birds as soon as you see them, identify the cause of death and dispose of the carcasses adequately, then thoroughly disinfect yourself and your clothing, as well as any equipment used in the disposal. If you suspect disease, immediately initiate an isolation for that house and notify your vet. When disposing of your carcasses, do so in a way that does not create a foul odour or attract flies or rodents. 🌸

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## IN THE GARDEN

# Go nuts: Try your hand at groundnuts

**T**he cultivated peanut or groundnut (*Arachis hypogaea* L) is indigenous to Bolivia and some other South American countries. However it is grown all over the world. In South Africa the peanut is called a groundnut.

Groundnuts are grown commercially in Northern Cape, Free State, Limpopo and North West. Resource-limited farmers, especially in the northern and eastern parts of South Africa, grow groundnuts mainly for their own consumption.

In 2019/2020 the total production of groundnuts in South Africa was 54 390 tons (statista.com)

The groundnut is a self-pollinating legume. The flowers are formed on runners and they produce a peg which penetrates the ground. The fruit is a pod which forms underground at the tip of the peg, with one to five seeds.

This means that the soils that are suitable for growing groundnuts are deep (900 - 1 200mm), with sandy loam to sandy texture in the topsoil, with good organic residues.

Planting should take place in warm moist soil, so from mid-to-late-October and into November in summer rainfall areas. Planting should not take place in the early morning, as



the soil must be allowed to warm up. Planting in cold, wet soil is not suitable. Good germination takes place at 20-30°C.

Rainfall in the region of 500 to 700mm per annum is required, although in some areas irrigation is necessary.

Ploughing is required in preparing the seedbeds, so as to break up the topsoil. The correct planting depth is 5-7,5cm. Spacing between plants should be 4-7cm between the plants, with the spacing between rows being 50-75mm.

Earthing up, where soil is piled up around the main stem of the plant, is not recommended.

Groundnuts respond well to added fertiliser, and adequate calcium is very important.

The Agricultural Research Council (ARC) has produced a number of successful groundnut cultivars. It is suggested that the smallholder plants more than one cultivar, so that risks of pests and diseases are lowered. Care must be taken in handling the seeds, as they are easily damaged. Groundnut seed is also susceptible to



## IN THE GARDEN

fungal rot in the soil, so it is recommended that all seed be treated with a fungicide before planting.

Weed control is essential, as the weeds compete for moisture, light, space and nutrients and might house pests or diseases.

Diseases to look out for are early leafspot - which shows as brown spots surrounded by a yellow halo - and Sclerotium stem rot, which is identified by white fungal growth in the stems, pegs and pods.

Time to harvest is affected by cultivar, water conditions and diseases. It takes roughly 90 days for groundnuts to reach maturity.

Harvesting should take place when approximately 75% of the pods have reached maturity. The inner wall of the pods usually has a dark discolouration at maturity.

Harvesting can be done manually or mechanically. If done by hand, the taproots are cut and the plants are collected and stacked in bundles of 10-20 plants. The stacks are formed



Groundnut plant.

with a core of plants placed on their leaves with the pods facing upward. The plants are left in the stack until picking can begin.

When the seeds rattle when the pods are shaken, they are ready for picking. Another sign is that the pods can be removed from the stems without causing long shreds to form. Crop rotation with maize, small grains, sorghum or millet is most



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## IN THE GARDEN

effective.

Because groundnuts are a legume, they fix nitrogen in the soil, so crops grown where they have been grown will benefit. Rotation also breaks the disease cycle.

Groundnuts are roasted and salted for consumption, are used in sweets or they are used to make peanut butter.

The seeds are also processed for their oil.

Young leaves and tips of the plants can be used as a cooked green vegetable.

The oilcake that is a by-product of the groundnut oil extraction process serves as a high-protein livestock



Stacked plants.

feed. The plants and shells can be used as forage.

The hulls are also used as stable bedding.

The ARC in Potchefstroom has developed a low cost mechanical picker and a sheller. Phone [018 299-6100](tel:0182996100) for more information. 🌿

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☐ Be a South African citizen with a valid South African Identity Document;



- ☐ Be from historically disadvantaged groups;
- ☐ Show ability to repay the loan;
- ☐ Be of the age of 21 and above;
- ☐ Gross non-farm income to be not more than R20 000 per month;
- ☐ Turnover of the enterprise not to be more than the SARS tax threshold;
- ☐ The enterprise should be agriculture, forestry or fisheries related;

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## BUSINESS

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According to the website of the Dept of Agriculture, the terms and conditions include:

☐ Maximum loan size is R500 000 per person;

☐ Interest rate charged is 8% per

annum compound;

☐ Loans below R25 000 do not require security;

☐ The repayment term is tied to the income cycle of the enterprise;

☐ Loans are available for individuals and groups;

☐ All applicants must meet Mafisa loan requirements to be considered. However, applicants might find that this information is not up to date.

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## IN THE FIELD

# Try no-till for next season's planting

**A**lthough the kneejerk reaction of a crop farmer will be to set about his fields with a plough and harrow, or a rotavator, there is an alternative to breaking ground for planting which is easier, quicker and cheaper and which many say is better for the soil, the environment and the crop itself. It's no-till agriculture, which is exactly that. Rather than ripping up the soil mechanically, all one does is drill a hole for a seed and drop it in, adding a bit of fertilizer if one wishes. The undisturbed soil itself contains all the microbes, earthworms etc that it had before, as well as any residual moisture, and the stems and roots of previous crops. The surface of the soil is covered by the residue of the previous season's crop, which provides organic matter for the soil as it slowly decomposes and is eaten by worms and other insects, and which provides a cooling and moisture-retaining layer of mulch before it does so. The advantages of no-till are therefore obvious:

☐ Your savings in terms of time, fuel and wear and tear are great. Instead of multiple passes over the field with different implements to create a weed-free, workable seed bed, you have only one pass, with a no-till



seeder.

☐ Environmental benefits include, therefore, less air pollution from your exhaust fumes, and a number of soil-related benefits. Because the soil is undisturbed, the microbial activity within is not disrupted by tillage, and earthworms, likewise, are left unharmed. The roots and stems remaining from previous harvests allow for moisture to enter the soil to crop root depth, and prevent soil compaction. Because the soil is not broken up there is less chance of light, soft material being eroded by heavy water flows, or blown away by wind. Because the soil is not turned over, loosened and exposed, less residual moisture is lost.

☐ Lower fertilizer costs are achieved because more nutrients are available to the growing plants through the decomposition of the previous season's residue.

☐ Lower water costs can usually be achieved because the surface layer of crop residue insulates the soil from heat and evaporation.

Experts point out, however, that



## IN THE FIELD

achieving good results with no-till techniques may take some time ~ a process, if you will, rather than an instant solution. And there's no one-size-fits-all method to no-till. A key to efficient no-till is to start the previous season, by spreading your crop residue ~ or at least part of it ~ evenly over the ground at the time of harvesting. This even layer of dry organic matter will inhibit weed growth, help retain moisture and eventually provide food for the insects and microbes in your soil below. In certain cases it may be advisable to plant an offseason cover crop, for example a nitrogen-fixing legume, or Japanese radish, which will add nutrient to the soil as it grows, but which will be left



Using a cover crop in offseason. in the field as cover when the new crop is planted. Another key to successful no-till is to know beforehand what it is you wish to plant and when. This means working a season or more ahead, to enable you to work out plant spacing etc, and to ensure you have a no-till planter suitable to your crop's seed size and fertilization needs, as well as row spacing, intercropping needs etc. 🌱

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## IN THE FIELD

# Overcome the challenges of spring grazing

**T**he onset of rains in summer rainfall regions will result in tender green shoots appearing in your pastures ~ much to the joy of the animals who have been struggling through the dry, brown winter grazing.

However the small farmer and smallholder need to consciously manage the grazing at this time. There are considerations about the growth in the pasture and there are considerations about the animals' health. Most smallholders have relatively limited grazing resources for the number of animals that they keep.



Grazing makes up a large proportion of livestock diet.

However, the veld needs to be given a chance to recover from the harsh winter that much of the country has experienced.

It is important that the plants are allowed to develop photosynthetic capacity and to restore depleted root reserves.

While it is tempting to take



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## IN THE FIELD

advantage of the new green grass, grazing it too early can reduce the pasture's ability to provide nutritious grazing throughout the summer and autumn. Now is the time that grasses produce two-thirds of their season long yield.

Overgrazing is a real danger. One solution is rotating from camp to camp in quick succession.

Livestock owners will be all-too familiar with spring grazing behaviour in their animals. The animals are so pleased to see a few shoots green grass that they only eat the new growth, ignoring the dry, brown grass. This often leads to a drop in condition, as the animal is simply not getting enough to eat.



Spring grass.

It also means that ruminants (cattle, sheep and goats) are not getting enough dry matter. They need dry matter to provide more nutrients to rumen microbes, which in turn provide more nutrients to the animal. Livestock nutritionists tell us that a milking cow needs a dry matter



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## IN THE FIELD



Green shoots.

intake equivalent to at least 3% of her body weight. Dry matter is essential in meeting energy requirements.

Another problem is the relatively low fibre content. This results in very high passage rates, leaving the ruminant unsatisfied.

Spring grass also poses problems for

horses, particularly those with digestive or metabolic disorders. These grasses are high in non-structural carbohydrates, which can play havoc with the horse's digestive system and metabolism. The content of highly fermentable carbohydrates in lush pasture can be overwhelming to the digestive system. The relatively low fibre content, combined with rapid fermentation of the increased starches results in what nutritionists call negative biochemical reactions in the horse's gut. Colic is therefore more common at this time. It also leads to increased risk of laminitis, which was described in the [August](#) edition of the *SA Smallholder*. 🌸



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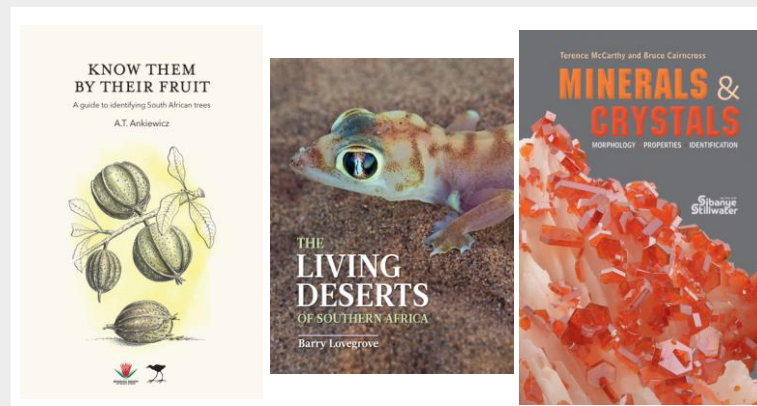
# New books of interest to smallholders

A new tree guide was published recently, but before you ask if we need yet another tree book, consider *Know Them by Their Fruit: A guide to identifying South African trees* by A T Ankiewicz. It is often easier to identify a tree by its fruits and pods than by its shape, size, leaves etc.

The book is published by Jacana, in partnership with the Botanical Society of South Africa.

It contains:

- ☐ Specially coded keys showing colour and size for easy identification;
  - ☐ The current botanical binomial, recent old names (due to taxonomic changes) and the “best” common name;
  - ☐ Notes on distribution, fruiting time and habitats are also provided;
  - ☐ 381 beautiful illustrations of the fruiting twigs of South African trees.
- Evolutionary physiologist, Barry



Lovegrove has brought out the second edition of *Living Deserts of Southern Africa*. He describes four arid biomes of South Africa, Namibia and Botswana: Desert, Arid Savanna, Succulent Karoo and Nama-Karoo, and explains how and why such a great diversity of plants, insects, mammals, reptiles and birds successfully survive in them.

Anyone with an interest in earth sciences will value *Minerals & Crystals: Morphology – Properties – Identification* by Terence McCarthy and Bruce Cairncross. The book examines a selection of important minerals, how they form, their physical characteristics, and how to go about identifying them.

Mineral species descriptions detail their gemological properties, history, occurrence and uses.

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# SA's hidden gems

There's a good reason why journalists are often to be found leaning on the counter of seedy pubs staring at a drink in front of them. That's because any hack worth his salt is always on the hunt for a good story. And bars are an excellent place to pick up the hint of one's next best story.

One can tell a lot about the character of a place by the nature of its pubs, because pubs tend to take on the character of the characters that frequent them.

South Africa is blessed with many pubs.

Even the smallest, most run-down platteland dorp is likely to have a Masonic or a Royal Hotel with, at the very least, a "public bar".

But it's not only the towns and cities that have pubs. There are also many, many country inns and taverns, many with long, illustrious histories.

At the top of Van Reenen's Pass on the N3 between the Reef and the

South Coast, for example, there sits one of South Africa's oldest surviving taverns, just off the road where it makes its abrupt turn at the top of the pass.

Originally built as a coaching stop some 140 years ago, the Green Lantern reflects its long, unbroken history and retains much of the character of those who have slaked their thirst and regained their strength within.

Today, its walls bedecked with thousands of business cards of the patrons it has served, it boasts a well-stocked bar, and serves good, honest pub grub.

So next time you race down the N3 to Durban, break the journey at the top of Van Reenen's Pass. You'll be glad you did.

And who knows? You might be able to swop a tale or two with a colourful local, or even give a passing journo his next big story.



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