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APRIL 2022
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Front Cover

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FEATURES

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EDITOR'S COMMENT

The great cannabis hash-up



How often, in the history of any government, does it enjoy the opportunity to conceive, write and implement a completely new law, or laws, to provide a legal framework for a development facing society? Not often, if at all, because most lawmaking simply involves tweaking laws made by previous governments. The ANC government, therefore, has been very lucky in this regard. It has enjoyed the distinction of conceiving and formulating at least two completely new sets of laws. The first, now implemented, are the laws surrounding Black economic empowerment (BEE). The second, not yet implemented, concern the growing, processing, selling and consumption of cannabis and related products. In both cases, I would argue, the ANC has made a spectacular hash of things. As far as BEE is concerned, however well-intentioned the laws may have been meant to be, in reality their effects have been to empower through enrichment a relatively small pool of well-connected individuals, while the intended beneficiaries, namely the broader community of black workers and the unemployed, remain spectacularly disempowered. As far as laws relating to the cannabis sector are concerned the government's cause is both helped and hindered by a ~ still ~ woeful ignorance of the possible extent and value that a thriving cannabis industry would offer. Although plants of the cannabis family have been grown and consumed in southern Africa for thousands of years, it is only in the last 100-odd years that they have become stigmatized because of the psycho-active properties of only one branch of the family. And sadly, all categories of varieties in the cannabis family have been tarred with the same brush as a result. In very simple terms, there are three distinct branches in the cannabis family. The

first is the set of plants whose flowers contain a high proportion of the chemicals, called THC's, that have psycho-active properties, ie that make smokers or consumers of edibles high. The second is the set of plants that have very limited or zero psycho-active properties, but which contain large proportions of cannabidiols (CBDs), that are said to have medicinal benefits. And the third branch of the cannabis family has neither of these properties, but has a number of very great potential uses, eg in the manufacture of paper, cloth, plastic substitutes and even liquid fuel. These are the hemp plants. The problem starts because a cursory glance by an untutored eye could easily mistake a field of industrial hemp with a field of dagga, that's how closely the plants resemble each other. And it is only very recently that a few very carefully chosen licensees have been granted the right to cultivate hemp for industrial use, and even fewer licenses to grow medical-grade cannabis for export. Meanwhile, thousands of subsistence farmers who have relied on their small plantings of dagga for part of their annual income continue to face harassment and aerial crop eradication by the SA Police Service. Despite sentiment worldwide changing as to the potential for a thriving new agricultural industry, of considerable financial worth to both the state and to farmers, the glacial way in which development of a legal framework for the industry is happening leaves one with the distinct impression that the government is wrestling with sentiments which may fly in the face of the broad tenets of the Constitution. In short, we wonder if the government isn't trying to frame the law in such a way as to favour a certain class of individuals over others.

Pete Bower
Editor

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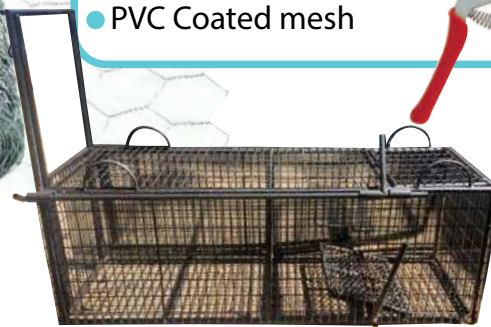


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Reader likes 'SA Smallholder' in print

Sir ~ I am very pleased to see the *Smallholder* back on the shelves in our local feed store. While your digital magazine is clearly a big step for you as it gives you the ability to reach smallholders nationally, and I'm sure younger readers enjoy it, for us in Gauteng who had grown accustomed to our monthly printed *Smallholder* magazine, your return is most welcome!

For many of us living in the sticks access to the internet for such "luxuries" as the reading of magazines online is not ideal, given our slow, and costly, data connections. So we tend to limit our usage to urgent, necessary tasks such as online banking and sending of emails.

I know over the years others have tried to do something similar to the *Smallholder*, but your mix of the type of advertising you carry and the articles you produce are ideal for us on plots.

Thank you and keep it up!

Kobus Hellberg
Vanderbijlpark

Thank you! One of our distributors exclaimed, when his consignment of magazines was delivered, "Do you know how k*k it has been to sit on the toilet without this magazine to read?!"

We're so glad our move back to paper, in Gauteng at least, pleases him, too! ~ Editor

EVENTS

Nampo to run under Covid regs

With up to 800 exhibitors expected at this year's Nampo Harvest Day show outside Bothaville next month, organisers Grain SA have added a fifth day to the show. This is to cater for the expected influx of visitors from far and wide, eager to see what has been newly developed in the agricultural field, over the past two years. However, because of the ongoing state of disaster regulations concerning numbers allowed to attend an event, only 50% of the normal capacity of Nampo Park will be allowed to enter.

Visitors must also be able to present a Covid vaccination certificate or, if not vaccinated, a test result no more than 72 hours old indicating that they are not Covid positive.

Following the declaration of the state of disaster in March 2020, that year's Nampo show was quickly converted from a physical event to a virtual one.

Presented in an innovative format, with talks, panel discussions and video demonstrations etc, it was an imaginative response to the problems of the time, but was much scaled down in comparison to the physical show, and it was not repeated last year.

So this year's event, at Nampo Park on the road between Klerksdorp and Bothaville, is expected to draw strong interest, which will, however, need to be physically curtailed at half the capacity of the park. As a result, tickets must be pre-booked through Ticketpro, to enable the venue to control the numbers, and will go on sale in early April. Tickets will cost the same as in 2019, namely starting from R90. The show takes place from 16 to 20 May.

Note from the Editor: This information was correct at the time of going to press. However, this may be subject to change before the show if national Covid lockdown regulations are adjusted. 🌸

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Locusts swarm ~ with a vengeance

With many describing this year's brown locust swarms in the Northern, Western and Eastern Cape as the worst in living memory, questions were being asked last month why two helicopters chartered to spray the swarms in the Eastern Cape had been grounded.

The reason, it turned out, was that the 600 000 litres of Sumi Alpha poison bought in December for the task was not to hand.

After some searching, however, some drums were located in the Western Cape and the choppers were able to resume work.

The swarms moved over a large swathe of the central country, affecting Calitzdorp, Ladismith and Oudtshoorn districts, and on down towards Willowmoore, Steytlerville and Klipplaat, among other areas. Crucially, Western Cape officials were particularly trying to prevent swarms from reaching areas such as Barrydale and Swellendam.

Anecdotal evidence showed just how large and active the swarms were, stretching for many kilometres across and darkening the skies as they flew.

Brown locusts are endemic to southern Africa, and

become particularly active following good rains, as have been enjoyed over large swathes of the Great and Little Karoo, and down towards the Western and Eastern Cape coast.

As far as response to the outbreak is concerned, the various districts affected put in place operations committees to co-ordinate control measures, spraying etc, in their areas.

In the case of the Western Cape, the provincial government allocated R5 million for the purchase of personal protective equipment, and backpack sprayers, as well as aerial spraying support. 🌿



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NEWS

Foot & Mouth spreads to North West and Limpopo

While a vaccination programme against Foot & Mouth Disease (FMD) is under way in north-eastern KwaZulu-Natal, a number of further outbreaks have been reported in other parts of the country.

The KZN vaccinations will take place in the Disease Management Area (DMA) around KwaHlabisa. Because of the close proximity of the KwaHlabisa DMA to the Hluhluwe Umfolozi Game Reserve, an estimated 40 000 animals will be vaccinated to reduce the viral load among livestock and so curb the spread of the disease.

Movement controls have also been in place in the region for at least nine months, in an attempt to prevent the migration of the disease to other areas. Movement of cloven-hoofed animals and their products into, out of, through, or within the reduced DMA is still only allowed on authority of a permit issued by the veterinary services of the area.

Meanwhile elsewhere, a case of FMD has been confirmed on a commercial stud farm in North West province.


The farm and other linked farms have been placed under quarantine while further surveillance in the area is being conducted to determine the extent of the outbreak.

The area involved is a swathe of the province stretching from Ventersdorp and Potchefstroom in the north-east to Wolmaransstad and Makwassie in the south-west.

And, in the Vhembe district of Limpopo two cases have been identified in a previously FMD-free zone, involving cattle grazing on communal land. Other locations in the area with animals showing clinical signs suggestive of FMD are also under investigation. 🌿

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Jerseys bring success for smallholder

A passion for agriculture is what drew Janina Almog and her husband to a plot in Benoni, upon which they run a successful micro-dairy. At Fairlead Farm, with a herd of up to 15 Jersey cows, the couple have maintained steady growth and now serve a thriving market of daily customers who come to collect their fresh, full cream milk. Having completed her schooling at Settlers Agricultural High School in Limpopo, Janina says she has always had a draw to farming. "We started with two Jersey cows in 2018 that we bought from Paul Steenkamp, a farmer on the other side of Orkney," says Almog. After undertaking plenty of research, the couple built a milking shed and dairy facility. Soon after, they acquired another six cattle at a deceased estate auction.

Today, their two-hectare property is home to a herd of eleven cows, three calves and a bull ~ aptly named Hugh Hefner, a lucky man surrounded by his lovely ladies. To ensure the continued genetic strength of the herd, Hugh Hefner was obtained when Almog swapped one of her males with a farmer in Magaliesberg.

Although she has a full-time job in commerce, Almog is hands-on in raising and taking care of the animals. Her husband manages the dairy and cheese production. He also maintains all their machinery himself, making repairs as needed and cleaning the equipment thoroughly between batches.



Janina Almog in her milking shed.

The herd is consistently rotated with some cows kept dry while others are in milk. Currently, there are six cows in milk. The dry cows are kept in a separate paddock, along with the three calves. Janina separates the calves from mothers between eight days and two weeks after birth, depending on the mother. For example, "one of the cows, Mama, is a very good mother so we leave her calves with her a bit longer". Almog notes that generally as a breed, Jerseys are well-known for being good mothers.

She believes in doing everything as naturally as possible, and as a result she does not use any artificial insemination in her herd. She starts breeding with her cows when they are around two years old.

"Some cattle owners do it much earlier, but Jerseys are small cows themselves, so I like to wait until they are a bit older," she says.

Male calves are sold on an online auction group.

"They usually go for around R1 400 to R1 600 as an average, depending on the time of year," says Almog. Female calves are kept by Fairlead Farm.

The groups of cattle are also rotated between a number of camps throughout the property to allow

Continued on page 9



A Jersey mother and her calf at Fairlead Farm.

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for grazing to recover. Even with this process however, the Almogs provide fodder and salt licks in the paddocks, as well as daily rations for the cows. These rations differ according to whether the cow is in milk or not. They also grow vegetables on the property, both for their own consumption and for the cattle. This includes spinach, kale, rape and melons.

The property has recently gone off-grid after the couple installed a solar electric system. "Dealing with dairy products, we can't afford to have the fridges on and off," says Almog. The property also has a strong borehole which helps when keeping dairy cattle.

"I am very lucky to have a great relationship with my vet," says Almog. The health of the cows is vital in ensuring good quality product and having a knowledgeable, hands-on vet has been useful. "He and Paul Steenkamp have been a huge help. Paul has become a mentor to me, always available on WhatsApp for advice and to check in on the cows." The Almogs also employ a farm worker to assist around the property and with the cattle.

The cattle undergo a tick and fly treatment every ten days in summer and 21 days in winter. Janina uses a pour-on product and tick grease for the ears and around the tails. This is done during milking for those cows in milk and with the use of a crush for the dry



Part of the herd at Fairlead Farm.

cows. "It's a bit more difficult with Hugh," she jokes. The Almogs make and sell Emmentaler, Jaegersburger, gouda, blue cheese and Butterkase. They occasionally make labneh as well, a well-known part of Middle Eastern cuisine. In fact, the labneh is what really put them on the map, she explains. "We had been taking part in weekend markets with the cheese. A customer requested labneh ~ and we couldn't keep up with the demand." Their vet assisted in getting their products tested so that they could be certified brucellosis and tuberculosis-free.

The property also has a well-established orchard of around 300 fruit and nut trees that bring in their own money in picking season. Last year, the apricot trees



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were a huge success. “We didn't market the fruit at all. People coming to collect milk saw them and asked to buy fruit. From there, it was word of mouth.” There are also plums, pomegranates, nectarines, almonds and pecan trees. A large patch of strawberry plants has also just been established to grow through the cooler months.

The dairy's clientele is largely from the Benoni area. “We work on a roster-basis for our clients to ensure steady supply,” says Janina.

The farm offers a delivery service in surrounding areas, but Janina says people enjoy coming to the plot, having a chat and seeing what's happening in the countryside. They also take walk-ins, with people popping around to collect milk throughout the day. The milk is currently sold for R12 a litre with the customer providing his or her own bottle or container. The couple have put in extensive work, time and money to establish their business. “It is a passion project, but it is not going to make anyone rich quickly,” Janina says. She is adamant that this is not an overnight money-making endeavor. Despite their large success over just four years, she quips, “Let's talk again in five years and see how far we've come.”

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How to write a business plan

A smallholder or small farmer who hopes to make some income from the land is unlikely to succeed without a business plan.

A business plan is a document which sets out your goals and what you are going to do to achieve them. It can be short and simple, but the more detailed your planning, the more you are likely to succeed. In doing the research required for a business plan, you will develop a clear vision for your project, showing exactly what you want to do. The market research that you have to do, along with the estimates of the costs and pricing that you will make will show whether your business has a chance of making a profit.

It will also show how much you will need to start the business.

Your research will reveal your suppliers and customers, but also your competitors and how your products can do better than theirs. It will also highlight possible risks and challenges to the business.

A good business plan will act as a road map for the business.

If this is a new enterprise, a number of factors will influence what products you choose to farm. If you already have access to land, how big is it, what is the quality of the soil and water and where is it in relation to possible customers? What do you or your staff know about and have a passion for? What competition would you be up against? What commodities does the climate lend itself to?

Once you have decided on your core business you can state your vision for it and what your goals might be. The goals can be short term, medium and long term.

Then consider your resources.

Your human resources are the employees who work on the farm. Mention the training that you and they have had and if you will need further training. Attach the CVs of the management team.

Your physical resources refer to your assets and infrastructure. Give a detailed assessment of what you

have in the ways of buildings, vehicles, equipment and livestock. State what more you would need to make a success of your venture and how much it will all cost.

Your natural resources are the land itself and water supply. Include the results of any tests that you might have conducted on the soil and water.

Your financial resources are your own capital, whether it is your savings or inheritance, which you intend to invest in the business.

Give a brief description of the products or services you will be providing to your customers. Then describe in some detail the processes which you will put into action to achieve those products or services.

Lay out your marketing strategy. Identify your existing or potential customers. Be clear that you know exactly who they are in terms of their age, culture, location and financial circumstances. Show how you are going to reach them. Describe how you will promote your products and how you will package them, if necessary.

Unpack the details of supply and demand for your particular products.

Identify and list your competitors and what you will do to make customers prefer your goods.

Give the details of your suppliers.

State your present financial situation. Then draw up a detailed budget, with estimated income and all your expenses. A cash flow analysis is also most important. This reveals your projected sales, and will focus your mind on your credit terms to customers ~ how much money you estimate will flow into the business and how long it will take to come in, as well as expenses ~ the money flowing out of the business, over the next twelve months.

If you intend to apply to a financial institution for funding or a loan, you will be asked to provide a business plan.

Find out before you submit your application what other documents will be required. 🌿

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FINANCE & BUSINESS

Where to get finance for agricultural projects

Most smallholders and small farmers need assistance to get an agricultural business up and running. There are different ways to obtain financial aid.

"Funding" is finance that is usually provided by a government department. Usually this money does not have to be paid back. A "grant" is similar.

A "loan" is a sum of money given by a bank or other financial institution, where it is expected that the farmer will pay it back over a period of time, probably with an extra amount, which is called "interest". Sometimes a smallholder or farmer might enter into a partnership where two or more people will put money into the venture. They then share the profit. (A "profit" is the money that is left over once all the expenses have been paid.)

When you apply for funding or a loan you will have to provide certain documents, such as your identity document, proof of address, bank statements, proof of ownership if you own the land, and a business plan.

There are various forms of government funding available, and the person applying for any of them has to meet certain criteria. "Criteria" are the require-



There are some government options for accessing funding.

ments that the applicant has to meet. It might refer to their age, race, financial situation or gender.

❑ The Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (Casp) offers support for previously disadvantaged and emerging smallholders and farmers. According to the Dept of Agriculture (DALRRD), "the hungry" and "youth, women and people with disabilities" will be given priority. The recipients not only receive financial help, but also training, technical advice and information management.



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❑ Applicants who want to farm may apply for a Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development grant, in order to buy land for farming. They have to make a contribution, either in cash or in labour, to a minimum of R5 000 - more if the grant is larger. Grants vary from a minimum of R20 000 to a maximum of R100 000. Individuals or groups may apply.

❑ The Land Bank is a state owned entity (SOE). According to its website, "At Land Bank, our sole objective is to serve South African commercial and emerging agriculture by bringing specially designed financial services within the reach of farmers across the nation." The institution offers loans, which have to be paid back with interest.

❑ In 2021 the Agri Industrial Fund was launched to support to a wide range of economically viable activities in agri-processing (food and non-food) sectors. The funding is provided by DALRRD and managed by the Industrial Development Corporation. The support is particularly for agri-businesses involved in high-value export-oriented crops, poultry and livestock. The business must be a 60% black owned entity. The grant cannot be used on its own but in conjunction with IDC funding.

❑ All the major banks have an agricultural section, with financial products tailored to the needs of farmers. However, they tend not to have specialised support for smallholders or small farmers. Smallholders, subsistence or emerging farmers are often unable to borrow from banks because they do not have the collateral and credit record that banks require. "Collateral" refers to something valuable which is owned by someone who wants to borrow money, that they agree will become the property of the bank or person who is lending the money if the debt is not paid back.

A "credit record": when someone has accounts with various shops or institutions and pays enough every month, they build up evidence that they manage



Be sure you have all the correct information when applying for funding.

their finances carefully.

❑ An alternative to a bank loan is to apply for a Micro Agricultural Financial Institutions of South Africa (Mafisa) loan. The loan is intended to offer really practical support and can be used to purchase production inputs; for the purchase of small equipment and implements; the purchase of breeding livestock, medication, feed, branding material etc. The maximum loan size is R500 000 per person and the interest rate charged is 8%.

❑ All the major agricultural co-operatives, for example Afgri, Senwes, GWK etc, have financial aid schemes for clients, with the added advantage of technical support and advice thrown in.

❑ The Western Cape Dept of Agriculture maintains a useful website, www.greenagri.org.za, with a list of funding sources, conditions and criteria, and the aim of each fund, for example, small farmers, land acquisition, special skills development etc. Contact details are also given.

It is worth noting that many of the funding schemes are not aimed solely at the industry of farming itself, ie land ownership, crops etc, but are also aimed at ancillary activities, such as agri-processing, export marketing etc. 🌱

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Grow to love your termites

If you have ever had a termite problem in your home or on your property you are probably not well-disposed towards these little creatures.

However, put aside your prejudice for a moment and gain a little insight into the complicated lives of termites and your revulsion may indeed turn to fascination, and possibly even admiration.

There are over 2 600 species of termites and more than 50 genera are found in South Africa.

They are not a kind of ant, being more closely related to cockroaches.

Most of us regard termites as destructive pests in our gardens, fields and homes. However, they play very important roles in the ecosystem. They are important

for soil fertilisation, reworking of sediment and soil, soil formation, and particularly for the decomposition of organic matter.

Termite colonies can survive for more than 80 years. Entomologists regard a colony as a super organism, rather than a collection of thousands of individuals.

The colony is made up of workers, soldiers, queen, king and alates. The alates are capable of reproduction and they develop wings. When the time is right, they leave the colony and fly in search of a mate. So what we know as "flying ants" are actually termites.

They will find a mate from another colony, lose their wings and find a suitable place to mate. They can then start a new colony.

Generally termites can be divided into those which eat grasses and those that eat wood. Those that eat grass may cause problems in smallholders' lawns and thatched rooves.

Some termites nest underground and are known as subterranean. They eat cellulose, found in wooden items such as skirting boards, door and window frames and roof beams.

Subterranean termites are one of the more destructive species found in South Africa. The workers make underground tunnels in order to access the source of wood. They eat the wood, but are not able to properly digest it. They thus go back to the colony, where they take their pellets of excrement to form a ball. There is a fungus called *termitomyces*, which only grows in termite colonies. The worker takes spores of this fungus and plants them on the balls of faecal matter. The fungus then breaks down the matter and the termites eat the fungus.

These termites are mostly prevalent in Gauteng and the Western Cape, although they are found country-wide.

Drywood termites live inside wood. They will eat from the inside out, until only the wooden shell is left, which makes them difficult to detect. They are found all over the country, but are more noticeable in coastal regions.



Nest of Formosan subterranean termites (*Coptotermes formosanus*).

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Termitomyces.

Smallholders are urged by entomologists to use eco-friendly methods of termite control. There are products that are based on leafy extracts of plants such as neem, garlic, marigold, papaya, castor and sandalwood that have been proven successful. Biocontrol products that are based on insect-attacking nematodes and certain fungi can be effective, especially when introduced into mounds. There is damp-proof course material that is treated with anti-termite products, which will prevent termites from coming into your home. Some crops, such as maize and sorghum, are susceptible to termites. Fruit trees might also be infested. Organic farmers use irrigation methods which discourage the termites. They make use of organic materials in their soils, as termites do not find compost and manure appealing. They also create physical barriers around the crops, using metal mesh, gravel and other materials. Where termites construct their mounds in a north-south direction, farmers place strong bar magnets in the soil next to the new

mound. This disorients the termites and stops the growth of the mounds.

Termites have many natural predators because they provide a good source of protein. Insects such as spiders, beetles, flies, wasps and ants, along with frogs, reptiles, birds and mammals such as bats will thrive if there is healthy biodiversity on the smallholding.

Difference between ants and termites

The easiest way to tell the difference between an ant and a termite is by their colouring. Most ants are brown or black, while most termites are pale cream/white/beige and almost translucent.

Termites have straight antennae and abdomens, while ants have kinked antennae and bodies, with pinched waists.

Ants eat nectars, other insects, seeds, etc., while termites eat wood or grasses.

Ants have four stages of development ~ egg, larva, pupa and adult.

Termites have three stages of the life cycle ~ egg, nymph (larvae) and adult phases.

Both ants and termites live in large groups called colonies. 🌿



Termite mound.

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IN THE FIELD Haymaking for small tractors

Lots of rain inevitably means lots of long, lush grass. While this translates into lots of fodder being available at reasonable prices for the winter season, it also means that smallholders who cut their paddocks ~ either for fire prevention or to make their own hay ~ are likely to spend more time on the task than they might in a season in which the grass is shorter.

That's because they will find that, just because they have a slasher with a certain operating width, it doesn't mean that they will be able to cut the full width of hay in one pass ~ particularly if they are reliant on a small, less powerful tractor.

In some cases they may only be able to achieve a cutting width of half, or even less, of the advertised width of the slasher.

This means, of course, that the time taken to complete the task increases, not to mention the amount of fuel used.

There are, however, certain things one can do to ensure that one's equipment is operating optimally, the most obvious being to ensure that the slasher's blades are as sharp as they can be. While a knife-

sharp blade will slice through the stems and leaves of grass with relative ease, regardless of the thickness of the clump, a blunt blade encounters much more resistance, ultimately putting strain on the tractor and, if nothing else, leading to possible overheating of the engine.

The action of a blunt blade, too, is to shatter the stems and leaves, rather than to slice them cleanly.



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IN THE FIELD

Not that it makes much difference at this time of the Highveld year when the grass is becoming dormant, but if you aim to remove two cuts of hay during the growing season you will find the grass recovers much quicker if the leaves and stems are cleanly sliced rather than shredded.

While on the subject of blades, with repeated use and many sharpenings over time the cutting tips of the blades tend to become rounded, which prove much less efficient than a sharp, square tip.

Before starting to cut, therefore, it is wise to remove the blades, sharpen them on both the upper and lower surfaces, and ensure that they weigh exactly the same. Unbalanced blades will cause vibration and lead to excessive wear on the bearings of your slasher. When replacing the blades, go to a little additional expense and fasten them in place with new locknuts, rather than using the old ones (as a rule one should never re-use nylon locknuts).

Although it may result in less dust being created, cutting wet grass, ie that which is covered in dew or rain, should be avoided. Firstly, the wet material is heavier than when it is dry, and is unlikely to form neat, tight windrows as it is cut. Secondly, a surfeit of moisture in the cut material will quickly cause it to start decomposing or become mouldy.



Windrows of cut grass.

Moreover, wet grass will tend to leave a sticky residue on the underside of the slasher which will impede the airflow generated by the spinning blades and the consequent movement of the cut grass. And, the residue becomes hardened and difficult to clean off if left to dry.

Another ruse for more efficient cutting is to raise the blade height (usually by lowering the side skids), although this will defeat the object of removing as much grass as possible, either in the form of hay, or in the form of a winter fire hazard.

Finally, always ensure that your direction of travel, and thus the side you are cutting, is such that the cut material is thrown away from the uncut grass. This will ensure that the blades only have to contend with cutting fresh material, not additionally fighting through a pile of already cut stuff. In very long grass, particularly if it is dry and has gone to seed, there is a chance that seed and small leaf particles become embedded in the cooling fins of your tractor's radiator. Or, if you have a fine seed screen fitted in front of your radiator, that this becomes clogged.

This can become a common cause of the tractor running hot and possibly overheating.

It makes sense, therefore, when you are checking over your slasher before starting work (eg, topping up the gearbox oil and ensuring all bolts and nuts are tight) to blow out the fins of your radiator, or to clean your seed screen with compressed air or a strong jet of water. 🌿

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How to choose your cutting implement

Agriculture, and haymaking in particular, has come a long way since the sole method of cutting hay was to slash at it with a hand-operated scythe. An early attempt at mechanisation of the haymaking process was achieved when the horse-drawn sickle-bar cutter was invented, the power to drive the blades being provided by a heavy cleated metal wheel. And even the development of the tractor and sickle-bar cutter drawing its power



Tractor and slasher.

from a cleated steel wheel has been left far behind. Firstly, by PTO-driven sickle-bar cutters and more recently by the Australian invention of the bush-cutter, or slasher as we know it. Variations of the classic slasher now include roller mowers and blower mowers for sports fields and parks, and hay-makers with windrowing capabilities and offset versions that cut material beside the tractor rather than directly behind. The latest development in the field of grass and crop cutting is the offset disc mower, where a set of three or four (or more) small metal discs are each

fitted with four small blades. With the discs under a solid housing which hangs off to one side of the tractor, they are driven by the PTO operating through a gearbox and their cutting action is concealed by a tarpaulin skirt all around the device.

This prevents cut material from being flung about, so that it falls neatly behind the blades in an even carpet atop the shorn stems.

But for all that, there is still a place for the sickle-bar cutter of old, particularly for softer species such as lucerne where crushing of the stems is best avoided. The problem with sickle-bar cutters, however, is that they are delicate, and temperamental, and will cause the operator endless hassles if the field being cut contains any form of detritus such as twigs, stones and wire. 🌿



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So, you've cut your hay. Now what?

With your grass neatly cut, how best to store it, or to make it easily transportable should you choose to sell it? That is, without breaking the bank.

In truth, buying a mechanical baler to cater for the few hundred bales one might harvest each season on a smallholding is probably overkill, and beyond the reach, financially, of most.

Before you get to the stage of baling, however, there is the important matter of drying the cuttings, and consolidating them in some way so that picking them up is rendered efficient, and the field is left clear of shorn combustible material afterwards.

Drying one's hay is necessary for the simple reason that if it is too damp, either internally or from rainfall or dew, mould will likely form either in the haystack or bale, rendering the contents at best unpalatable and more likely toxic to livestock.

The process of exposing cut hay to the drying warmth of the sun is called tedding. Mechanically, it is achieved by an implement called a tedder which is towed behind the tractor and whose long flexible fingers scoop up the cut material and fling it into the air, so that it falls in a smooth thin carpet. In many cases, a tedder can be converted into a hayrake simply by changing the configuration and action of the fingers. Thus, for the price of a single implement the farmer has a device with which to spread and dry the hay and, when it is at optimum dryness, to rake it into windrows for the baler. If your smallholding is small, the cost of such an implement would, like a mechanical baler, be unwarranted, and hand-tedding, using a pitchfork and manual labour is your simple

option.

Likewise, for small fields, hand raking, again using a pitchfork may be your best bet. Note that a

conventional wheel rake, or



Tedder rake.

“tolhark” in Afrikaans, is only that: a rake. Its action is simply to consolidate the grass into one long “sausage” and if the grass is wet to begin with the centre of the sausage will remain wet, with further raking just rolling the sausage across the field.

With the grass dried to an optimum moisture content, what are your options for storage? The cheapest old-fashioned method is to build it into a haystack. This is particularly suitable if you intend to use it yourself during winter, ie on your own property where no or limited transportation is necessary.

Although the hay will retain its condition best if stored under a roof, a good quality stack can still be achieved outdoors especially if one covers the completed stack with a tarpaulin until one intends to use it.

Choose a site for your stack that is level, and which is preferably large enough that the stack can be approached from all sides. It goes without saying that, in areas at risk of winter grass fires, the place where you make your stack should be fire-proof.

To build a stack takes labour armed with pitchforks and is best achieved with a tractor and trailer handy to move the material from the fields to the site of the

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IN THE FIELD

stack. The hay is then simply stacked atop the previously positioned load, keeping the sides as vertical as possible. A couple of people atop the stack will use their pitchforks to level out and compress the material being flung atop the stack by the people on the trailer. Once the stack is finished, cover it with a tarpaulin to prevent rain and sun damage.

If you intend selling your hay, some form of baling is preferable if it is to be transported over any distance. The options available to you as a smallholder include hand-baling, small square machine baling, small round baling or, on larger properties the large round bales that have now become popular.

Baling by hand can mean nothing more than building a sturdy wooden box, filling it with hay and compressing it by walking and stamping on it.



Hand baler.

This produces a loose bale, which can be about the same weight as a standard rectangular bale (about 15kg) but is bigger in volume. An advantage of a loose bale is that mould is less likely to grow within if

the material being baled is not completely dry. Home-made hand balers are also possible with a little home carpentry, that will produce a tighter bale, more akin to a machine bale in size, weight and texture.

Plans for a simple, yet sturdy, wooden hand baler are to be found under the resources tab on our website, at www.sasmallholder.co.za.

Hand baling by either means is a two man job, at least.

Square machine balers are still made, though their popularity is declining in favour of round balers. Two types are to be had, namely those older types that fasten their bales with baling wire, and ones that use polyprop baling twine. They are PTO-powered, and can be used either towed or statically, with the hay being fed to the baler by hand.

The small round balers have become common over the past 20 years, making bales that can still be handled manually, of about the same dimensions and weight as the rectangular bales.

When it comes to the bigger round bales, however, manual handling is limited to rolling the bales around. They are too big for manual lifting and positioning, for which a tractor with a hydraulic bale spike or a forklift is required. 🌿

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IN THE KITCHEN

Make curd with your summer fruit

As summer draws to an end and autumn sets in, lucky smallholders may find themselves with a glut of certain fruits. Plus, lemon trees around the country can be seen groaning with green fruit, soon to ripen and fill kitchens with citrus smells. So what can one do with all of this fruit? Simple. Make curds.

Fruit curd is a dessert spread and topping usually made with citrus fruit. One might be familiar with a lemon curd, but when it comes to the sweet, creamy spread lemon is just the beginning.

Curd can be used as a spread on scones, toast or croissants. It can be used as a filling in pies and tarts, or as a topping on cakes and cupcakes. It can also be used as a flavouring for yoghurt or ice cream.

The basic ingredients are egg yolks, sugar, fruit juice and zest. Some recipes call for butter too. The origin of the name comes from the 1800s when lemon juice (acid) was used to curdle cream to form curds, which were then separated from the whey using a cheese-cloth. This "lemon cheese" was then used to make lemon tarts. However, in modern times, the recipe



Basic lemon curd.

has evolved to include eggs and as such what we know as fruit curd is actually more of a custard. Here are a few options for curds to use up some of your summer fruit, or in a few weeks' time when you have lemons in abundance. For heating the mixtures, most cooks recommend you use a double boiler, to prevent the eggs from scrambling.

Continued on page 25

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Basic Citrus Curd

(You can use lemons, limes, oranges, grapefruit, or naartjies)

In a double boiler whisk together four large eggs yolks, 2/3 of a cup of sugar (you can adjust for taste), 1/3 of a cup of lemon juice and a tablespoon of lemon zest until blended and starting to thicken. Reduce the heat and add 1/3 of a cup or six tablespoons of unsalted, softened butter in cubes, whisking constantly until the mixture is combined and thickened. It should coat the back of a metal spoon. Take it off the heat and allow to cool. Transfer to jars and refrigerate.

Granadilla Curd (Passionfruit)

Ingredients are as for citrus curd, plus half a cup of granadilla pulp. Mix the pulp with the sugar. Heat slowly in a double boiler until sugar is dissolved. In a separate bowl, whisk egg yolks and lemon juice so that they form a paste. Slowly pour the warm granadilla mixture into the eggs, whisking constantly to temper the eggs. Pour the whole mixture back into the double boiler on reduced heat. Add the softened butter whisking constantly until the mixture is com-



Granadilla curd.



Curd can be used as a topping for cakes and desserts.

bined and thickened.

Other Curd Options

A variety of fruit can be used to make curd. Some will require the use of a citrus (commonly lemon) to assist in the cooking process. Common options include mango, guava, raspberries, blueberries, cranberries or strawberries. Rhubarb is a winter option. When using fruit flesh, it is better to blend the fruit beforehand to ensure your curd remains smooth. Some cooks push the puree through a strainer to remove fibre and pips. You don't have to stick with fruit options. Ginger, mint, vanilla, cardamom or coconut can also be added to a basic curd to flavor it, or as additives to enhance the flavor of other fruit curds. If you want to experiment but are nervous about ruining a whole batch, cook your curd almost to completion and then separate it out into smaller bowls and stir in your flavouring. This curd might not be as smooth as if you had continued whisking over heat until cooked fully, but you will at least have preserved the majority of your curd if your flavour experiment is a flop. 🌿

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Impress your friends with new quick ID guides

Once again Chris and Mathilde Stuart have been busy and recently published two additions to their series of quick ID guides ~ one on primates and one on the carnivores of Africa. They are published by Struik.

Quick ID Guide to Primates

This is a guide to Africa's great apes, true monkeys and their relatives, giving a succinct survey of their features and habits.

The guide is divided into the three main primate groups ~ great apes, typical monkeys and prosimians (including the bushbabies). It contains pertinent facts, annotated photographs and up-to-date distribution maps to help readers accurately identify the most commonly seen and charismatic primates in the field. Price: R90.00

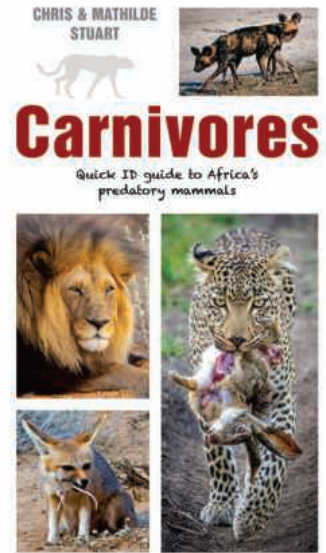
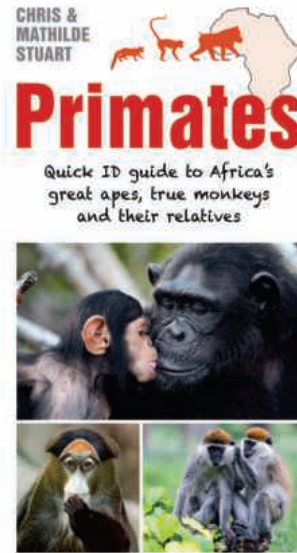
Quick ID Guide to the Carnivores of Africa

This covers both the mighty and ferocious of these sought-after animals ~ big cats, wolves, foxes and hyenas ~ and a variety of smaller but equally formidable hunters ~ otters, polecats, weasels, mongooses

and civets.

Features include quick ID points, behaviour, diet, annotated colour photographs and distribution maps. Price: R90.00.

These join six other quick ID guides and the Stuarts' other field guides to various animals and national parks in southern Africa. 🌿



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EVENTS

Solar Power Systems Course

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Dates: 9 April, 08h00-17h00.

Costs: R1 800 per person.

Location: Diamond Valley, Pretoria, Gauteng.

Contact: 087 231 1644 or email riaan@kragdag.co.za for more information or to book.

Ostrich Meat and Wine Pairing

Pitso Ostrich Farm, Brits, North West is hosting an Ostrich Information Day which will include a two-course meal and wine pairing.

Date: 30 April.

Location: Pitso Ostrich Farm, Brits

Contact: 073 621 1584 for more info and to book.

Cooking On Coals ~ Dinokeng Voluntary Rangers Fundraiser

The Dinokeng Game Reserve's Voluntary Rangers are hosting their annual fundraising event in the form of a cooking competition. The potjie competition will be judged by celebrity judges Chris Forrest and the Braai Boy. Entry into the com-

petition is R300 per team of two. There will also be a market, kids' playground and live entertainment provided by Heuning.

Entrance to the event is R50.

Children under 12 enter free of charge.

Date: 30 April.

Location: Lazy River Bush Pub, Dinokeng Game Reserve

Contact: www.dinokengvr.co.za/events

Hydroponics Vegetable Production Course

Hosted by the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) Vegetable & Ornamental Plant Institute in Roodeplaat, Pretoria East, the course covers systems and structures, growth media, crops, fertigation and irrigation, sanitation, marketing principles, scouting pest and diseases management, harvesting and grading, production planning/ planting programme, seedling production and record keeping.

Costs: R4 200pp (minimum 20 people).

Dates: 13-17 June, and 14-18 November (on request).

Contact: evdheever@arc.agric.za.

Open Field Vegetable Production

Hosted by the ARC Vegetable & Ornamental Plant Institute in Roodeplaat, Pretoria East, this course covers classification of vegetables, winter crops, summer crops, influence of environmental factors, fertilization and irrigation, spacing, planting times, seedling production, planting programme, marketing principles, record keeping, pest and disease management and sanitation.

Cost: R3 800pp (minimum 10 people).

Dates: 13-17 June, and 14-18 November.

Contact: evdheever@arc.agric.za.



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The family dogs

My family has always kept a few dogs. And with the exception of one or two they have all been ~ shall we say ~ oddballs. In most cases, SPCA specials and, even, the runts of their litters. And fine companions they have proved, too. By the time we moved to our first smallholding more than 30 years ago, the family dog at the time (the runt of his litter) was old and hard of hearing. So I deemed it time to acquire a younger dog to provide continuity. An inspection of the kennels at the local SPCA revealed the usual collection of sad-eyed mutts. All, that is, except for one. A brown and white dog of indeterminate origin that may have passed through a fox terrier gene-pool at some stage. What drew my attention was the fact that she was either jumping up and down in her cage or chewing determinedly at her gate. That should have been a warning, but instead I took it as a good sign of a lively spirit, and she duly joined the family. She proved absolutely untrainable. When locked out of the house she would set up a furious bark, fit to wake the dead, and hurl herself at the (glass-panelled) front door until she was let in. And once in she would chew anything she could lay her teeth into. In her long life she covered herself in virtue once, by coming home with a live chicken delicately held in her jaw. As there was some confusion as to which neighbouring plot she had come from, we built a coop for the hen and thus did we start as small-scale chicken keepers. Much later, with horses, sheep, chickens and lots of feed, we had a bad rat problem one year and my son, knowing that I am averse to using poisons because of their fatal effects on owls, suggested we get a Jack Russell. They are, after all, exceptional ratters. And as it happened, he said, he had a friend whose dog had just had a litter. Then he mentioned that his friend was from Brakpan, which should have

been a warning sign. The day arrived, and the cutest little brown puppy appeared, about the size of a teacup, with a determinedly curly tail. With as much Jack Russell in her as one finds in a pigeon. In short, she is a chihuahua. Well, a Brakpan version thereof. She now, too, is old so it was deemed necessary for us to acquire two younger dogs as companions for my beloved and I in our semi-retirement. My daughter had a colleague whose dog had had a relationship with a travelling man and who had thus delivered herself of a full litter of puppies, all speckled and spotted in white, black and brown. We were told that there was some Daschhund blood in them (good, I thought) and Jack Russell too (even better, I thought). We



were sent a picture of two, heads only, one with a distinct Daschhund face, the other with, well, some black and brown and white and... A time was set to fetch them. We arrived at the house and pressed the button. And the lady of the house appeared, and thrust the puppies towards us. Yes, they were indeed sweet, but the one with the multi-coloured face was clearly more a fox terrier than anything else, with a mottled head and a pure white coat. And then the lady casually dropped in that she thought there might also be some bull terrier blood in them. And so they have proved to be. Woe betide any springhaas that happens to find itself on our plot. Sadly its days are numbered. And our plot is no longer a safe landing ground for hadedas, and we have two very fit, well-fed dogs as a result of all the chasing that they do.

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