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# Plastics: Ban the stuff

**A**sbestos is a remarkable substance. A mineral extracted through mining, it is lightweight, and can be transformed into many useful household and industrial items such as ceiling cladding, wall insulation, and roof sheeting. Another property of which asbestos boasts is that it is fire resistant. It neither burns nor melts, and it therefore found itself in high demand as a fire-retardant insulating material.

However, yet another property of asbestos is that, in both the mining and manufacturing process and in use, it releases microscopically small fibres which can be breathed in by those in close proximity. In the lungs these fibres lodge themselves, and over a long period of time cause a disease called asbestosis, which will eventually result in death.

So extensive did the asbestosis spread become, particularly among those mining the mineral, but also among those manufacturing asbestos-containing products or working with them in the building and industrial sectors, that governments around the world pretty-much universally banned the mining, manufacture or use of asbestos and its related products. This resulted in the closure of mines, the development of new, safer alternatives, and bar those now elderly victims of asbestosis still alive, a huge reduction in incidence of the disease.

The same needs to happen with plastics.

Plastics owe their popularity to the fact that their molecular constituent, carbon, has the unique chemical ability to form chains, often bonding with other elements.

Thus, commonplace plastics display different characteristics depending on the nature of their carbon chains and added constituents. Think PVC, commonly-used in irrigation pipe. This stands for poly vinyl-chloride. Another, also used in water pipe, is

HDPE or high-density poly-ethylene.

There are thus an almost limitless number of variations of plastics for an almost limitless number of applications.

And here's the problem. When those items, either one-time vegetable packaging or computer keyboards, finally reach the end of their lives what can be done with them?

They can be recycled, say the plastics pundits. Yes, but not in all cases and not without a lot of extra work. And not always (in fact very seldom) into a substance that can simply be remoulded to make another of the same thing.

Take plastic cooldrink bottles, now to be found in their billions in rivers, on beaches and floating in the ocean. One thinks of a cooldrink bottle as one thing, but in fact it is a minimum of three. There's the bottle itself, which is (usually) of a clear plastic that must be food-grade and strong enough to withstand the pressure of carbonisation. There is usually a thin wrap-around label. And then there is the cap and the little security band which forms the tamper-proof seal. Different again. Before the bottle itself can be recycled into new cooldrink bottles, these items must be removed and processed differently. This will mean that the cost of a bottle made from recycled material will far exceed that of one made from virgin plastic. But the bottom line is that we as a species simply cannot continue to sully our planet with these materials because recycling or re-use is too expensive.

For, while asbestos resulted in the deaths of miners and workers from asbestosis, and was banned worldwide, plastic pollution will result in the death of humanity ~ *en masse*. And a lot of animal and plant-life besides. Can we risk that happening?



**SOUTH AFRICAN  
SMALLHOLDER**  
**SEPTEMBER 2022**  
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**PUBLISHED BY**

Bowford Publications (Pty) Ltd  
*Established 1985*

(Reg No 2004/019727/07)

PO Box 14648, Bredell 1623

Tel: 076 176 7392

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# Gauteng agri-shows back to full strength

Gauteng's two major agricultural shows took place in August and early-September this year. Both were a major success with record visitor and exhibitor numbers ~ relief after the difficulty of the last two years.

## Sakeliga Kragdag

With double-digit growth in both the number of exhibitors and visitors, last month's Sakeliga KragDag expo held east of Pretoria showed convincingly that South Africans have had enough of lockdowns and just want their lives to go back to normality.

For, with no fewer than 580 exhibitors showing their wares to 30 900 visitors this, the 13th KragDag show, was by far the biggest yet held, and the first in three years to be staged without any restrictions on numbers, etc.

The numbers of attendees were doubtless boosted by the third staging of an agricultural side-show organised in conjunction with the TLU, which drew more than 100 exhibitors itself.

As one would expect at a show premised on the possibilities of self-sufficiency, and given Eskom's

continued inability to provide constant, reliable power, solar energy, in all its forms, was a strong focus among exhibitors.

Also exhibited on a number of stands were electric vehicles in various forms, particularly two iterations of electric utility bikes suitable for carting goods, feed, manure etc around a farm, and a handy-looking electric panel van that will make an attractive purchase for companies involved in urban and short-run deliveries.



Electric tipping tricycle and, right, electric moped.

Other products featured included sewage management, generators, power tools, and garden and home equipment.

Continued on page 5



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For the first time a section was added for showing hand-made products, organised in conjunction with Solidarity, who were also involved in the Junior Entrepreneur competition, with a total prize kitty of R21 000.



Aerial view of the parking (foreground) and show (background) at KragDag ~ record numbers.

This was also the first year that KragDag had its own airstrip for those flying in from afar.

And, with the dust in the showgrounds hardly settled, the organisers announced that next year's event will stretch over four days, from August 9 to 12.

Moreover, there is a possibility that a second KragDag expo will be launched next year, to give the Western Cape a taste of how to "doen jou eie ding".

For more information email Sone Saunders at [sone@kragdag.co.za](mailto:sone@kragdag.co.za).

## Walkerville Agricultural Show

When, a few days before a show, you receive a message from the organisers to say "the showgrounds are fully-booked" you know you're in for a hum-dinger of an event.

And that was the case before the 59th Walkerville Agricultural Show early this month.

After a Covid-induced break of a year, and the postponement to later than usual of this year's event, the quaint rural grounds of this popular show were

packed with stalls selling every conceivable craft, home industry and product of interest to dwellers in this region south of Johannesburg.

In addition, visitors flocked to the popular food and beer garden for sustenance and to listen to and enjoy a wide range of entertainment.

The show is the home to the Gauteng Rabbit Breeder's Association, which hosted a successful event and competition, with some 200 animals of all breeds and sizes, while adjacent to that was a popular poultry tent, also featuring many popular, and some rare, breeds.

As far as other livestock was concerned, this was the third show in recent years at which livestock were excluded, because of Foot & Mouth Disease restrictions. This resulted in the mandatory exclusion of cattle, and in the *de facto* exclusion of sheep and goats, all of which would have needed to pass a State Vet inspection before attending.

Nevertheless, horses made up for that shortfall in a small way, with some impressive cart horses on show, and displays of traditional farriery.



Hungry (and thirsty) visitors at the Walkerville Agricultural Show.

One of the most impressive exhibitions at the show highlights the work of conservancies in preserving and protecting the biodiversity of one's natural areas, fauna and flora.

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## Another rainy summer on the cards

It looks like we're headed for another wetter-than-normal rainy season in Southern Africa's interior. While some models show that the early part of the rainy season, may see very normal rainfall patterns over the interior, the situation changes, in one scenario quite dramatically, when looking at the three months from November onwards, with up to a 50% probability of above normal rainfall over most of Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Gauteng. This modelling is in accord with the El Niño/La Niña modelling carried out constantly by oceanographers at The US

National Oceanographic & Atmospheric Administration (Noaa) who have forecast a continuation of the current La Nina patterns in water temperatures in the southern Pacific Ocean (which result in wetter-than-normal rainfall in the southern hemisphere and drier-than-normal rainfall in the north).

The current prediction is that the chances are that La Niña is expected to continue, gradually decreasing from 86% in the coming season to 60% during December-February 2022-23. 🌿

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## SHOWS

As far as agricultural machinery and inputs was concerned the pickings were slim, with the emphasis of the show gradually shifting away from displays of what one might need to get the work done to the results of the work once one has done it – produce, crafts, cheeses, sweets, charcuterie, etc.

A feature of the show annually is the number of sellers of plants, saplings etc, who are congregated close to the entrance gate, making it easy to cart one's purchases to one's vehicle on departure. 🌿



Part of the Conservancy Stand.



Vintage Farmall tractor at Walkerville Show.



# AHS vaccines remain a concern for horse owners

At the start of the warmer weather, you should be starting inoculation against African Horse Sickness (AHS). However, there have been reports of a vaccine shortage, with the vaccine's sole manufacturer Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP) plagued by mismanagement for the last few years. Meanwhile, a group of horse owners and breeders is lamenting the current situation around the manufacture and sale of the vaccine. Because it is produced solely by OBP, the group says they are being held over a barrel by the manufacturer who has in previous years not produced enough to cover the country's equines. Additionally, the cost of the vaccine is of constant concern, with some racing owners claiming animals used for sport are charged more. A petition against OBP's monopoly has been started by Southern African Agri Initiative and can be signed at <https://skakel.saaai.org/horse-vaccine-9546>. Back in May, OBP gave the assurance that a minimum of 20 000 doses of vaccine would be available for use in the AHS "Red Zone" by the start of the season.

AHS is caused by a virus carried by the culicoides midge. The culicoides midge likes a damp, warm habitat, and comes out in the cooler parts of the day. Therefore, keep your stable yard dry and clean. Keep your horses in their stables through the first few hours of the day and bring them in earlier than you might otherwise do in the afternoon. Use fly control measures in your stables. Because of the preference of the midges for wetness, it makes sense if you have undulating ground with wet, boggy lowland, to try to confine your horses in the summer months to higher ground. Before the development of an efficient

vaccine against the disease, this was one of the methods of control practiced by horse men of old. If you are able to get your hands on a vaccine, it is a two-part vaccine. Just make sure you keep it refrigerated before use.

The efficacy of the vaccine is short-lived, so at the very minimum an annual course of injection is necessary. And short-lived also means that if you start your vaccination programme too early, it may have lost its effect before the end of the midge season. Two-part means you need to inject the horse twice, about a week or ten days apart. The second injection is not a booster of the first. Each injection contains a limited number of strains of the disease, so to cover the full spectrum of strains both injections are necessary.

Good practice also, say some, is that a horse that has recently been injected should not be worked hard for a few weeks afterwards. There are two types of AHS, colloquially called "dikkop" and "dunkop" according to the symptoms shown by the horse.

One strain is invariably fatal, the other marginally less so. All equines, ie donkeys and mules, too, are susceptible. 🌿



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# Announcing 2022's Tree of the Year

**D**uring every Arbor Week (1-7 September), to help increase public awareness of just a few of the 2 000 indigenous tree species in South Africa, two specific trees ~ one common and one rare species are highlighted.

This year the common tree is *Dais cotinifolia*, commonly known as Pompontree (note: not to be confused with pompom weed), while the rare one is *Peltophorum Africanum*, commonly known as African Wattle.

## **Pompontree**

The Pompontree is also known as pincushion tree (Eng), kannabas, speldekussing, basboom (Afr), intozani (Xhosa); intozwane-emnyama (Zulu).

The tree can be planted in full sun or semi shade and is a relatively fast grower.

The Pompon is fairly frost hardy.

It is not a big tree, reaching a height of 6 metres.

It forms a crown of rounded, glossy green leaves. The leaves might have a bluish tinge.



*Dais cotinifolia*, commonly known as Pompontree.

It needs to be watered in summer, but is quite low-maintenance.

In November or December, depending on the area, the tree bursts into a lovely display of fragrant, pinkish-mauve flowers forming a pompon-like cluster. It will flower profusely for about three weeks.

The flowers attract butterflies, other insects and birds. It is rarely attacked by pests or diseases.

## **African Wattle**

*Peltophorum Africanum* is also known as African Wattle (English), Huilboom (Afrikaans), Musese (Venda), Mosêlha (Tswana) or Umsehle (Zulu). It is a small to medium, fast growing, deciduous tree. It grows in grassland and woodland and is fairly frost and drought hardy.

It flowers profusely from October to May. It has large spikes of golden-yellow, crinkly flowers that are held well above the leaves, which last for weeks. Many insects and birds are attracted by the flowers. 🌼



*Peltophorum Africanum* is also known as African Wattle

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# Learning from animal droppings

**T**hey say that what comes out of the back end of your livestock is almost as important as what goes in at the front end.

One can learn a surprising amount about the health of an animal by examining its droppings. Dung is an important indicator of the nutritional status of an animal. So it's useful to know what normal droppings of a healthy animal should look like.

The three Cs act as a guide: consistency, colour and content.

## Sheep and goats

Normal sheep faeces are small black or dark brown pellets. Pasty or clumpy faeces may indicate that the sheep needs deworming. Diarrhoea should not be considered an illness in and of itself but rather a symptom of other more serious health problems in sheep and goats. It can be the symptom of many different illnesses, e.g. bloat, acidosis, enterotoxemia and polio. Diarrhoea is not always the result of an infectious disease. It can be induced by stress, poor management, a sudden change in feed and incorrect nutrition. Adult goat faeces should be firm "berries" that are brown in colour. They may be greenish if the goat has a diet high in lucerne. Goats that eat a lot of grain, such as those that are milking, might have faeces that are more clumped than usual.



Sheep droppings should look like pellets.

Goats are known for their hardy digestive systems but they might have parasites, such as various worms or coccidia (a protozoa) which cause runny droppings.

## Horses

The average horse defecates eight or nine times a day, producing 12-17kgs of manure. Fresh droppings should be green-brown in colour and formed in tight, shiny balls. The dung should be sweet smelling.

Particularly foul smelling manure could be caused by

Continued on page 13

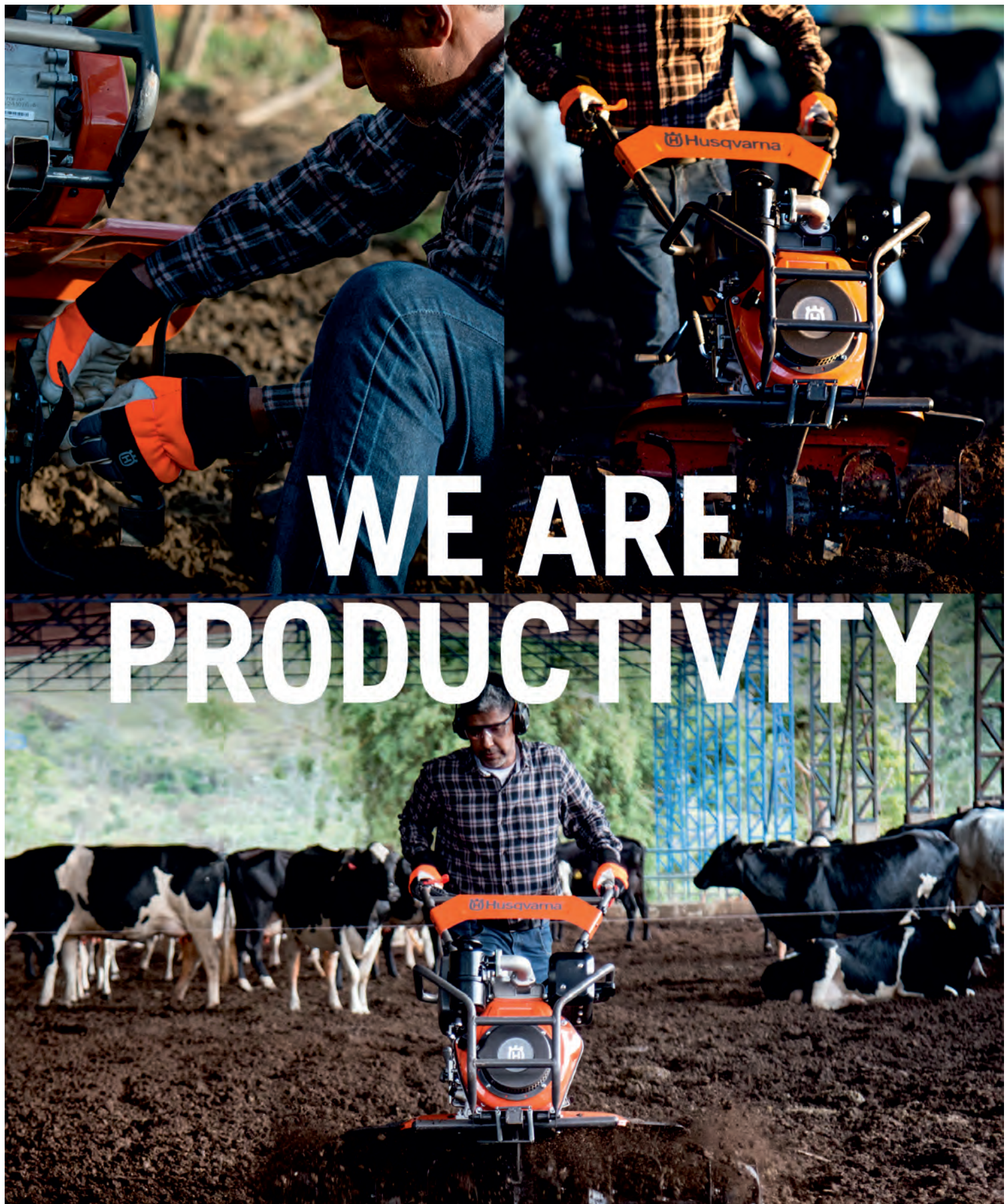


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a rapid change in diet, too much fat or protein in the diet, ulcers, salmonella or internal parasites.

A strange odour can be a warning of an illness. The quality of the faeces can also indicate the state of the horse's teeth and digestive tract. In the case of dry or runny droppings the diet needs to be examined.

Diarrhoea in horses can have a number of other causes:

- ☐ Infection with germs (body temperature is usually elevated);
- ☐ Antibiotics or drugs which were given for another problem;
- ☐ Stress conditions where animal is not well kept and is disturbed;
- ☐ A one week old foal may develop diarrhoea when its mother comes into heat (oestrus).

If a large amount of whole grains are found in the droppings the horse might not be chewing properly or might have digestive problems. Blood in the dung may be a sign of an inflammation of the digestive tract.



Horse manure.

If you break open one of the balls of dung and observe small white insects within, your horse has worms.

## Cattle

A healthy cow forms a pat 2-3cm thick, with a dimple in the top. The manure has a porridge-like

appearance, and should have several concentric rings. The dung drops should make a slow hand clap sound and the dung neither sucks or sticks to your boot.

The appearance of the manure colour is highly influenced by the feeding program. Cows that are found on pasture will generally have a dark green manure, while those with a diet of concentrates and dry hay will be more of a brown colour. With the addition of more grain to the diet the manure tends to take on a greyish colour. Cows ideally ruminate for 6-8 hours a day.

If the dung is very runny it will cause body-mass loss and a decrease in butter-fat yield. Dung with a thin porridge consistency indicates that the pasture intake has been excessive, with too much protein and excessive salt.

Diarrhoea in cattle can be caused by germs, internal parasites or overfeeding.

Dry faecal balls with a high fibre content and a distinct plaited surface area are a sure sign of dehydration.

## Pigs

The stool of the normal pig should be firm and shaped like human faeces.

Intestinal problems may cause porcine faeces to become moist. Scours (diarrhoea) with blood, mucus or bad odour may even result. A pig with diarrhoea caused by infectious agents and/or parasites usually has a reduced or no appetite, but is still drinking.

When a pig is on free-choice feed and water, the stool tends to loosen to the consistency of a cow patty as feed consumption increases. Feed restriction reduces the amount of stool and tends to be constipating, particularly if water also is restricted.

## Rabbit

A rabbit's droppings should be separate, round, fairly



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# LIVESTOCK

firm and greyish brown in colour. Any change is a sign of a health problem. Diarrhoea can be caused by:

- ☐ Changing the feed from dry to green feed.
- ☐ Bad feed, either too wet, too cold or contaminated with chemicals.
- ☐ Disease caused by bacteria.
- ☐ Coccidia can cause diarrhoea in young animals.

## Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea will cause the animal to lose water and salts and if this is allowed to continue the animal can die.

If you cannot get veterinary help you can give the animal a home treatment of rehydration fluid.

To make rehydration fluid mix six teaspoons of sugar and half a teaspoon of salt with a litre of clean, warm water. For sheep or goats give this as a drench of 500 ml four times a day for three days.

Larger animals require more fluid, 5% of body weight twice per day.

Generally, if the diarrhoea stops after one or two days it was probably caused by something that the animal had eaten. If it persists for longer or if the animal's temperature has gone up you will need to consult



Cow dung.

your veterinarian.

Constipated animals cannot defecate or they pass very hard droppings with difficulty. The animal with constipation is easy to spot.

Most often it is caused by the animal not having enough water to drink.

Constipation can be treated by giving an enema. Warm water is injected into the rectum.

Epsom salts or commercially produced oils can be given by mouth to relieve constipation. 🌿

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## Tsenza: A potato with many names

**A**frica is host to a huge number of nutritionally dense traditional and ancient crops. These include orphan crops and unusual, specialty foodplants for smallholder production.

This is part four in the series to introduce "orphan crops" to the ecologically sensitive, small-scale farming community.

Livingstone potato or Tsenza (*Coleus esculentus*) is a fascinating one indeed, one of the root crops known as a "potato" of sorts, although it's actually more closely related to mint!

Also known as wild potato, veld potato, African potato\*, Livingstone potato (Eng.); veldaartappel, wilde-aartappel (Afr.); itapile (Xhosa); mutada (Venda); ujango, ujilo, umbondwe, umhlaza (Zulu), umbondiwe (Ndebele), tsenza is the Shona name for the plant. The name gives away the edible part of the crop, its cluster of fingerlike roots. The huge number of common names this plant has underscores how important it must have been to the people who first



Looking a lot like fingers, these tubers are amongst the most nutritious of root crops.

**Another in our series on "orphan" and unusual crop species, by University of Pretoria horticulturist Jason Sampson**

domesticated and spread the cultivation of this plant. Unfortunately, this is the very poster child of an orphan crop, with its extensive traditional cultivation being replaced by other crops (specifically taro, cassava and sweet potato) to the point of virtual extinction in

South Africa, although the crop is still considered important in subsistence agriculture in other countries to the North.

The situation had become so bad in the early and mid 2000s that reports of the species growing in the wild were considered worthy of scientific publication!

Luckily the modern movement towards traditional crops and diverse planting has revived interest in the plant, and one can find it for sale from seed merchants and nurseries in season (early to late spring).

### Cultivation

Superbly adapted to dry conditions, all African potato needs to grow is deep, fertile soil in full sun and reasonable summer rain, with a bit of weeding. The plant is a small shrub, about knee height, with thick, semi-succulent leaves.

Sections of root of about 3cm long or so can be planted about 3cm deep in friable soil once the weather has properly warmed up in September in most areas of the country. The plant is adapted to porcupine predation in the wild and with dozens of "eyes" on tubers sections, it can reshoot from very small pieces. It is



Freshly dug from the field. The dormant stem of the plant can be seen at the top of the tuber cluster.

Continued on page 17

**Bekostigbare implemente geskik vir die klein boer**

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best to plant the root sections horizontally, to form a small clump.

Harvest can take place anytime in winter when the plant is dormant. Dormancy is easy to see; the plant will turn yellow and drop all its leaves with the onset of cold weather. If you leave plants in place over winter never water dormant plants, they will rot.

If your climate is very mild, and the aboveground parts of the plant are not frosted off, you can be



Foliage is thick and leathery, well adapted to drought.

rewarded with lovely yellow flowers.

## Seed saving and sharing

Store tuber sections in dry sand or coir for replanting in spring, or leave a few clumps in the ground for division and replanting in season. Its important to store the tubers dry but humid. They will rot if kept wet, and desiccate if kept "naked".

## Uses and potential markets

This plant has been cited as being extremely nutritious, with a particularly high starch and amino acid content. Cultivated varieties taste like potato with a slightly minty undertone.

They can be peeled and eaten raw, or used in stews, roasted or even in baking.

High starch root crops have uses in gluten free baking, although recipes along these lines are difficult to find ~ perhaps someone inventive can give it a try. There is always interest in traditional food ingredients at the right restaurants and fresh food markets, but development of new products is entirely possible from such an underutilized crop.

With the right conditions this is a plant that pretty much grows itself, and does not deserve the neglect that it has suffered in South Africa in the past.

\* Not to be confused with the "African potato" touted by former health minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang as an ingredient in a cure for HIV-Aids, *Hypoxis heamerocallidea*. ~ Editor.

All photos credit: Richard Hay.

For more information on this, or other orphan crops, please contact Jason Sampson at [jason.sampson@up.ac.za](mailto:jason.sampson@up.ac.za) 🌱

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# POULTRY

## Comparing duck eggs with chicken eggs

Anyone who has kept ducks on their plot will sing the praises of the eggs. So how do they compare with chicken eggs?

Duck eggs are bigger than chicken eggs: they weigh 70-80 grams, as opposed to a jumbo chicken egg which should be more than 66 grams. Duck egg yolk is disproportionately larger in relation to the albumen. The fat content is higher in a duck egg, but so is the level of cholesterol.

The duck egg has more Omega-3 fatty acids ~ 71.4 milligrams vs 37 milligrams, along with more protein. Duck eggs are also higher in calories: 130 calories vs 71 calories.

Duck eggs help to build muscle and boost skin health. Because they are rich in magnesium, selenium and zinc, they support mental health. The vitamins a duck egg contains have numerous nutritional benefits.

The flavour is richer and creamier. Duck eggs can be cooked in the same ways that chicken eggs are cooked: boiled, poached, fried, scrambled and turned into omelettes.

Baking with duck eggs might require some experimentation. You can work on the basis of two duck eggs to three chicken eggs, but because the proportions of the contents are different your cake might not turn out the way it usually does. Duck egg shells come in a wide variety of colours, depending on the breed, including white, various shades of grey, light green, brown, speckled or pale blue. However, the colour does not affect the flavour or the contents in any way. The duck shell is thicker than that of a chicken.

Eaten in moderation, duck eggs can form a part of a healthy diet. 🌱



Quail egg (top left), chicken egg (top right), duck egg (bottom).



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# Options for planters for your plot

One of the problems less-agile older people have with growing their own vegetables is their reluctance, and even inability, to get their hands and eyes close enough to the earth to correctly push seed or seedlings into the ground. For, while it may seem funny to agile younger folk, as one gets older one is less able to bend without toppling over, or to kneel and then rise up again. And if that is not enough, bending over, even assuming one doesn't topple face-first into the bed, becomes excruciatingly painful after a while.

Short of building raised beds so that one's work surface is at waist-level, how, therefore, can one ensure one's seed is placed into the soil at the correct



Single-seed hand planter by Backsaver.

depth and spacing, without crippling oneself?

Fortunately a number of devices are available which enable one to place seeds in the soil at the correct depth ~ without bending. Some are designed and manufactured in South Africa, others are imported, mostly from China. Because seeds of different species vary in size, and vary in planting

depth, such devices tend to be species specific: if you want to plant maize, you need a maize seed planter, for pumpkin a pumpkin seeds planter and so on.

For smaller areas, even backyard vegetable patches, some of these are devices that one pushes the delivery end of a vertical tube into the soil. A horizontal base plate ensures the end is at the correct depth. A wheeled combination seeder and fertiliser planter by Backsaver.



Inserting a seed in the vertical shaft and operating a lever ensures it is deposited in the soil at the correct depth, whereafter the device is lifted and moved to

Continued on page 21

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The next position, a thin adjustable measuring stick ensuring one positions the next one the right distance from the first.

For bigger areas there are wheeled units, most of which come with a variety of seed plates for different sized seeds and spacings.

Clever gearing ensures that the seed plates revolve in conjunction with the forward speed of the device, to ensure that the seeds are correctly spaced regardless of how vigorously one pushes the planter.

A bit more sophisticated still are combined seeder/fertilizer units that simultaneously deliver a measured amount of granular fertilizer to each seed. No-till versions, that will work even in quite compacted soil, have wheels the curve of which has been cut away to form many flat surfaces. At each corner is



"Punch" Planter by Eden Equipment can be used for no-till seeding.

a delivery tube and the idea is that as the wheel is pushed along the shape will force the delivery tube into the soil rather than allowing it to skate over the surface.

Next up, versions exist that will deliver seeds to two, or three, rows simultaneously, and animal-drawn and powered planters are available, too.

And all of this before one moves on to commercial planters that are drawn behind one's tractor.

So much for seeds. What about seedlings?

Tractor-drawn seedling planters are well-developed, often requiring one seated operator per row, who carefully plucks a seedling from a tray and deposits, right way up, in a chamber, from whence it descends down a tube into the soil.

For small spaces a hand operated Chinese device comprises a lightweight steel tube. At the bottom are three or four triangular flaps arranged to form a cone, hinged to the tube, and attached to a series of wire levers, in turn attached to a trigger.

The operator pushes this device into the soil, drops a seedling right way up into the tube and then pulls the "trigger". This forces the flaps to open, allowing the plant to drop into the hole in the soil.

It goes without saying that these devices will work only in soft, light, tilled soil. 🌱

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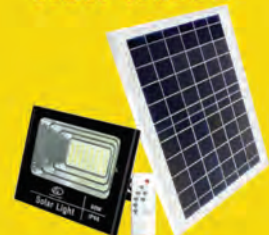
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There's no need to blast paint off the walls of stables, broiler houses or piggeries when attempting to ensure they are adequately disinfected.

That's because an easy-to-use spray gun system named Sagewash™ uses no greater water pressure than that emitted by a standard hosepipe (3bar to 5bar) to apply a premixed sprayed solution of effective chlorine-based disinfectant.

The Sagewash™ spray gun looks similar to the familiar high-pressure detergent jet systems that come standard with sets of compressor accessories, in that it incorporates a canister of disinfectant chemicals which mix with the passing water flow at a predetermined, constant rate.

The disinfectant chemical itself is calcium hypochlorite, provided in a solid cylindrical tablet form.

When in contact with water a solution of hypochlorous (not the infinitely more corrosive hydrochloric) acid is produced. And it is this that, when in contact with a surface to be disinfected, releases chlorine, a commonly-used water-based disinfectant (think swimming pool chemicals).

A benefit of the Sagewash™ system is that one does not need to flush out spent disinfectant after application (as one would with, for example, an old-fashioned carbolic acid (eg, Jeyes Fluid) wash).

After a time in contact with the affected surface the chlorine dissipates with little polluting effect and as the disinfectant solution dries the remaining chemical will be traces of calcium, which is harmless and found naturally in the environment.



Sagewash™ spray gun and tablets.

The Sagewash™ system can be used to great effect not only in animal housing where high-levels of cleanliness are required, but also in food processing, transport and preparation areas, schools, sports facilities, residential complexes etc.

Continued on page 21



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## MACHINERY

# Dry your diesel with a Snake

**M**oisture accumulating in a diesel tank can, in time, bring on a host of problems with whatever engine the fuel is intended for.

Moisture usually enters the tank as condensation as a result of changes in temperature, such as the difference between warm daytime and cold nights, or in tanks on machines where the temperature increases with use and then rapidly declines.

The problem becomes particularly acute in tanks and equipment that stand unused for any length of time, for example, emergency generators, forklifts and tractors that may only work occasionally.

And particularly, of course, bulk diesel storage tanks on stands such as are commonly found on farms to fuel up trucks and tractors. These are rarely under cover, but stand exposed in the open, absorbing the full heat of the sun during the day, and cooling to the full extent of the night-time temperature drop.

Having condensed and settled on the roof and sides of the tank the moisture (being heavier than oil) descends to the bottom of the tank, where it can form a little "puddle" at the tank bottom.

In this inviting medium a "diesel algae" forms and begins to grow, in time resulting in the clogging of fuel

filters.

Fortunately, there is a way to deal with the problem before it becomes acute and that is to lower into the tank a suitably-sized Tank Snake.

Tank Snakes are long flexible devices comprising an inner core of cloth containing a highly absorbent substance not unlike the material found in a baby's nappy, as well as a metal weight or a magnet. These are enclosed in a protective casing made of material that resembles a

plastic net vegetable bag.

The ends of the web bag are securely fastened with sturdy eyelets, with one end having a nylon string attached with which one can retrieve the snake from the tank when it has done its work.



A yellow Tank Snake held up against a diesel tank to show size-comparison.

## EQUIPMENT

It is also effective in controlling algae and, because it is safe to use around plants, lawns etc, can effectively be used to ensure that paving, pathways etc are kept free of algae, and thus slip-resistant to walkers.

Apart from the fact that it has been tested and certified by bodies such as the SA Bureau of Standards and European equivalents, the Sagewash™ system has proved easy-to-use, and thus popular with those whose job it is to do the work. Thus, anecdotally, Sagewash™ buyers have found that their

workers are likely to carry out their disinfecting tasks more frequently, because of the ease of use.

A complete kit, including the spray gun and eight tablets, sells for R5 700. This is sufficient to generate 12 000 litres of disinfectant spray. Once you have the spray gun, you only need to order additional tablets when required. A bucket of eight tablets sells for R1 850.

For more information visit [sagewash.co.za](http://sagewash.co.za) or call Gary Worthington on 082 808 2101. 🌱

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# Choose your supplier with care

**A** walk through any homeowners expo will tell you that solar power is currently one of the fastest growing industries in South Africa ~ and understandably so given the unreliability of our electrical grid. So as a consumer, what steps can you take to ensure you are getting the best installation possible?

Probably owing to its fairly new roots, the solar industry is not yet regulated by any governing body. The SA Photovoltaic Industry Association (SAPVIA) is about the closest we have to a general industry body at the moment and they are working towards estab-

lishing a set of industry best practices and regulations to help maintain standards in the industry. Currently, the organisation's PV GreenCard is the industry's only form of verification for installation. Technicians who hold a PV GreenCard have proven that they are qualified electricians able to sign-off a Certificate of Compliance (COC) and that they meet SAPVIA's minimum requirements – based off European standards – for solar installation.

So, when looking for a solar installer SAPVIA membership is a good place to start. But at the very least, your technician must be a qualified electrician with a

## MACHINERY

Tank Snakes have been known in the USA for some years and a number of variants have been designed for different applications.

They are now available in South Africa in three configurations for use in diesel tanks, and various lengths according to tank size.

One series, contained in yellow web, is a rapid, quick fix design that removes water quickly from the tank and, once it has done its work, is retrieved and discarded.

Two other series, one contained in red web and the other in black, have magnets rather than simple metal weights, the magnets attracting any rust found at the bottom of the tank.

In all cases bar the red the dry snakes are 50mm diameter. The red snakes are available in one length only, namely 600mm, and are narrower at 25mm, making them suitable for use in small plant and mobile equipment.

Calculating the right length of snake for your tank is easy. The most suitable length will lie at the bottom of your tank (held in place by the weights or magnets)

with a gap of about 200mm at either end between the ends of the snake and the tank.

The diameter of the snakes is a critical factor. For while a 50mm diameter snake can easily be pushed into just about any fuel filler opening, once the snake has absorbed the water at the bottom of the tank it will have swollen in diameter. Thus, before dropping a snake into one's tank one must make sure that one will be able to retrieve it. This requires an opening of at least 63mm

Unlike the yellow snakes, which are for one-time use, the others are all reusable up to ten times. Once saturated with water (a process that can take some months) they are removed for drying and replaced with fresh snakes.

To dry they are simply hung up in a dry place and left for a few months, before they can be reused. They should never be squeezed dry, but should be left hanging to lose their moisture to the atmosphere. For more information: [www.tanksnakes.co.za](http://www.tanksnakes.co.za) or call Ricardo Mendes 083 442 8195. Tank Snakes are also available through Takealot.com. 🌿

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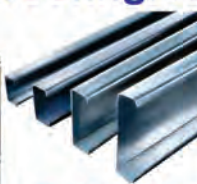
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## BOOKSHELF

# Books & apps for bunny-huggers & twitchers

**T**reevolution's *Beginner's Guide to Recycling in South Africa* (Version 3), August 2022 is now available to download. The guide is simple and easy to read.

It is practical and warmly encouraging of any recycling efforts by the reader.

It covers why you should recycle; the three Rs (reduce, reuse and recycle); useful statistics about recycling in South Africa; what can be recycled; where to take your recyclable waste; three simple

steps to getting started and finishes off with a plastics guide. It is filled with useful links to a number of recycling websites.

It is published by Media Hack Collective and is downloadable for free at

<https://guide.treevolution.co.za/>.

### Two Useful Apps

Insects of South Africa is an app that smallholders will find most convenient to have on their cell phones.

## SOLAR

Wireman's License, registered with the Dept of Labour and who is able to sign off on COCs. As your system will likely involve an inverter that converts direct current generated by the solar panels to alternating current used in the electricity grid, your installation must be completed by a qualified and registered electrician. And you must obtain a COC for this work. The SA Qualifications Authority (SAQA) also runs an NQF Level 5 qualification for solar technicians. The course includes four modules: Solar PV Mounter, Solar PV Installer, Solar PV Technician, and Solar PV Service Technician. 🌱



There are steps one can take to verify one's technician.

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The app has detailed descriptions of over 1200 of the most ecologically important insects in the region. It's the perfect field tool, even if you are an amateur entomologists.

It is interesting to note that many of the species described occur widely in the rest of Africa, making the app useful to a wide range of anyone with an interest in natural history.

Features include distribution maps for all families and species; latest expert findings, accurate information and key id pointers; over 1200 unique South African insect families and species; over 1500 beautiful, detailed photographs; an index categorised by English or scientific names; a host plant index that helps you identify insects by the plants they inhabit; a split screen comparison feature to view two species side-by-side and a life list that records your insect sightings.

It is downloadable from the Apple app Store or from Google play.

## Sasol eBirds of Southern Africa

There are a number of bird apps available but a glance at the list of contributors to the new and improved Sasol eBirds Southern Africa app will convince smallholders that this one is worth having. Accessible and easy-to-use, the app covers all 994 bird species in line with the latest taxonomical changes. Information has been updated with fresh

input from new contributing authors. The text is in English and Afrikaans.

It includes over 1170 bird calls and more than 3200 photographs (no in-app purchase required).

The new illustrations have finer attention to detail and the maps have also been the life list functionality has been expanded.

It is downloadable from the Apple app Store or from Google play.

There is also a lite version which includes only 30 species, compared to 994 species in the full app.

The authors are Ian Sinclair, Phil Hockey, Warwick Tarboton, Peter Niall Perrins and Dominic Rollinson. 🌿



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# EVENTS

## Solar Power Systems Course

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No formal prerequisites are required to attend this course. This is the first leg of a twin course.

**Date:** 22 October 2022

**Cost:** R1 650, until 7 October, thereafter available at full price of R1 950.

**Location:** Diamond Valley Estate, Pretoria, Gauteng

**Contact:** 087 231 1644 or email [info@kragdag.co.za](mailto:info@kragdag.co.za) for more info or to book.

## Organic & Natural Products Expo Africa

For growers of organic items, and manufacturers of organic and natural products, the Organic & Natural Expo Africa offers a platform from which to showcase such goods to an important and growing market sector. Exhibitors are still able to apply for a stand. Moreover, because the organisers recognise that many producers of natural products are SMMEs, they have developed budget-conscious exhibition packages, from as low as R9 410 for a fully-equipped indoor stand, or only R3 960 for a 6m<sup>2</sup> outside stand. Event categories cover Lifestyle, Health, Body & Beauty, Home, Food & Beverage, and Baby & Kids.

**Date:** 21-23 October 2022.

**Cost:** R100 per person prepaid or R150 per person at the door.

**Location:** Wanderers, Corlett Drive, Johannesburg

**Contact:** John on 082 895 2832 or [john.t@satp.co.za](mailto:john.t@satp.co.za).

Mark your calendar

## Cannabis Expo

The Cannabis Expo is the global marketplace for education and innovative products and businesses serving the cannabis industry and its medicinal, agricultural, financial and lifestyle aspects. The expo hall at The Cannabis Expo will feature over 100 exhibitors representing the full spectrum of the cannabis industry. Browse and enjoy cannabis-infused meals, treats and drinks. The event will also feature a vibrant outdoor festival environment hosting bands, artists and DJs. Presentations around cannabis-related topics that cover health, agriculture, legislation, finance and more.

**Date:** 18-20 November 2022

**Cost:** R150 pre-sold or R200 at the door.

**Location:** Sandton Convention Centre, 161 Maude Street, Sandton

**Contact:** [www.cannabisexpo.co.za](http://www.cannabisexpo.co.za) for more info and to buy tickets.

## Open Field Vegetable Production Course

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:** 14-18 November.

**Contact:** [evdheever@arc.agric.za](mailto:evdheever@arc.agric.za).

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# The battle of the languages

The battle of the languages in a bilingual country (yes, I know that South Africa is a multilingual country, but for my purposes I am referring to English and Afrikaans alone) can sometimes, as we all know from our history, lead to fisticuffs, if not actual war. And certainly to great confusion.

But there are times when one's inability to communicate clearly in the other language can descend into comedy and farce rather than blows.

And there is no better place to experience this than at the KragDag Expo, the latest iteration of which took place last month east of Pretoria.

As anybody who has been to KragDag, or who has had dealings with the organisers, will know, KragDag is an unapologetically Afrikaans-orientated expo. The main sponsor this year, for example, was Sakeliga, an Afrikaans business organisation, and communications by the organisers, prior to and at the show itself, were pretty much exclusively in Afrikaans.

And so one would expect the vast majority of exhibitors and visitors to be avid ~ and sometimes even militant ~ Afrikaans speakers. And for the most part this holds true.

However, because they recognise the excellent marketing opportunity that KragDag offers, a goodly number of "engelsprekendes" take stands at the show, brushing up their schoolboy Afrikaans beforehand in anticipation of the linguistic challenges of the show.

One of these this year is a friend of the *Smallholder*, a product of the South African school system, where English was taught as his first language, and Afrikaans was taught as a second. He used the expo to launch into the South African market a completely new technical device ideal for any user of powered machinery, and something very necessary for many.

Being a brand new concept it requires some explanation, and this can become complex and technical quite quickly.

Which is what happened. When two khaki-clad farmer-type men approached his stand, my friend launched into a polite Afrikaans greeting, and received a similarly polite Afrikaans response.

Then the questions started from one of the gents: "Wat is die ding? Hoe werk dit? Waar kry jy dit?", and so on. The second gent was silent, but taking in the discussion nonetheless, a grin slowly forming on his face.

Pretty soon the questions became more technical: what is it made of, how long does it last? Diameters, length, capacity, fitment, etc. And at this stage my friend began to struggle and sweat a bit, but the technical questions were relentless, and the struggling response from my friend brought on a look of glee and amusement from the silent, onlooking partner.

Eventually his anxiety caused my friend a brain-freeze: his Afrikaans deserted him and he couldn't think of the terms he needed in English, much less the translations.

So, very sheepishly he said "I'm sorry, gentlemen, but my Afrikaans doesn't stretch to such technical stuff. Do you mind awfully if I answer in English?"

Whereupon both visitors burst out laughing, the questioner answering "I thought you'd never offer. We're English too and weren't understanding much of what you were saying anyway!"



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