

Genetic Improvement of communal sheep flocks

A rural development project by the National Woolgrowers' Association of SA (NWGA) and the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR)



The fact that R130 849 388 million has been earned in 2014/15 from foreign currency through wool exports, is proof of the potential of woolled sheep farming as a means of developing and uplifting rural communities. This in turn stimulates the local economy and drastically improves rural livelihoods.

- Wool is non-perishable- market when opportune
- Export product- earns foreign currency for households in most rural and extensive farming areas in SA
- “New” money to stimulate and support rural economy
- Was the stimulus for establishment of many rural towns in SA over TWO centuries plus a commercial bank!
- Wool has potential to continue to support rural development even today!!
- Luci Shearing Shed: R17 000 (1997) to R650 000 (2011)

LONG TERM IMPACT: Wool marketed through the commercial market (auction) and income of communal wool producers in the Eastern Cape.

<i>Season</i>	<i>Kilogram</i>	<i>Value (R)</i>	<i>Nat. Price (c/kg)</i>	<i>Comm. Price (c/kg)</i>
97/98	222 610	1 502 908	1 225	675
99/00	336 700	1 965 557	1 102	584
01/02	535 911	6 927 640	2 277	1 293
03/04	2 029 556	17 768 955	2 109	876
05/06	2 222 883	14 954 931	1 695	673
06/07	2 345 991	30 791 496	2 594	1 313
08/09	2 666 933	43 149 706	2 548	1 618
10/11	3 027 276	71 749 104	4 015	2 370
11/12	3 555 077	113 015 898	5 236	3 179
12/13	3 461 937	131 842 578	5 537	3 803
13/14	3 806 993	137 919 368	6 016	3 623
14/15	3 582 123	130 849 388	6 863	3 652

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This project has a significant impact on the socio-economic situation of communities:

Income from sales of wool and mutton:

- 47% internal income in 2004
- Increased to 59% (2006) and 65% (2009)

Social indicators (2004 to 2009)

- Children going to bed hungry (43,1% to 27,3%)
- Household's savings accounts (56,9% tot 77,3%)
- Borrow money school fees (78,4% to 52,3%)

This study is to be repeated in future.



The genetic potential of sheep with regards to reproduction, growth and quality as well as quantity of wool is viewed as an essential element of a larger holistic approach towards increased production of woolled sheep.

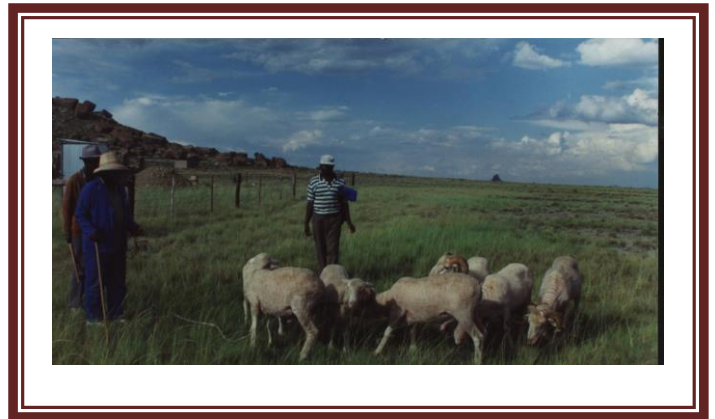


The project also involves administration, planning- and evaluation meetings with commercial breeders, communal executives, directors of veterinary science and research and animal production.

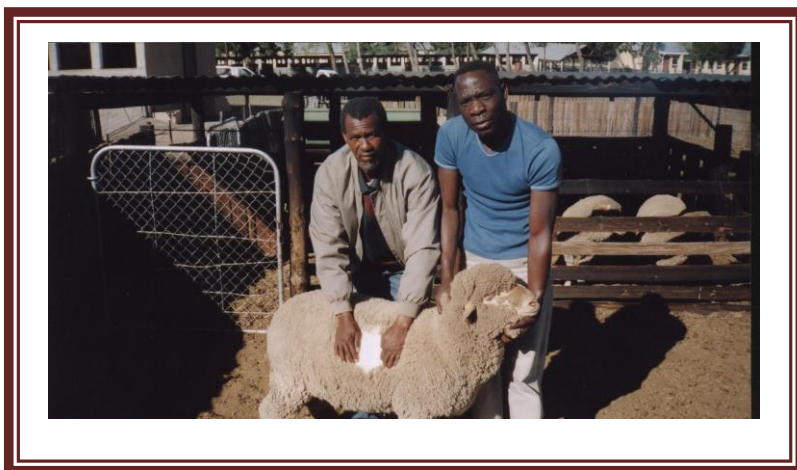


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The offloading of quality bred rams in the communal areas of the Transkei and Ciskei. The whole wool industry stands to gain by this important and high impact project aiming at the genetic improvement of communal wool sheep flocks.



During the respective NWGA Regional Congresses, a resolution served expressing the gratitude of the farmers towards Government for their involvement in wool production and requesting for continued funding of the project.

Satisfied farmers observing the quality of the wool. Breeders are contracted by the NWGA to breed rams according to specific rules for the project. A total of 3 200 rams per year are bred for distribution into the communal areas. The following conditions are important for the success of the project:

- 1) One ram per 40 ewes are supplied
- 2) Rams are swapped for homebred rams on a one-on-one basis. Ownership of rams is thus ensured, while swapped rams are slaughtered and remaining homebred rams castrated.
- 3) Tattooing / branding and transportation of rams in line with the Stock Theft Act (Act 57 / 1959).

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Mentorship and training is a continuous activity by Breeders, NWGA Production Advisors and Departmental Seconded Extension Officers



The first rams specifically bred on contract for this project, was distributed in March 2002



Regional leaders inspect with enthusiasm and excitement the rams they will receive in the following months and envisage the genetic potential of their flocks



During 2015/2016 a total of 2 973 quality bred rams were distributed to 308 beneficiaries i.e. shearing sheds / wool growing associations contributing to the upgrade of communal flocks genetically.

Amathole DM	=	557
OR Tambo DM	=	587
Chris Hani DM	=	1 063
Joe Gqabi DM	=	412
Alfred Nzo DM	=	347
Replacements	=	7
Total	=	2 973

Since the inception of the programme in 2004, a total of 42 743 improved rams have been distributed.

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The Genetic improvement of woolled sheep in the communal farming areas of the EC comprises of 3 main goals:

- 1) Introduction of breeding material (rams) to a limited number of communities to measure the impact will be measured and where group breeding schemes will be initiated to eventually breed rams for neighbouring communities.
- 2) Large scale introduction of rams to other communities where the impact will not be directly evaluated.
- 3) Training of famers in genetic improvement and animal management to ensure the desired impact of the project



Breeders participating in group breeding schemes in the EC have been contracted with the aim of supplying adapted but top genetics for the project. The breeders are integral to the ongoing success of the project



Message from Regional leader :

“The ram project has long achieved its purpose! As it was named Genetic Improvement Scheme, it has successfully improved our flocks in size, and in numbers. Twins have been produced and the quality of wool is improving season by season. This industry is the only gold mine we have in the Province !!