

The book ECOLOGICAL CATTLE FARMING revealed how feedlots and industrialisation practises in cattle production have become a millstone around the neck of cattle farmers and responsible for extensive resistance in the consumption of red meat. Therefore, there can't be another alternative for the producer to survive and for the industry to obey than to become honoured partners in the process of delivering natural beef.

That's why we will now discuss the system of marketing grass fattened cattle directly to abattoirs. This is the righteous challenge for cattle farmers on any farm in the country. The differences in climate between regions enable cattle producers to deliver in different seasons to the benefit of the industry.

Any cattle production action on a farm depends on the herd as a whole. It implies that a herd of cattle cannot be any number of cattle put together because:

- There are different classes of different ages that need to be in a specific relation in numbers to each other to make a herd a sustainable unit.
- Every animal in the system has to reach its highest level of appreciation to maximise productivity of the herd.

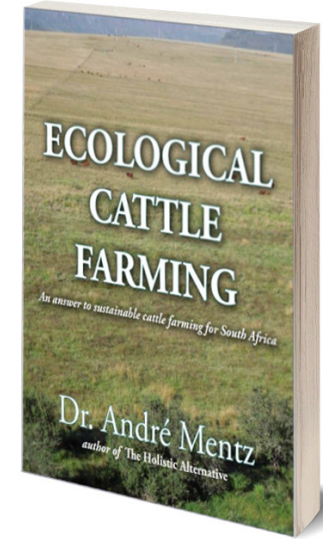
For the sake of this discussion, we analyse a herd of 510 cattle which is demonstrated in the table herewith and diagram on page 2.

The table shows that the herd is divided into four classes on the basis of its composition at the beginning of each year for the herd to remain sustainable.

Cow herd	150 (30%)
Calves	120 (24%)
Young stock	120 (24%)
Store stock	120 (24%)
Total Number	510

Table : Proposed composition of a cattle herd of 510 cattle at the beginning of each year

The diagram (page 2) visualise the whole herd in the big circle representing the same classes with their corresponding figures every year. These classes are responsible for the kilogram live mass production of the herd through two processes, namely:



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1. The production cycle: The core of a herd is the breeding cows. This class has only one function and that is to reproduce and deliver weaners. The diagram shows that the 150 cows deliver 120 calves every year at a proposed 80% calving rate.

When the system is in full swing, all progeny-classes accumulate in the herd as is shown in the diagram thereby resulting in the total of 510 at the beginning of each year (calves are born in October to December).

During the 12 months that follows, the suckling calves will be weaned and become 'young' stock at 12 months. At the same time the previous year's young stock will become 24 months and called stores. The third group (stores) will be ageing from 24 months onwards and marketed during the period when becoming fat at a satisfactory slaughter mass before the age of 36 months. In the diagram they are shown as slaughter stock and represent the output of the herd meant for the abattoir. So every animal will have the opportunity to reach its full potential before being slaughtered.

2. The sustainability cycle: The diagram also shows another feature which explains the sustainability of the numbers year after year. This is indicated with circular arrows and shows how replacement heifers departed the stores and enter the cow herd at the top. At the same time every years' culls will depart the cow herd to become slaughter cattle.

Conclusion

The composition of cattle classes in a three years rotational system of marketing natural beef has been discussed. To farm with a sustainable number and composition of cattle in a fixed system, should be the provoking challenge and pride for every ambitious cattle farmer to manage. This system is applicable on every farm in the country. If not, it's not because of the system, but rather because of the wrong type of breed or management not understanding how to operate the system. There will be a continuance of discussion on this subject.

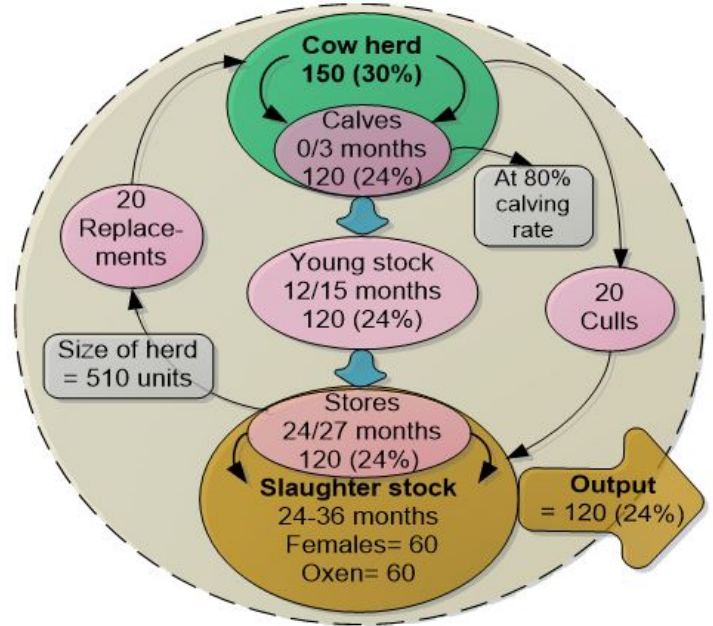


Diagram: The diagram illustrates the input, output, structure and turnover of a herd of 510 cattle at the beginning of each year in a system of delivering natural beef. The herd's numbers represent the carrying capacity of a hypothetical farm and could be any figure in practice as long as the classes remain in the same ratio

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