

# BONSMARA – the all-round breed!



The Bonsmara is a proudly South African beef breed developed through a scientific cross-breeding programme supported by performance testing and a pre-approval evaluation process that includes visual appraisal for functional efficiency.

**S**trict selection for economically important factors such as fertility, milk production, growth and adaptability contributed to the Bonsmara proudly becoming the strongest and most professionally administered beef breed in South Africa in less than 25 years, and maintaining this position. This most prominent of South African beef cattle breeds currently has more than 120 000 registered animals on record. Economically based traits, along with its affordability, make the Bonsmara a popular choice with stud breeders and commercial cattlemen alike.

In fact, it is estimated that around 70% of all commercial breeding cows in South Africa are either Bonsmara or Bonsmara types.

## FERTILITY

In the Bonsmara, fertility is non-negotiable as the most important trait in breeding and selection.

When cows do not calve every year, efficient selection is not possible. Notwithstanding the fact that the heritability of fertility is low, a breeder can significantly improve fertility in their herd by meticulous observation, good record keeping and careful selection.

Rigorously applied minimum breed standards will, in time, eliminate low fertility.

## Reproduction

- A heifer must calve before or by the age of 39 months.
- The Intercalving Period (ICP) may not exceed 26 months (790 days).

The minimum breed standards also stipulate the minimum number of calves a cow must produce by a certain age.

## Selection goals

Bonsmara selection strives for accelerated reproduction, with specific reference to ICP and age at first calving (AFC). In both cases, the Bonsmara performs better than the

average of the national registered herd in South Africa. According to the ARC Annual Report 2010/2011, the Bonsmara's current average ICP (30 000 cows) is 414 days, while its average AFC (8 000 animals) is 30,8 months.

## THE BONSMARA SYSTEM

The Bonsmara system is unique, while its strict implementation by competent and dedicated staff contributes greatly to the position of the breed in the beef industry.

This system rests on four pillars:

- Genetic material in a large gene pool.
  - Efficient processes to select the best genetic material.
  - A competent marketing strategy for efficient marketing.
  - Dedicated manpower to co-ordinate all aspects of breeding.
- The development and implementation of the Bonsmara system over many years has scientifically moulded the breed to become the benchmark in breeding today.
- **Stud breeding**
- The Bonsmara is ideally

**BELOW:** Bull CSW 07-023 was bred by CW Williams, Dibeng. It is currently at Hanzyl Bonsmaras, Dewetsdorp. The bull's first calves looks very promising and will be weaned in April 2012.  
GERRIT VAN ZYL



suited to South African conditions. The Bonsmara Cattle Breeders Society sees the role of stud breeders as that of satisfying the needs of commercial cattlemen. Through scientific selection procedures, the Bonsmara is setting the benchmark by breeding cattle that perform in any environment.

• **Cross-breeding**

Bonsmara bulls cross very well with many other breeds and types. Commercial cattlemen who continue using Bonsmara bulls will not forfeit productivity after the first cross.

As a synthetic breed, the Bonsmara performs extremely well in a cross-breeding programme.

**BREED DESCRIPTION**

The Bonsmara is an early maturing medium-framed, smooth-coated, heat- and tick-resistant breed with a good temperament. It has a reddish brown to light brown colour and its frame type is typical of an efficient, easy calving subtropical animal.

The Bonsmara cow has excellent mothering abilities and sufficient milk to wean strong calves.

The breed's strong heterosis, excellent growth rate and feed conversion have made it very popular as a proven breed for the feedlot. Its feedlot performance is highly efficient, its temperament is suited to the feedlot environment and it produces tender beef of high quality.

**'STRONG HETEROSIS & EXCELLENT GROWTH RATE HAVE MADE IT A VERY POPULAR BREED.'**

Carcasses grade well from veld or feedlot, with a high dressing percentage, even fat deposition, marbling and an excellent muscle-to-bone ratio. Weaners sell at a premium price.

Bonsmaras regularly feature in regional and national carcass competitions with excellent carcasses that fully meet consumer needs.

The pace of adaptation to climate change on the one hand, and breed society policy on the other, will significantly determine whether a breed will maintain its production level or even increase its market share in the coming years. The Bonsmara, because of its adaptability, can look forward to an even brighter future.



**ABOVE:** TOR 06-172, son of the well-known RCO 00-191, was sold by Tempevale Bonsmaras to Cecil van der Merwe, Norton Thompson, Justin Stirk and Ashley Whitfield in 2010 for R98 000. DAVID COCK

**Why the Bonsmara?**

The Bonsmara Society and breeders are very passionate about the breed. The Bonsmara currently has the largest database in the world on which genetic breeding values can successfully be applied. Industry leaders choose the Bonsmara, truly a breed for all reasons, for its:

- Excellent adaptability on the veld.

- Good mothering ability.
- Superior fertility maintained by strict selection standards.
- High weaning weights due to good milk production.
- Easy calving.
- Superior growth under intensive and extensive conditions.
- Good carcass that rounds off very well and attains best grades at a young age.
- Disposition

- (temperament).
- Important role in any cross-breeding programme.
- Highly economical feedlot performance. A Bonsmara bull is...
- Registered with SA Studbook.
- Performance tested by the ARC.
- Approved by Bonsmara Inspectors.
- Branded with a B on the right shoulder. Buy B branded Bonsmara bulls!

**Farmers' day and Bonsmara sale**

All commercial and stud breeders are invited to a Commercial Farmers' Day and the National Bonsmara Sale on 21 March 2012 at Nampo Park, Bothaville. These both promise to be of exceptional value to all commercial and stud breeders. The opening speaker

will be Brand Pretorius, former CEO of McCarthy Limited on the topic: "Guidelines for business success in a rapidly changing South Africa". Guest Speaker Dr Esté van Marle-Köster (PhD, Pr.Sci. Nat Animal Science, University of Pretoria) will talk on: "Molecular genetics

as part of breeding value prediction in South Africa". Contact the Bonsmara office for more information on 051 448 6084, email: info@bonsmara.co.za or visit www.bonsmara.co.za. Postal address: Bonsmara SA, 118 Henry Street, Westdene, Bloemfontein.