Ulrich Müller, Voermol

Large numbers of weaner calves are finished in feedlots on farms every year. In this way both the calf and/or maize producer can add value to his own product. Profitability is largely determined by the ratio between the weaner calf, maize and meat prices.

To feed and market a weaner calf successfully, numerous important factors need to be taken into account. The following are some of the most important aspects to consider:

- **Feed.** Approximately 1.2 tons of feed is required to fatten a weaner calf until it is market-ready. The feed consists of approximately 70 % grain and/or hominy chop, while the remaining 30 % comprises a finishing concentrate, a high protein concentrate (HPC) and roughage. With 70 % of the ration consisting of grain (maize) it is clear that the maize price, or more specifically, the ratio between the maize and meat price, will largely determine profitability.

- **Weaner calf.** The greatest single input to a feedlot is the purchase price or value of the weaner calf. It is very important that the weaner calf price is not too high. The value of the weaner calf (R-c/kg) is primarily determined by the weight and quality of the calf. A good quality weaner calf efficiently converts feed to meat. The typical weight of the ideal weaner calf is between 200 and 250 kg.

- **Facilities.** Larger feedlots (500+ calves) usually make use of well-designed facilities. However, a weaner calf can also be successfully finished in more basic facilities with a feeding trough in a small camp. This can be done using the Voermol system with **Voermol SB 100 (V4498)** or **Voermol Beefmaker (V7535).**

- **Water.** Provide good quality, cool drinking water. A weaner calf requires approximately 50 litres of cool, clean drinking water per day.

- **Final weight.** The ideal final weight is approximately 440 kg live weight, which will render a carcass (A2/3 grade) of approximately 250 kg. A good quality calf should achieve this weight after approximately 120 days in the feedlot.

- **Mortality.** Calves must be correctly processed (vaccinated, dosed, treated, implanted, etc.) to limit mortality and increase productivity.

- **Location.** The ideal feedlot location is in close proximity to the grain and the market thus minimising transport costs. Bear in mind that a typical weaner calf weighs 220 kg and requires approximately 700 kg of grain in order to reach a market-ready weight of 440 kg and a carcass of 250 kg.

Voermol offers a variety of feedlot concentrates, each suited to specific conditions. **Voermol SB 100 (V4498)** is usually used by smaller feedlots (500 calves and less) with limited facilities and manual labour. The Voermol system simplifies the feeding of calves and delivers good results. Simply mix 200 kg **Voermol SB 100** with 800 kg grain (whole maize or hominy chop) and feed the mixture *ad lib.* together with hay fed separately and *ad lib.* The Voermol system of fattening requires only basic facilities. There should be at least a feeding trough to hold the **Voermol SB 100** maize mixture, as well as hay in a hay rack.

The hay can also be supplied in the form of veld grazing in a small camp. **Voermol SB 100** can also be used in...
complete feed rations where better mixing facilities are available or where silage is used. **Voermol SB 100** yields good results in bull and in Phase D rations. Consult the latest Voermol Product Guide for more information.

**Voermol Beefmaker (V7535)** is a concentrate specifically developed for feedlots where the availability and cost of roughage and/or hay are problematic. With the Voermol Beefmaker system, a weaner calf can be successfully finished without the use of hay. Another benefit of the Beefmaker feeding system is that minimal milling or mixing is required and that the system works well with limited facilities. Consult the latest Voermol Product Guide for more information.

**Voermol Natbeef (V26102), N-FF3520** does not contain any ionophores. Beef from animals fed on Voermol Natbeef is approved for export to the European Union.

**Voermol Super 80 (V6059)** is a highly concentrated fattening concentrate requiring a low inclusion rate. It is thus very important that the feed is mixed properly using good mixing facilities such as a mixer wagon. The Voermol System is not recommended due to the low inclusion of Voermol Super 80.

**Voermol Zilmol (V16978)** contains the b-agonis, Zilpatherol HCL. This partitioning agent increases the deposition of muscle (protein) while suppressing the deposition of fat (energy). The result is that a calf which has already reached the A2 fatness grade, can be fed for another 30 to 35 days without becoming too fat. Thus the positive feed margin is exploited by feeding animals for longer and substantially increasing profitability. At the same time the slaughter percentage increases by approximately two percentage points.

For complete mixing and feeding instructions, consult the latest Voermol Product Guide, or contact your nearest Voermol agent.

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**Boshoek Bovelders – striving to breed the best**

CT du Plessis, Voermol

**The 2005 Cattle Farmer of the Year, Paul van Niekerk, farms with Bovelder cattle on Boshoek in the Memel district. Paul is a member of the Bovelder Cattle Study Group which has grown into one of the best cattle study groups in the country, under the guidance of Dr. At Viljoen.**

The Memel area is known for its harsh, cold winters. The sourveld area is characterised by excellent summer grazing for four months of the year, with grazing deteriorating in winter. The average carrying capacity of the area is 3 ha/LSU and his stocking rate is 3,4 ha/LSU.

Paul runs his cattle enterprise as a weaner calf system, marketing the weaners in April/May each year at an average weaning weight of 263 kg in 2017. In addition, an annual production sale is held in August, offering female animals and commercial bulls for sale.

Heifers are put to the bulls from 1 September for only 60 days, the aim being to identify fertile and productive animals with the most potential. All heifers that are not pregnant, are culled and sold.

Cows are put to the bulls for 90 days from 1 October. Cows that have calved early, are artificially inseminated once their calves turn 60 days old, just prior to the normal breeding season. The reason for this is that they want to use proven bulls with good breeding values that are unrelated to the herd, thus allowing for the retention of the benefits of heterosis. All non-pregnant cows are culled.

Sound management under Dr. At Viljoen’s guidance, has enabled Paul to maintain weaning percentages of over 90% for the past few years. A balanced lick programme is part and parcel of these management measures. For the past 12 years Paul has only used **Voermol Bovelder Lick (V19218)** and has achieved excellent results in the process.

He continuously monitors lick intake and adapts lick quantities based on grazing capacity, condition and production stage. He hasn’t used any grain in his lick for the past 12 years. Although this isn’t common practice, the animals are performing exceptionally well – proof of good management, top quality animals and a high quality lick.

“Bovelder Lick really works! This is clearly reflected in the results yielded over the past few years. We are 100% sure that we are over-wintering our cattle with the right product and that the product ensures a consistently well producing herd”, says Paul.

“Correct veld management and lick usage that is ideally suited to my farming conditions, ensure that I only feed a maintenance lick and no production lick.”

Feel free to contact Paul at 082 577 6556 or Hendrik van Pletzen of Voermol at 083 456 3636.
Voermol Premix 450 – the high performance winter lick for cattle

Hendrik van Pletzen, Voermol

Voermol Premix 450 (V4676) is a proven winter lick used successfully on winter grazing for many years. The major problem posed by winter grazing in the summer rainfall areas, is that the nutritional value of the veld decreases drastically. This coincides with a decrease in the palatability and intake of dry grazing.

As a rule dry winter veld contains a lot of energy, but this energy has not been unlocked for animal production (note the amount of energy released during veld fires). Premix 450 is especially suitable for supplementing winter veld, stimulating intake of winterveld and subsequently limiting weight loss in cattle.

Premix 450 is a maintenance lick that supplements protein and trace elements in order to stimulate micro-organisms in the rumen, thus improving the digestion of dry winter grazing. The protein in the lick is concentrated and only essential elements are supplemented, making it very cost-effective.

The molasses in Premix 450 provides numerous benefits, including the supply of energy for efficient nitrogen utilisation, the prevention of dry gall-sickness, ensuring good intake due to palatability and preventing lick losses due to lick drying out and being blown away by wind.

A trial was conducted under controlled conditions on pregnant cows on harsh winter veld over a period of three months. The results are reflected in Table 1.

The trial results clearly show Premix 450 outperforming other winter licks. Cows on Premix 450 gained 459 g/day and although a large portion of their weight gain could be ascribed to the growth of their unborn calves, Premix 450 nevertheless improved the growth and condition of these cows under harsh winter conditions.

It is especially at farm level where Premix 450 has repeatedly proven to be one of the best winter licks for cattle. Many farmers use Premix 450 successfully in their cattle enterprises.

Mr. Carl Durow of the FC Durow Trust near Clocolan has long been a firm believer in the winning Premix 450 recipe. Mr. Durow was the National Cattle Farmer of the Year and during the year in which he won the competition, his average weaning percentage was 95.5 % (weaning percentage equals calves weaned per cows mated). Mr. Durow’s management practices are strongly focused on ensuring a high reproduction rate in his herd. He gives high priority to the management of first-calf heifers. During their second calving this group of animals achieved a weaning percentage of 96.8 % with an average weaning weight of 238 kg.

Mr. Hennie Coetzee of Prieska was the 2013 National Cattle Farmer of the Year. He also uses Premix 450 and has recorded a weaning percentage of 90 % across the herd.

Premix 450 is used with great success in highly productive herds across South Africa.

Voermol Premix 450 can be fed as is as a winter maintenance lick at an intake of 400 – 500 g/animal/day. It can also be given as a production lick when mixed in equal parts with grain. The mixing ratio of production licks for lactating beef cows and those in late gestation is indicated in Table 2.

The recommended intake of the production lick is 1.5 – 1.7 kg/cow/day and the intake for the heifer lick is 1 – 1.5 kg/day. If grain prices are high one can consider the cost-effective option of replacing half of the grain in a production lick with Voermol Molasses Meal (V1995).

Table 1. Growth results of pregnant cows fed different winter licks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Premix 450</th>
<th>Prototype 1</th>
<th>Prototype 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starting weight (kg)</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End weight (kg)</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>591</td>
<td>591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight gain (kg)</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADG (g)</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Mixing instructions for production licks for pregnant and lactating beef cows and for growing out heifers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Late gestation and lactating (kg)</th>
<th>Heifer lick (kg)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voermol Premix 450 (V4676)</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grain meal</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voermol Rumevite 12P (V11994)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voermol Procon 33 (V12701)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1050</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What nature lacks, Voermol will provide.
Cattle and sheep farmers of the year take the lead in improving the profitability of livestock farming

Hendrik van Pletzen, Voermol

The 2017 National Cattle and Sheep Farmers of the Year excel by employing management practices that are not commonly used by livestock farmers. The growth of their operations into relatively large units, is testament to their improved productivity and increased profitability.

Cattle Farmer of the Year

Bertus Burgers was named Cattle Farmer of the Year and farms with Bovelder cattle on the farm, Rietvallei, in the Utrecht district. The area has an annual rainfall of 750 to 900 mm. Annual veld burning practices are applied on the farm’s higher lying areas which comprise of sourveld grazing. The summer grazing is of excellent quality for four months of the year at most. After that the nutritional value of the sourveld decreases substantially.

The veld has a grazing capacity of between 2,5 and 3,5 ha/LSU and the stocking rate used is just below the norm. Besides utilising the veld as natural grazing, he also bales “Oulands” grass and veld grass which is then fed for two to three months from August onwards, when the cows start to calve. Cattle overwinter on lower lying areas and in ravines which offer better protection against the exceptionally cold winters.

He farms with approximately 1 000 breeding cows and maintains a weaning percentage of 90. Bertus manages a unique selection programme and all cows are tested for pregnancy at the end of January, directly following a breeding period of three months. He only retains cows that are visually verified as pregnant. This has led to 80 % of his cows and heifers calving by the end of August.

A shorter calving season offers numerous advantages, such as better supervision over a shorter period; lick supplements and strategic supplementation over a shorter period, leading to a substantially lower lick cost; and cows that have longer to recover and enter winter in much better condition.

Cows that are not verified as pregnant by 31 January are sold with calves, with a few exceptions. Old cows and those that have skipped are marketed as slaughter animals.

Heifers are bred to the bulls in October, a month earlier for approximately 70 days. Only those heifers that calve within the first two cycles are retained. Calves are weaned at 260 kg as Bertus believes that the additional weight advantage of approximately 40 kg will benefit the heifers for the remainder of their productive lives.

Some 40 % of the heifers are retained upon weaning and bred at 24 to 26 months during a single annual breeding season. At the start of the breeding season these heifers weigh 330 to 360 kg, and mature cows weigh 480 kg.

He applies a well formulated three-phase lick programme. The cows are given a flush lick for 50 days during the breeding season, while the rest of the cattle receive a basic supplement comprising of phosphate and trace minerals. During winter they receive a protein maintenance lick and during the calving season they are given a production lick.

Sheep Farmer of the Year

Frans Wiid was named Sheep Farmer of the Year and farms with more than 8 000 commercial Dohne-Merino and Dorper breeding ewes in a well diversified operation on the farm, Die Lande, in the Hopetown district.

The Dohne-Merino ewes with lambs are kept on perennial irrigated pastures consisting of a proven mixture of tall fescue, cocksfoot and ryegrass as well as clover. This grazing is planted selectively on specific soil with an effective depth of approximately 20 cm on a restrictive layer. Over the long term the profitability...
of the sheep on the irrigated pastures surpasses that of cash crops. Currently there is great interest in intensive sheep farming systems and his enterprise is an exceptional example of a low-cost intensive system.

The Dorpers are farmed extensively on natural grazing and initially only ewes with multiplets are cared for in lambing pens, until they are returned to the veld. Frans focuses on fertility when selecting ewes and his large flock allows him to select animals that are adapted to his resources. All ewes with lambs older than six weeks are bred and Dorper ewes with lambs aged four and a half months were already 86% pregnant and Dohne ewes 55% pregnant by August 2017. He maintains a weaning percentage of 140.

Frans regards predator control as one of the major challenges in his enterprise. If these animals are not controlled, it could affect the profitability of his business to the extent that operations would have to cease. He has succeeded in limiting livestock losses to the minimum using control methods such as electrifying all his border fences, and using cages and trained hunters with hunting dogs.

**Sponsors and Partners**
Voermol is the main sponsor and co-ordinator of the competition. Other sponsors are BKB, First National Bank, Landbouweekblad and Landbou Radio. Partners include Agri SA, the National Wool Growers’ Association of South Africa (NWGA), the Red Meat Producers’ Organisation (RPO), the TAU SA, the University of the Free State (UFS) and RuVasa (Ruminant Veterinary Association of South Africa).

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**Petana Beefmasters: The taste of success**

**Peet Koekemoer**

*Petana Beefmasters is a family owned business operating in the Wolmaransstad district in North-West. Peet Koekemoer (Sr) and his son, Peet, are the proud owners of Petana Beefmaster Stud.*

**The selection process**

They select for animals with a phenotypical Beefmaster appearance comprising 40% Taurus and 60% Indicus. Heifers and cows are correctly mated with selected bulls and the team work hard at retaining the Indicus factor in the herd. The goal is to breed top quality animals that perform well for maximum profit in an extensive management system. Their aim is for heifers to calve at 24 months, with cows calving every year and weaning a good calf.

A synchronisation programme was established in 2017 and included 50 cows. The process was initiated with the help of a veterinarian who closely monitors the situation. This system allows for easier management and handling of the calves, while making great strides in terms of genetic progress in the herd.

**The right nutrition**

It is of cardinal importance that the animals receive the correct nutrition and supplements, affording them optimal conditions for pregnancy and good calf growth. The feeding programme is managed with the help of Voermol representative, Gerrit van Niekerk.

Crop residues, natural grazing and artificial pastures are used as grazing. They manage a winter and summer breeding season. The stud also partakes in the ARC’s Phase B performance testing. Bulls are prepared for auctions by including Voermol SB 100 (V4498) and maize silage as the basis of the ration. One of the main reasons for using Voermol SB 100 is because of the product’s long-standing reputation as an excellent product yielding excellent results. The product is safe and cannot harm the rumen.

During the summer months when green grazing is available, the herd is given a lick mixed with Voermol Super 18 (V355), Voermol Rumevite 12P (V11994) and salt. Voermol Supermol (V7267) is used to grow out the young bulls and heifers. During winter a maintenance lick is mixed with Voermol Dundee Lick Concentrate (V10737) as required.

**Petana Beefmasters presents an annual information day and auction in August. This year the information day will take place in Wolmaransstad on 1 August and the eighth production sale on 8 August 2018. For more information contact Peet Koekemoer (Sr.) on 082 773 7389 or Peet Koekemoer (Jr.) on 082 773 7390.**
Voermol Assists with Drought Relief

Jacques Pretorius, Voermol

The Pofadder Agricultural Association sent an email to Voermol appealing for assistance by way of a feed donation: “HELP! We simply can’t go on. Animals are dying and farmers are losing their livelihood!”

The photographs received gave a glimpse of the desperate situation. One of these farmers said, “When I see how many people and companies still care, then the only thing I can say is that, no matter how dire the situation or conditions, if you look closely, you will see that God has sent something wonderful – be it rain or feed, He will provide.”

Agriculturalists from Pofadder were relieved when a 34-ton truck drove into town on 14 December.

I was privileged to accompany the truck that day. We were greeted by a welcoming committee – numerous desperate and very thankful farmers. There were many tears, tears of joy and gratitude. One elderly gentleman thanked me numerous times: “Thanks to you and to Voermol” and each time emotion got the better of him.

Thinking back on the events, I know that Voermol has made a difference, not only with the feed it has donated, but also by instilling hope that tomorrow things will look better than today.

Thank you to Voermol for allowing me to convey the good news on your behalf. It is a humbling experience to see a company such as this, so willing to assist.

Thanks to everyone up and down the line who had to approve this donation. Thanks for saying “Yes!”

Voermol's sponsorship of the RPO

Shelley Cornish, Voermol

In terms of Voermol’s sponsorship arrangement with the Red Meat Producers Organisation (RPO), the RPO receives an amount for every bag of Voermol SB 100 (V4498) and Voermol SS 200 (V8592) that is sold.

Kenny Crampton, Voermol’s national sales manager, handed over a sponsorship cheque in the amount of R177 616.56 to the organization at the National RPO Congress in Parys.

Photo: Koos van der Ryst (left), chairman of the RPO received the sponsorship cheque from Kenny Crampton (right).
Voermol extends a helping hand

Kenny Crampton, Voermol

Voermol received letters of appreciation for assistance given to drought-stricken farmers in various regions of South Africa, some of which included Aberdeen, Boshof, Hertzogville, Dealesville and Steytlerville.

Aberdeen
Dickie Ogilvie, chairman of the Aberdeen Farmers, Wool and Mohair Growers’ Association, thanked Voermol for donating a link of Voermol LS 33 (V2678).

Boshof, Hertzogville and Dealesville
Marius Groenewald of Agri Hertzogville thanked Voermol on behalf of the farmers of Boshof, Hertzogville and Dealesville for a donation consisting of Voermolas (V10257). Groenewald said: “The gratitude on their faces spoke volumes. I wish you could have experienced it. It is wonderful to be associated with agricultural companies such as Voermol.”

Steytlerville
The Steytlerville community was very grateful for a donation received from Voermol and expressed their appreciation in this regard. Voermol donated a load of animal feed to the Steytlerville Farmers’ Association in December and Caring Daisies transported the feed free of charge.

We sincerely thank Caring Daisies for this kind gesture. Approximately 77 farmers benefitted from this donation.

Voermol’s sponsorship of the NWGA

Shelley Cornish, Voermol

Voermol’s national sales manager, Kenny Crampton, handed over a cheque in the amount of R85 296.00 to the executives of the National Wool Growers’ Association, at the National Midyear Management Meeting.

Photo: Kenny Crampton, Leon de Beer, general manager of the NWGA, Guillau du Toit, national chairman of the NWGA and Leon de Klerk, Voermol’s sales manager.