

# Successful beef and milk production with Braunvieh

**Cois and Annemarie Harman** have been farming Braunvieh cattle since 1998. The breed is desirable because of its calm temperament, quality beef and milk production, excellent growth and adaptability to the North West bushveld, where the Harman's farm is situated. By **Chris Nel**.

Cois Harman and his wife Annemarie established their Harman Braunvieh stud on the farm Welverdiend in the Marico bushveld in North West in 1998. Their choice of Braunvieh was based on the breed's excellent dual-purpose characteristics and performance.

more than 50 prominent tree species and game such as kudu, impala, bush buck, duiker and steenbok. Carnivores include black-backed jackal, caracal, serval and leopard. The area's birdlife is equally diverse.

## CHANGING FROM MILK TO MEAT

Initially, Cois milked the cows directly from the veld and supplied milk to the then National Co-operative Dairies (NCD). When NCD withdrew from the area, he supplied the milk to a local dairy.

Owing to the erratic nature of the dairy industry and the fact that he farms part-time, he abandoned commercial

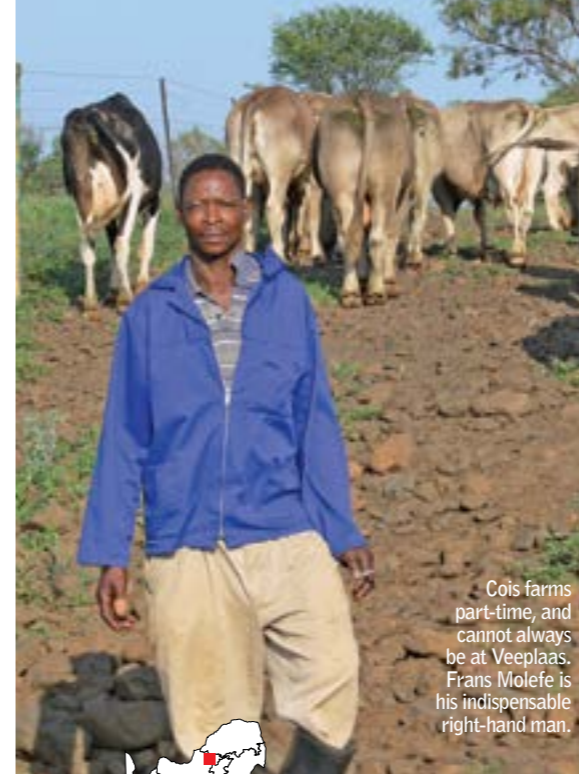
**RIGHT:** Cois and Annemarie Harman of the Harman Braunvieh Stud. COURTESY OF COIS HARMAN

**BELOW:** Harman Braunvieh cows on pasture on Veeplaas. The breed's walking and foraging ability, coupled with the high-quality milk produced from veld and pasture, enables it to do well in the North West bushveld. PHOTOS: CHRIS NEL



milking, leaving the calves with their dams. In September 2004, Cois introduced a programme, which he still uses today, to weigh all cattle at stipulated times. Now with their dams, he found that the calves were growing

considerably faster. But when several calves were killed by leopard, Cois was forced to separate them from their dams at night, keeping them in a kraal. Then he noticed that those calves sired by



Cois farms part-time, and cannot always be at Veeplaas. Frans Molefe is his indispensable right-hand man.



• Cois and Annemarie Harman farm Braunvieh on Veeplaas in North West.

• The breed is well-adapted to the North West bushveld.

• Many cattlemen, particularly from Botswana, regularly buy heifers, cows and bulls from the stud.

## FAST FACTS

## WHY THIS DUAL-PURPOSE BREED?

In the North West bushveld, where no substantial commercial dairy industry exists, cows are commonly milked from veld or pasture. In this respect, the Braunvieh outperforms other breeds due to its walking and foraging ability and the high-quality milk produced from veld forage.

"It's a well-adapted breed that provides a monthly cash flow from the milk it produces," explains Cois. It is for these reasons, coupled with the breed's practical production characteristics – exceptional beefiness, excellent growth, meat quality, and docile temperament – that Cois chose to farm Braunvieh.

certain bulls grew faster than others. He started taking the bull calves that showed the most potential in each year's crop to Armoedsvlakte in Vryburg for phase-C testing. The other bull calves undergo phase-D growth tests in Welverdiend. Following the test results, the best performers are made available on the bull market while the others are culled and slaughtered.

Cois expanded his operation in 2011, moving his operation to the farm Veeplaas, situated where the Klein Marico River joins the Groot Marico River. Here he established pasture under irrigation and started to milk again, making cheese from the Braunvieh's high-quality milk.

## The best of breed for 2014

Cois and Annemarie Harman's Braunvieh cow FJNH 05 0004 was judged the best-performing cow of its breed in 2014, receiving the DAFF-ARC Best Elite Cow Award, sponsored by *Farmer's Weekly*, at a presentation during the 2014 Spring Show in Pretoria.

The award was based on her long-term performance and the objective analysis of her data. She produced her first calf at the age of 26 months and

by her evaluation date at the age of nine, had produced seven calves, with an intercalving period of 338 days.

In December last year, she gave birth to her eighth calf, FJNH 14 0017 Harman NERO, sired by the bull CDH 10-0017 Zakhumi, at heel. On the evaluation date, her reproduction index was 122, her average weaning index was 104, her birth weight EBV (direct) was 0,99kg (accuracy 81%), her birth weight EBV (maternal) was

0,67kg (accuracy 63%), her weaning weight EBV (direct) was 5,8kg (accuracy 53%) and her weaning weight EBV (maternal) was 8,7kg (accuracy 19%).

All her calves, of which three were heifers, have been retained for breeding.

She comes from a line of high-performing cows. Her granddam Charlford Sproeitjies CFS 87 0017 had 13 calves by the age of 15, and her dam Harman Susie FJNH 98- 0002 had 11 calves by the age of 14.

**BELOW:** The Braunvieh cow, Harman Nuessli FJNH 05 004, recipient of the 2014 DAFF-ARC Best Elite Cow Award. She has several other awards and championships to her name. Her calves grow rapidly and achieve above-average weaning weights, despite the fact that she is milked for cheese production. COURTESY OF RICHARD HARMAN



"In a commercial herd, a Braunvieh bull can increase the weaning weight of the calves by up to 50kg more than calves sired by other breeds. Also, the breed produces high-quality purebred and crossbred calves," he says. The Braunvieh breed's many strengths means that it is in high demand, and owing to the excellent performance of Cois's herd, many cattlemen, particularly

from Botswana, regularly buy Braunvieh heifers, cows and bulls from the Harman Braunvieh Stud.

## THE SELECTION PROCESS

Cois selects for growth, good post-weaning weight gain in relation to feed intake, hardiness and adaptability, calving ease and small calves that grow quickly. Characteristics that he favours include length,



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◀ depth, muscular development, above-average milk production (more than 10ℓ daily on the veld), longevity, temperament, maternal characteristics and productivity, and fertility and reproduction.

or artificial insemination, he only uses bulls that perform well and distinguish themselves in the herd, thereby ensuring that the herd remains at the forefront of the breed and contributes to progress

### IF A GENETIC LINE PERFORMS UNSATISFACTORILY, THE PROGENY ARE CULLED

Bull calves undergo phase-C and phase-D testing through the ARC's performance testing scheme. "I cull and slaughter those that don't perform satisfactorily, along with cows that don't make the grade," he says.

Heifers are put to the bull or artificially inseminated between 18 and 20 months, to calve before 30 months.

### RECORDING AND CULLING FOR THE BEST GENETICS

The herd is weighed regularly and Cois keeps records of the performance of each genetic line. Whether by direct mating

in other Braunvieh herds. "A cattleman who buys a bull from us must be satisfied with the impact it has on his herd," he says.

Should a genetic line perform unsatisfactorily, he culls the progeny. "It's better to get rid of cattle that don't adapt to the area because they cost us money," he stresses.

Cois favours lines that are tough, adaptable, and productive, and cows failing to produce annually are culled – as is common in any efficient beef production operation.

• Phone Cois Harman on 087 808 3198, or email him at [cois@harman.co.za](mailto:cois@harman.co.za). Visit the website [www.harman.co.za](http://www.harman.co.za). ■FW

**ABOVE LEFT:** Cois culls any cow that fails to produce above-average milk production (more than 10ℓ a day).

**ABOVE:** The Gold Merit Braunvieh bull Harman Nantes FJNH 12 001 is from fertile and long-lived genetic lines. He received a DAFF-ARC National Platinum Bull Award last year. His grandsire Harman Markus 8 FJNH 01 008 serves as herd sire.

## Making his mark in farmer development

Cois Harman is a part-time farmer. He is a former lecturer in African languages at North-West University in Potchefstroom, UNISA and Consulting Engineers South Africa, and in guidance at the Lehurutshe College of Education in North West.

He has been closely involved in agricultural development since 1996. In 2005, he started the company Agri Start with three other partners to identify farmers with the potential to make a success of commercial agriculture.

Cois is passionate about encouraging new and developing farmers. Since 2001, he has presented farmers' training courses on the farm Welverdiend on the second Friday of April each year, with a second course in September. The event is attended primarily by developing

farmers from four provinces: North West, Limpopo, Gauteng and the Northern Cape.

At last year's September training day, he arranged for a number of service providers to attend in order to expose farmers to people and services from which they could benefit.

By arrangement, Cois presents training courses on various topics, sometimes in cooperation with specialists. Subjects include cattle anatomy and build, diseases and their control, dehorning and castration, inoculation and vaccination, dipping and dosing, veld and pasture management, licks and lick mixtures, finishing feeds for cattle, cattle handling and stockmanship, and showing and preparing cattle for shows.

Cois also organises cattle judging courses on request.