



agriculture & rural development

Department:
Agriculture and Rural Development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Media Monitoring

The Witness, 06 September 2018

Training a boon for farmers

TRAINING to develop a commercial mindset has been a boon for small and subsistence farmers in the Dannhauser district.

Small and subsistence farmers own over 40% of SA's livestock, according to Primary Animal Health Care at the University of Pretoria. "My herd looks different from what it did before the training. Now, with daily observations, it is easy to identify the ones that suffer from something and start treating the problem."

This is a quote from one of the small-scale farmers in the Dannhauser district who are benefiting from Afrivet Training Services' involvement in the Exxaro Durnacol Livestock Improvement Project.

Dr Alfred Kgasi from Afrivet Training Services said if the productivity of communal livestock farming can be improved through better herd, grazing and disease management, annual weaner production could rise by 147%.

When Exxaro first asked Afrivet to get involved in its community programme in Durnacol in 2016, the condition of the herds varied from good to very poor. The farmers relied on free medicine from the local state veterinarian's office, but due to budget cuts and logistics, remedies were not always available.

The biggest issue was that the farmers had not been trained to run successful stock-farming businesses. "Today, success is evident everywhere. Calf mortality rates have fallen by almost 50%, and all the farmers have been registered as livestock owners under the Animal Identification Act. They have their own registered brand marks to mark their animals, resulting in a dramatic reduction in theft."

The trained farmers have taken on the role of community advisers, helping others to solve animal disease problems.

The training also has infrastructural spin-offs as the farmers learnt how to build a proper crush pen which is now used by the community. "Arguably the biggest benefit of the training has been that it opened farmers' eyes ... to the business value of farming." — Business Editor.