agriculture
& rural development
Department:
Agriculture and Rural Development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Kokstad Research Station

Kokstad Research Station is situated in the Harry Gwala District Municipality, approximately 5 km out of Kokstad on the road to Franklin.

Postal address:

Private Bag X501, Kokstad, 4700

Physical address:

Adam Kok Road, Kokstad, 4700

Telephone : 039-727 2128/2105

Situation:	S30° 31' 16 72
	E29° 24' 30 38
Altitude:	1340 to 1830 m
Rainfall:	750 mm/annum
Topography:	Undulating with steep slopes and some vleilands. The hills on this property form its eastern and western boundaries, and Mount Currie forms the northern boundary
Size:	1254 ha

THE PAST

Prior to the establishment of the Kokstad Research Station on a site north of the town of Kokstad on the road to Franklin, all agricultural research in East Griqualand had been concentrated at the Springfontein Research Station near New Amalfi.

The property was formerly a State Forestry Reserve, and was transferred in 1962 from the Department of Forestry to the Department of Agricultural Technical Services. Almost the entire area of the property had been planted to trees (conifers and eucalypts).

On transfer of the ground, the Department of Forestry felled and removed the timber and the Department of Agriculture was left with the onerous task of de-stumping the land.

At this time the infrastructure on the property consisted of three houses and a large brick shed. Domestic water was obtained from the Kokstad Crystal Springs Dam, whilst stock- and some irrigation water was drawn from a water-furrow which traversed the property.

The second and larger portion of the Research Station was formerly part of the town commonage and was acquired in 1963. The Umzimhlava River and its numerous tributaries flow through this portion.

The erection of boundary fencing, de-stumping work and repairs to the houses commenced in July 1962 and the station was occupied later the same year. Development work progressed rapidly and it was possible to lay down the first of the research blocks by the spring of 1965.

The farming activities in this area are concentrated mainly on dairy production and extensive to semi-intensive cattle and sheep production. The Kokstad Research Station serves the drier phase of the highland sourveld, which comprises about 27% of the Region.

NATURAL RESOURCE INFORMATION

This farm falls into two Bioresource Groups (BRGs). The Moist Highland Sourveld (BRG 8) in the north, easterly and westerly corners and the Dry Highland Sourveld (BRG 9) in the central portion of the station. BRG 8 occurs between 1 400 and 1 800m and is comprised of gentle to moderately rolling topography. BRG 9 is generally found in the higher altitude areas (above 1 400m). Only two Bioresource Units (BRUs) are found within these two BRGs, namely UVc11 (Kokstad) in the Dry Highland Sourveld and WXd5 (Crystal Springs) in the Moist Highland Sourveld.

The natural vegetation of the valley consists of treeless and relatively dense *Themeda / Cymbopogon* transition veld. The higher slopes and hill tops are typically dense and bleak Highland Sourveld.

Mean maximum January temperature for this farm is 25°C, while mean minimum July temperature is -1°C. Frost severity is recognized as very severe, where an average of 42 – 57 days of frost can occur in a 126 day period during the year.

The rainfall is well distributed during the summer months, whilst the winters are severe with occasional snowfalls, and the production and conservation of feed to carry the animals through this period is essential. Mean annual rainfall for this area ranges from 778 - 842 mm. With the fairly high mean annual rainfall, assisted by the numerous streams in the area, these BRGs are generally rich in water resources.

RESEARCH STATION PROGRAMME

There are three research components at the Research Station, namely crop production, animal science and grassland science, with farm services as the support component.

More detail is supplied under the relevant research directorates.