

THE HUGUENOT

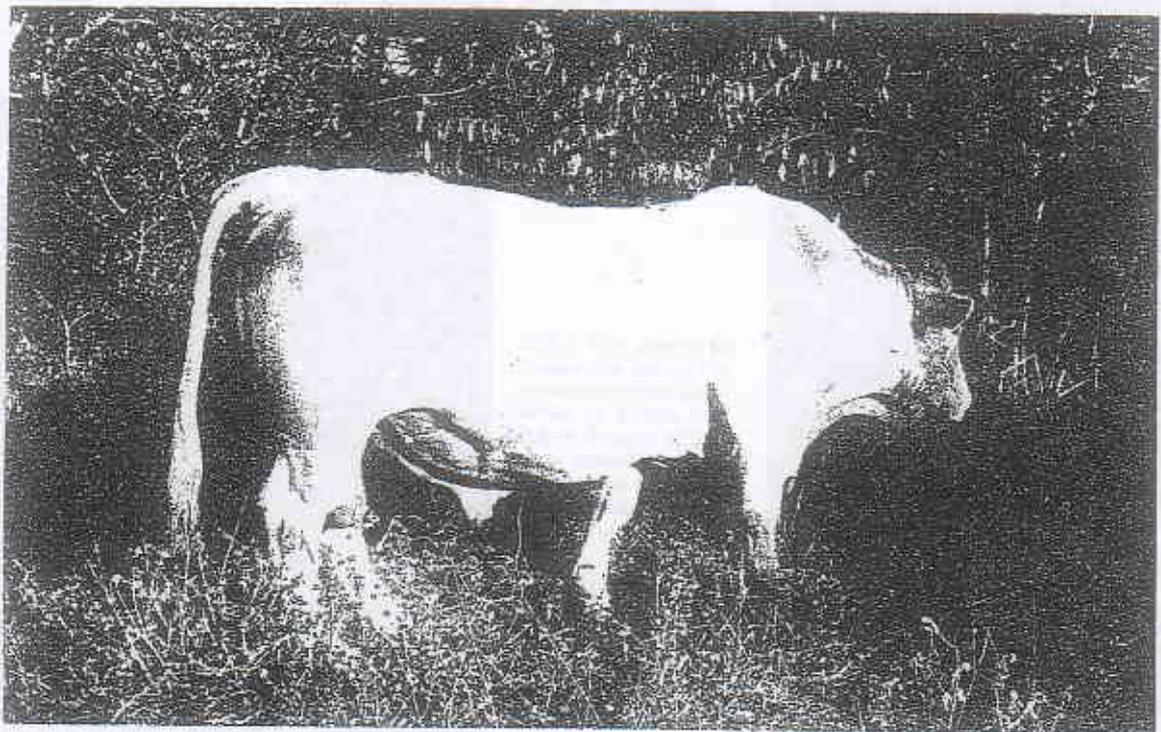
the new South African beef breed

HIGH MASS, HIGH GAIN, HIGH FERTILITY

LOW BIRTHWEIGHTS, EASY CALVING

BEEFY AS THE CHAROLAIS

HARDY AND SMOOTH AS THE AFRICANDER



HUGUENOT BULLS

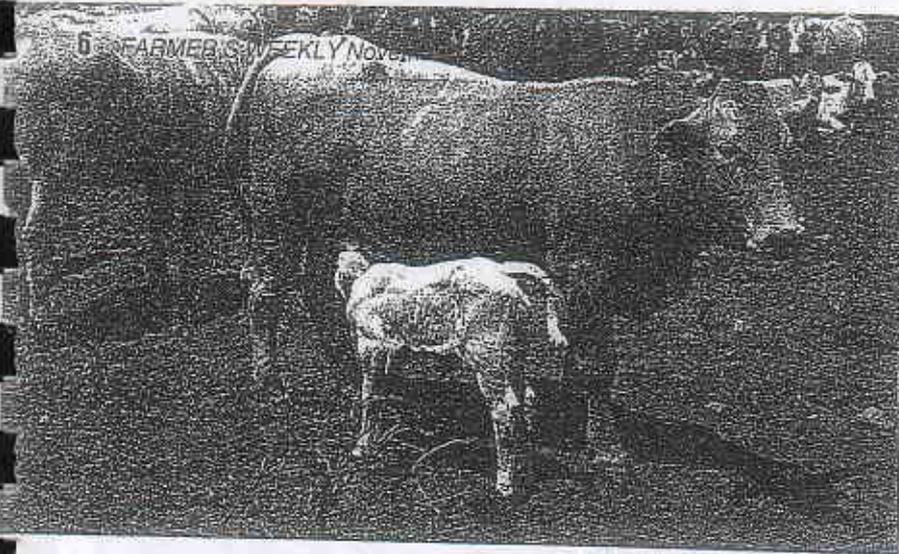
at "commercially sensible" prices

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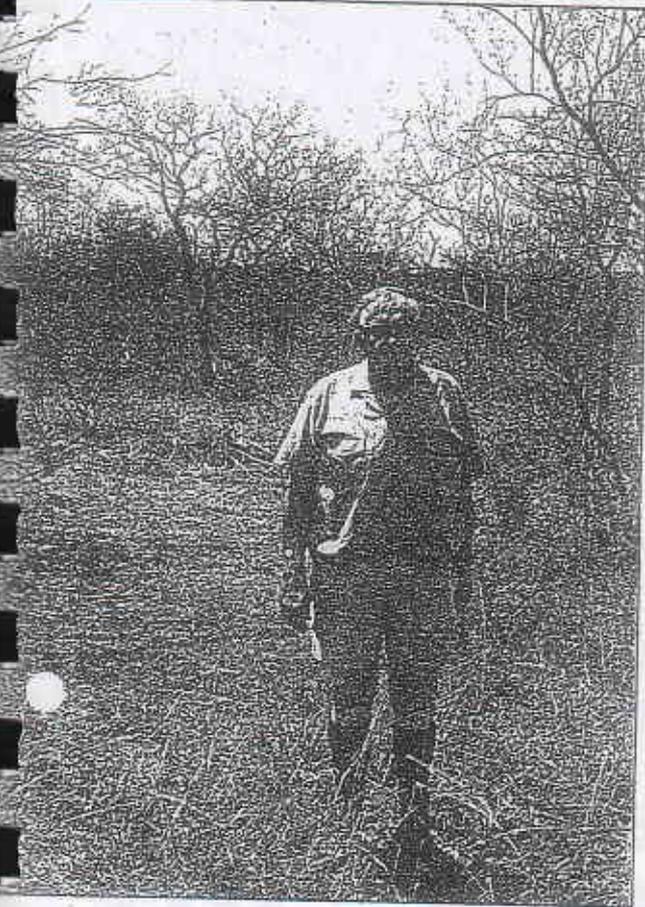
CROC RANCH, P.O. BOX 134, PHALABORWA 1390
Manager: D.P. Laubscher, Telephone Gravelotte 134

or

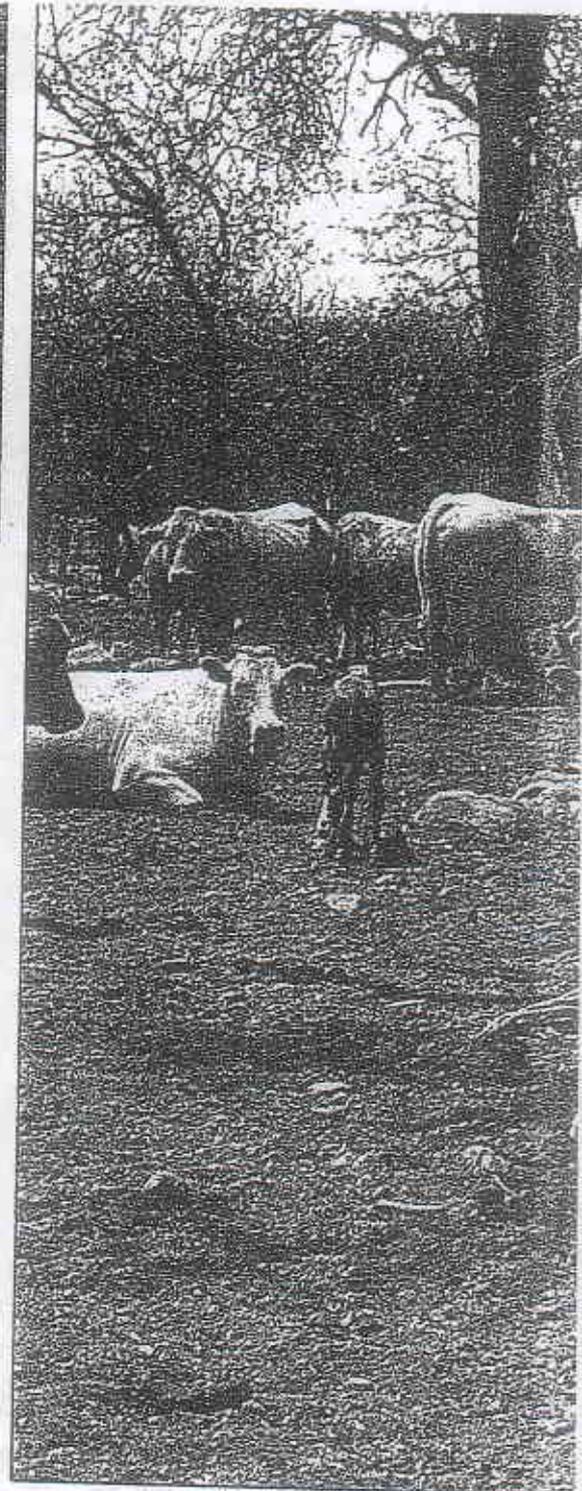
CROCODILE VALLEY ESTATES, P.O. BOX 11210, NELSPRUIT 1200
Cattle Manager: C.J. van Vuuren, Telephone 2142 Nelspruit or 3037 Home



ABOVE: The Afrikaner/Charolais combination has produced excellent mothers with plenty of milk.



LEFT: This shot of Mr Laubscher shows the condition of the veld when the picture was taken. In spite of the poor end-of-winter conditions, the animals were sleek, without extra feed.



RIGHT: A group of cows at a watering point in the heat of the day.

GOLDEN CATTLE FOR

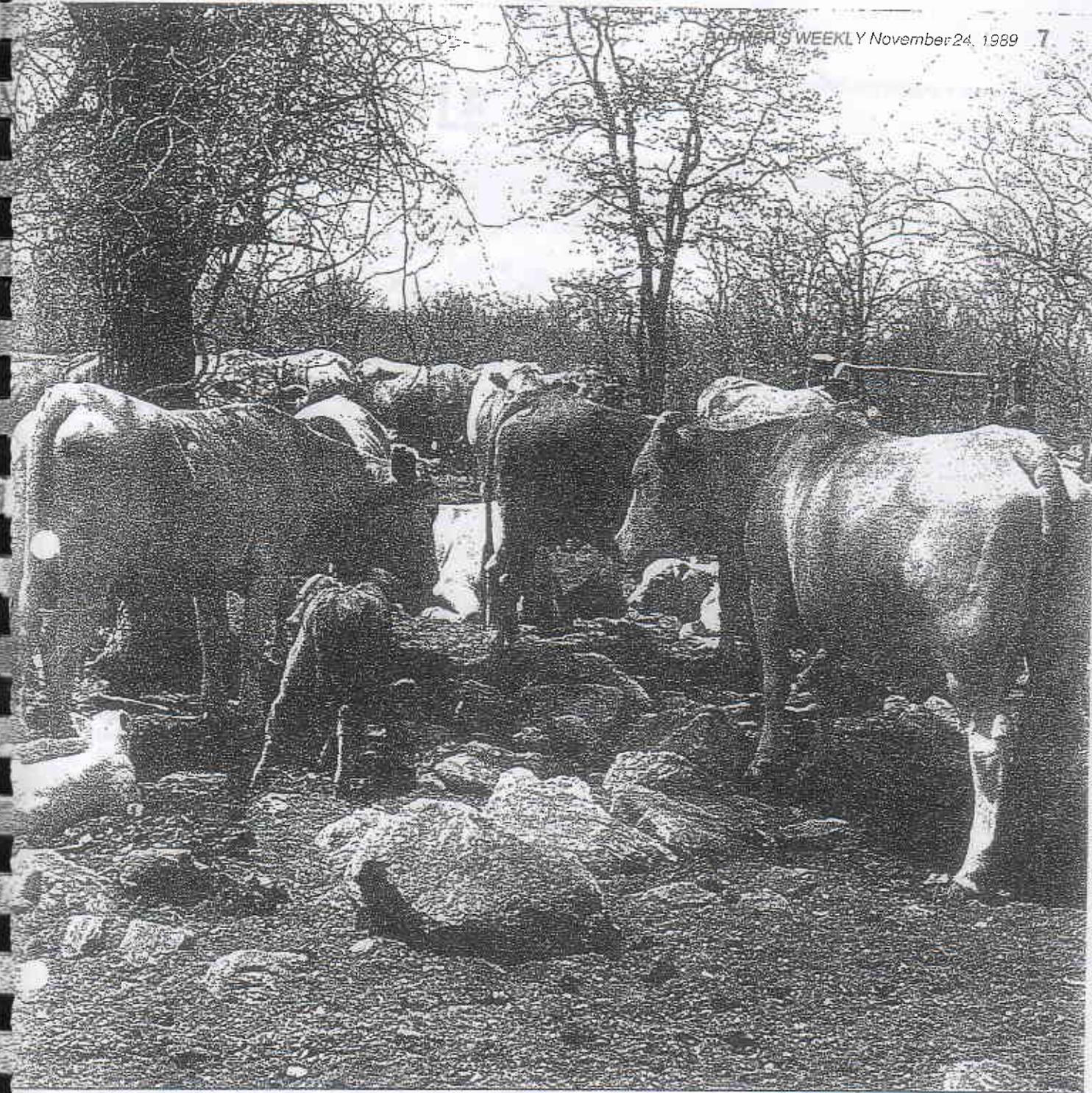
A carefully selected new cross-breed offers sound advantages for extensive ranching in harsh areas

by Clarke Gittens

THE dream of every cattleman is to find or, better still, produce an animal which will give top production at lowest cost with virtually no attention.

Way up in the bushveld, in the sweltering heat of the Phalaborwa area, there is a farmer who believes he has suc-

ceeded in doing just that by producing what he calls Huguenot cattle. Danie Laubscher, manager of Croc Ranch at Gravelotte, together with his employer, Dennis Solomon, has spent more than 25 years in perfecting a cross between Charolais and Afrikaner which is able to thrive under the



THE BUSHVELD

worst conditions to be found in the region.

Mr Laubscher says that from the outset they applied the strictest selection and cross-breeding standards and now they have a stable breed made up of 60 per cent Charolais and 40 per cent Afrikaner.

The animals range in colour

from white to golden brown; the skin is well-pigmented, and the coat is smooth - features prized by bushveld farmers in areas where sunburn and ticks can cause serious problems.

The Charolais is well-known as being a good animal for cross-breeding, because it

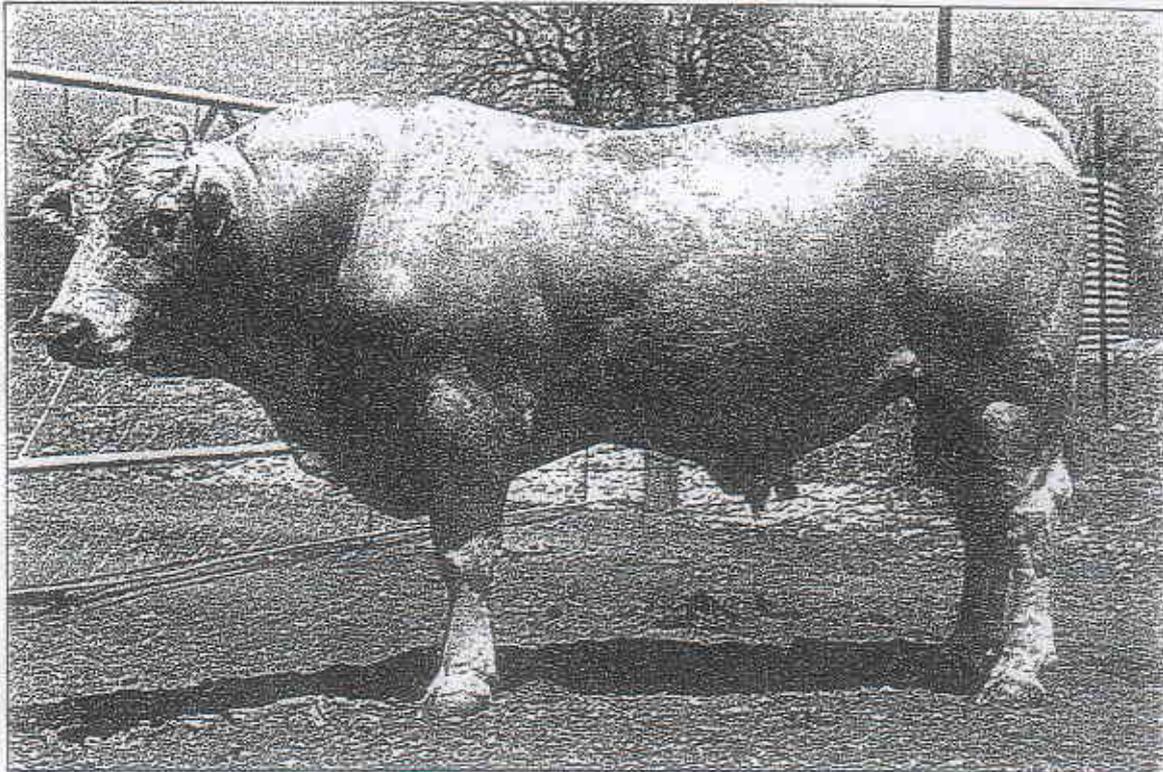
has the ability to increase the beef production in almost any breed, he says. It is also a hardy animal, having been developed in a region of France where conditions were very difficult for cattle.

By crossing this breed with the Afrikaner which is indigenous to South Africa, these two

farmers have produced a strain which, they believe, can make a major contribution to the national beef cattle herd.

Mr Laubscher is keenly aware of the pitfalls of cross-breeding, and stresses that more than eight successive generations of this synthetic breed have been evaluated

GOLDEN CATTLE



A very promising young Huguenot bull.

under veld conditions on the farm, and that both bulls and cows breed true to type.

Because game farming has always been the main activity of the farm, the cattle have never known anything other than extensive ranching. However, realising that modern cattle-farming cannot succeed without constant monitoring to check on and to improve performance, Mr Laubscher has always implemented the principles of performance testing, although the herd does not take part in the National Performance Testing Scheme.

"We record all of the information required for the official scheme," he says, "and process it using virtually the same formulae in order to evaluate our animals on what we believe to be the same standards of excellence."

HEAVIER WEANING

One of the reasons for this is that the animals are never subjected to feedlot conditions, but are weighed and evaluated entirely under veld conditions. From the results of tests he has carried out, Mr Laubscher says he has proved that the 210-day wean mass of his calves is on average up to 30 kg heavier than

those of other breeds.

His strict selection programme has also resulted in a steady increase, as the following list of wean masses, taken over the last three years, indicates:

Bull calves weaned off the veld, returned an average mass of 293 kg in 1986, 300 kg in 1987 and 320 kg in 1988. Heifer calves weighed an average 271 kg in 1986, 273 kg in 1987 and 302 kg in 1988.

To simplify matters, and to distinguish their system from the "official" one, they use what they regard as a more descriptive system than indexing to evaluate the performance of the animals.

"A weaner score of 300 + 20 means that the average weaning mass of that calf crop was 300 kg, and that this calf weighed 20 kg more," he says. "We prefer this system to indexing because it shows us not only how the calf compares to the average but also what the calf actually weighs and its cash value."

At the same time, he stresses that he would not necessarily regard a weaner with a score of 300 - 30 as poor, because he does not subscribe to the slogan "biggest is best."

"A 270-kg weaner is not a cull to any cattleman," he says, "and comparisons of mass do not tell the full story about an animal. We must assess the actual conformation of the animal, its skeletal size relative to the actual mass, and its growth rate, before deciding on the actual quality."

The Afrikaner cow is known to produce small calves, and to have excellent mothering ability, whereas the Charolais is an early-maturing female with good milk production. The result of combining the two, he says, is that Huguenot cows produce small calves, virtually eliminating calving problems, and they will protect their calves with the same tenacity as the Afrikaner.

HIGH CALVING RATE

The average calving rate in the herd is about 94 per cent, he says. And even when they are with calves, these animals are not difficult to work with. "They seem to have inherited all of the good qualities from both sides," he says. "They have an excellent temperament, even when they have been out in the veld for extended periods."

Neither he nor Mr Solomon have felt it necessary to regis-

ter the Huguenot as a Stud-book breed: "We believe that commercial beef-breeding success is dependent on selection and performance testing, not using bulls with paper pedigrees," he says.

"Our bulls have to prove themselves in the field, by producing calves which have superior weaning weights, good conformation and fertility."

A careful breeding programme is followed in which inbreeding is rigorously excluded. Mr Laubscher believes inbreeding can easily produce inferior performance and various forms of weakness in the offspring, and that the qualities of the breed must be protected.

To make sure that even illiterate farm workers cannot make mistakes when putting bulls in with the cows, he has divided his cattle into three separate-but-equal studs, and each bull is branded with his stud number.

The crucial test of this new breed, Mr Laubscher feels, has been passed with flying colours in that there is a good demand for breeding stock, and calves are "snapped up" by feedlots who have been quick to see the advantages of the breed. ●