



THE BRAHMAN BREEDERS SOCIETY

A GUIDE FOR BASIC INSTRUCTION COURSES

Namibian Brahman Breeders Society
PO Box 11790
WINDHOEK
Tel & Fax: 061 240573
e-mail: brahman@iway.na
Webpage: www.brahman.iway.na

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NAMIBIAN BRAHMAN BREEDERS SOCIETY

A GUIDE FOR BASIC INSTRUCTION COURSES

Dave Morley

The Namibian Brahman Breeders Society welcomes you to their Basic Instruction Course. Thank you for your attendance and interest in the Brahman breed.

The course will run for two days, closing at approximately 15.00 tomorrow afternoon. During this time we will demonstrate and discuss the Brahman breed and other related aspects. We appeal to you to participate fully in the discussions, and as we proceed, not to hesitate in raising any points that you feel have relevance, or may need clarifying. Rest assured that your opinions pertaining to cattle, and to our breed in particular, are of great importance to us.

It is important for us too, that you leave this course with a far clearer picture of Brahman cattle in your mind than when you arrived. We will show you both good and bad cattle. Concentrate on, and remember the good ones in particular, because it is around them that the industry revolves. When you think back on this course in the coming months or even years, we want you to recall productive, attractive Brahman cattle - not a bunch of moth-eaten creatures, full of faults! We request you therefore in all sincerity, to ask whenever you feel its necessary; it does not matter how insignificant you might think your query is, we will welcome it. We appeal to you **please**, not to go home with a string of unanswered questions hanging over your head!

We trust that you will find the proceedings stimulating and instructive. Enjoy the course!

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THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRAHMAN BREED.

When seeing American Brahman cattle for the first time it is their 'different' appearance that one always remembers. Ask any greenhorn what a Brahman is and the reply immediately comes, "Ah yes, they are those funny cattle with the humps on their backs and the long ears!" Since Brahmans have been around for a long time now, the younger generations of cattle folk know and accept them as part and parcel of the livestock scene. However, it was not always so.

Not many years ago, Zebu cattle from the East, and even the Brahman breed that originated from them, were something strange to cattle breeders in the Western world. They knew the *Bos Taurus* breeds, indigenous to Europe and the United Kingdom. These breeds were and are still, better known to Europeans than the cattle breeds from the East. When *they* speak of cattle, it is the *Bos Taurus* breeds that spring to mind.

The Zebu cattle of India caused quite a stir when they first appeared in the United States and South America. For those accustomed all the years to the British and European cattle, these were strange looking creatures indeed! Long floppy ears, humps on their shoulders, very alert and sometimes even aggressive.

Cattle ranchers soon realised however, that these animals not only looked 'different'; they *were* indeed different. Their loose hides, short, slick hair coats, resistance to ticks and biting insects, an amazing degree of heat tolerance and a strong survival instinct, all pointed to better adaptation in tropical and arid conditions. After years of ranching with breeds that did not really take kindly to the climate of the South, American cattle ranchers immediately picked up on these traits. They fully appreciated the economical benefits that come with well-adapted cattle. Something new was winking on the ranching horizon!

Of the Zebu cattle that turned up in the United States from 1849 to 1925, wherever they may have come from, all had their ancestral roots in India. Many of them, especially the larger and later importations from Brazil, were destined to become the progenitors of the American Brahman. The breeds of India are scientifically classified as *Bos Indicus*. For thousands of years' cattle have been domesticated and have formed part of the pastoral scene of that country. Indeed, the Indian people show a great respect for their cattle; a respect that even amounts to reverence.

The cattle population of India numbers approximately two hundred million animals, comprising over thirty distinct breeds. The regions in the country where these breeds originated, provided the names by which they subsequently became known. As can be imagined, they derive from a widely differing range of environments, and therefore vary considerably in respect to size and function.

Four of the old Indian breeds played a significant part in the development of the American Brahman; they were the Guzerat; Gir, Nelore and the Krishna Valley. In brief, these four breeds possess the following characteristics:

Guzerat - Large framed, strong cattle with long upward curving horns, broad-chested and with straight toplines. Coming from an area with considerable variations in climatic and pastoral conditions, the *Guzerat* has sustained itself over many centuries. Some sources quote the *Guzerat* type as having existed as far back as 3000 BC This breed probably contributed largely to the adaptive abilities of the American Brahman. *Guzerat* cattle originated in the *Rann of Cutch*, on the western end of the Indian and Pakistani border.

Gir - A smaller framed breed, distinguished by a prominent curved forehead, high orbital arches; long, hanging tapering ears, with a distinct twist on the inner side, just above the tip. Even among

the strange assortment of Zebu ear shapes, the ears of the *Gir* are something special. The horns come out close alongside the head and then extend away laterally, forming attractive curves especially in the cows. *Gir* cattle have a smooth conformation with clean, dry leg joints and compact hooves. The original home of *Gir* cattle, are the *Gir Hills* in the Southern part of the *Kathiawar* peninsular, where great fluctuations in climatic conditions also occur. In the development of the American Brahman, these cattle played an important part in establishing the red strains.

Ongole (Nelore) - Medium to large frame animals with good length of body. Heads rather narrow with smaller ears, carried more erect than other Zebus. Probably the most numerous of India's cattle breeds, and affectionately known in that country as the "poor man's cow." *Nelores* have become well known for their hardiness, resistance to ticks and diseases. They are versatile self sufficient cattle, sometimes inclined to irascibility. *Nelore* type cattle featured largely in the early importation of Zebu cattle to the United States. They originated in the *Ongole* region of the state of *Madras*.

Krishna Valley - In appearance not unlike the American Brahman, although a wide variety of characteristics exist within the breed. Some of the most permanent and favourable qualities of the modern Brahman derives from the *Krishna Valley* breed. The belief is that this breed developed by crossbreeding with animals from the *Gir* and *Nelore* breeds, with a possible infusion of *Guzerat* and *Mysore* strains as well. They originated in the huge *Krishna Valley*, located in India's *Deccan Plateau*.

During 1870 and 1910, India exported large numbers of Zebus to Brazil. All four Indian breeds mentioned above played the key role in the creation of the American Brahman. However, we should bear in mind that it was from Brazil, that the large importations of these Zebu breeds to the USA subsequently took place. In the years 1924 and 1925 approximately 210 bulls and 18 females arrived in America from Brazil. Obviously, these cattle were also influenced to a certain extent by the environmental conditions that prevail in Brazil. The possibility exists too, that the descendants of Portuguese cattle in Brazil also had some influence on the bloodlines.

In those years, virtually the entire cow population of the Southern states of America consisted of British type animals. The bulls and females that came in from Brazil in 1924 and 1925 accordingly elicited much interest. The importers distributed these Zebu bulls among certain ranchers, who immediately put them to British type cows. When these cows began calving and the little crossbred Zebus started growing, their owners immediately realised that something anew was afoot. An amazing degree of hybrid vigour was evident. With their short slick coats and resistance to biting insects, they adapted at once to the hot and humid climate of the Gulf Coast. In respect to adaptive ability and performance in this part of the world, the Zebu progeny left their British type counterparts far behind.

This turn in events caused some cattle ranchers at the time to wonder. Would it be possible to create in one breed, the superior adaptability of the Zebus, with the excellent beef qualities inherent in the British breeds? Certain ranchers began discussing the possibility of such a venture; the more they considered these ideas the more they warmed to the theme. With interest in the Zebu crossbreds' running high this idea of a new breed spread like wildfire. What started off as a rather far fetched idea, had suddenly transformed into a burning ambition.

In 1924 the Zebu pioneers gathered at Houston Texas, and this meeting saw the founding of the *American Brahman Breeders Association*. The meeting resolved too, that the envisaged new breed would bear the name of, 'The American Brahman.' The newly formed association went to work at once. They drew up a standard of excellence and set in motion a programme of strict selection and upgrading. The development of America's first breed of beef cattle, the American Brahman, started to

move ahead.

In 1946, a further importation took place when 18 Brazilian bulls entered the United States via Mexico. This consignment played an important part in the development of the red Brahman in America.

The idea of a new American Zebu breed has since come to fruition in the development of the Brahman. Subsequently, the American Brahman has found its way to more than sixty countries throughout the cattle breeding world. A lasting tribute indeed to those far-sighted old cattle ranchers who saw a gap - and took it!

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THE BRAHMAN BREED IN NAMIBIA

Although the first American Brahman cattle to arrive in Southern Africa set foot on the docks in Cape Town, they were but passing through; their destination was Namibia. Also disembarking that day from the Lykes Line freighter, that had transported the animals, were their owners Mr. & Mrs. Jurgen Cranz of the farm Isabis, in the district of Windhoek. Returning from buying cattle in the USA, they had made the voyage back to Cape Town together with their newly acquired Brahmans. The year was 1954 and the consignment significant; these were the first Brahman cattle ever to appear in Southern Africa. One can picture Mr. & Mrs. Cranz standing on the wharf in Cape Town harbour that day, watching their cattle being offloaded. One can only wonder if it ever occurred to them what the eventual upshot of all this would be. Though no longer active breeders, it is they who set the Brahman ball rolling here in Southern Africa.

As can be expected, Mr. Jurgen Cranz importation of a new breed of beef cattle set tongues wagging among the cattle folk in Namibia. In a cow raising country, the introduction of a new breed will surely raise the roof; and so it was. The appearance of these strange looking newcomers from America sure caused a buzz, and caused all kinds of opinions to do the rounds.

From the outset, some fell in love with these floppy eared creatures and remained loyal over all the years. Others regarded them with suspicion, convinced that they would upset the applecart; their comment was bitter and unyielding. In one respect *they* got it right - the Brahmans *did* upset the cow applecart in Namibia! The more sage cattle folks looked on with quiet interest and reserved judgement; they would wait and see.

Despite all the debate and wild talk, the Cranz importation nevertheless triggered a spate of further imports. In the following years, more people brought Brahman cattle in from the United States and importations continued for a number of years. The true pioneers of the Brahman in Namibia were undoubtedly Mr. and Mrs. Cranz. With them too however, were an enthusiastic bunch of ranchers who, from the time the Brahmans arrived in the country, stood staunchly behind the breed. Their hard work and steadfast support for the Brahman surely paved its way in Namibia.

Meanwhile, many cattle producers in South Africa found themselves gripped with this Brahman fever as well. Imports rocketed, and Brahman numbers increased dramatically. In 1958, they founded the Brahman Cattle Breeders Society of South Africa that subsequently affiliated with the SA Stud Book Association. The political dispensation at the time entitled pedigree breeders in

the then South West Africa, to full membership of breed societies in South Africa. From that time onwards, the Brahman breeders in South West Africa had representation on the Council of the South African Society.

Geographically though, the South West African breeders found themselves largely isolated from the mainstream of Brahman activities in South Africa. Sparsely scattered in this vast country, the danger existed of breeders hiving off in different directions and doing their own thing. Clearly something had to be done to consolidate the situation.

Meanwhile however, a battle lay ahead - a battle to get the breed accepted by the commercial producers in the country who in general, were highly sceptical. Now, nearly fifty years down the road, people have no conception of the intensity of this conflict and the strong feelings it aroused. Apart from the usual leg-pulling and gibing, there arose in some quarters real animosity towards the breed and its breeders.

This emanated mainly from the Department of Agriculture, some pedigree breeders of other breeds, and certain commercial producers. There is no doubt that Brahman breeders in those years had a rough time of it; fortunately they had the guts to stick to their guns. They came up for their breed all over the place, at shows, sales, the main street in Windhoek, and in the many small pubs scattered throughout the lonely and bushy countryside! Today we tend to take all this for granted, but had it not been for their tough stand, this antagonism could well have overwhelmed the emerging breed and relegated it to secondary status.

While the debate raged, Messrs. Val Hanssen of Otjiwarongo and Tudi Luchtenstein of Keetmanshoop, decided to try and consolidate the situation. They came up with the idea of forming a Brahman Club! This immediately met with acclaim, and in 1966 the South West Brahman Club came into being. Looking back now, there is no doubt that this was a smart move indeed; it provided the forum that the breed needed to help it move ahead. The club proved to be an erstwhile and lively organisation; it served the breed for many years with great enthusiasm and total dedication. The founding of the club is undoubtedly one of the great milestones in the breed's history in Namibia.

However, while negativity and scepticism surrounded the breed; down on the farms the Brahmans themselves were getting on with the job. They started showing what *they* could do! More and more Brahman crossbreds began appearing. First they received grudging respect as sturdy robust calves in commercial herds, bouncing around their Afrikaner, German and British-type mothers. But it was when these crossbreds first hit the commercial sales, that the cow fraternity really began to sit up and take notice.

First they came as sleek growthy weaners, and later as strapping young steers; and fetched top prices too. When the first crossbred heifers came into production and grew into strong good looking productive cows, the full impact of the Brahman message was really driven home. The general image of the commercial cow as an overworked, withered-up mama, old far beyond her years, faded forever.

Under able leadership the Brahman Club forged ahead. They tackled the negative perceptions of the breed head-on, especially the temperament issue, that had raised the biggest storm. The club

spread the message that the handling of cattle need not be occasions of stick wielding, stone throwing and loud shouting. They made it clear that it would not be possible to handle Brahmans properly when they abused them in this way. They maintained that sensible handling practices and astute selection would eventually overcome this so-called evil temperament.

The club also encouraged its members to exhibit their cattle at agricultural shows. Because of all the bad propaganda that the breed received, every Tom, Dick and Harry had by this time, conjured up their own lurid visions of Brahman cattle. Seeing Brahmans parade around a judging ring just as other cattle do, did much to change the public's perception of the breed. It soon became clear that Brahman cattle were not the wild rampaging creatures, that many people seemed to think they were. The shows also provided an ideal opportunity for breeders to set the record straight. With much feeling and great enthusiasm, they set about getting the true facts about Brahmans across to sceptical commercial producers; and to anyone else who would listen as well! Make no mistake; few breeds have had such a loyal bunch of campaigners behind them!

In various ways the club succeeded in its attempts to promote the breed. They organised highly successful Brahman days on a regular basis; these events made substantial contributions in publicising the breed. The institution of championship shows at four yearly intervals, also brought Brahman cattle before the public eye in greater numbers. All this hard work on the part of the club simply *had* to bear fruit, and slowly but surely the Brahman established itself on the local cattle scene. With the onset of the seventies the breed was well on its way to becoming what it now is, an integral part the beef industry in Namibia.

Since its inception in 1966, the South West Brahman Club had operated under the auspices of the Brahman Cattle Breeders Society of South Africa. This arrangement saddled the Club with a kind of Cinderella status; a situation that in later years, did not sit well with all members. With the independence of the mandated territory of South West Africa approaching, the club began investigating ways and means of establishing a breed society for Brahmans. This of course meant much spade work; first among Club members, and then with the South African Society and the SA Stud Book Association.

The founding of an own breed society for the Brahman breed in Namibia meant of course that the South West Brahman Club would have to bow from the scene. The new organisation would of necessity, take the place of the club and all its functions. For the old-timers especially, this was a grim prospect.

For nearly thirty years the club had served its members faithfully, and all the while successfully directed the fortunes of the breed. Having pulled the breed through those early and rocky years with grit and determination, and steering it on the road to success; the South West Brahman Club deserves the greatest praise. It laid the foundations for the breed in this country - but a new day was dawning.

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THE NAMIBIAN BRAHMAN BREEDERS SOCIETY

The South West Brahman Club convened a special meeting of its members on 20 February 1992 in Windhoek; we can look back on this as a red-letter day indeed. Mr. Wiid de Wet, the chairperson, duly proposed a motion calling for the dissolution of the South West Brahman Club; thereby announcing the end of an era. For moments' feelings of nostalgia hung in the air - something good and dependable

was busy passing away. The meeting unanimously accepted Mr. de Wet's motion, and the South West Brahman Club slipped away into its own niche in the Brahman annals of Namibia.

Immediately there followed another motion; this time for the founding of an own Brahman society in Namibia. Also unanimously accepted, this motion signaled the founding of the Namibian Brahman Breeders Society. Members elected *Mr. Floors Junius* as President and *Mr. Sigi von Lüttwitz* as vice-president. These two gentlemen have the honor of being the first principal office bearers of the new Society. On this day the Brahman breed in Namibia achieved one of its greatest milestones.

The constitution for the proposed new society, having been drawn up beforehand, was duly accepted and approved at this meeting. The constitution provides that the affairs of the society be served by a council consisting of eight members. The members then elect the Society's president and vice-president from the ranks of the eight-man council.

From the outset, the new Society found itself infused with enthusiasm. Standing stolidly behind their breed; the NBBS have set up an impressive track record in the first ten years of the Society's existence. A full time secretary now attends to administration. An extraordinarily successful inspection system is in place, ensuring that all animals are evaluated prior to registration. This in itself is no mean achievement. The introduction of an Appendix register enables phenotypical grade Brahman females to be brought into the system; thus widening the genetic base.

Very aware of ensuring that the right message gets across, the Society organises regular instruction courses. Their intention here, is to target their own breeders, the new ones in particular, as well as commercial producers and others involved with the breed. Those who judge Brahmans at shows, and evaluate animals for registration, start their journey up the ladder at basic instruction course level. From here they can work their way forward by attending more advanced instruction courses and later judges' courses as well.

The Society realises fully that the task of breed improvement has no end. Therefore breeders gather annually to discuss and appraise the breed. They hammer on the strong points, and at the same time give attention to any problems that might be emerging. In so doing they measure the pulse of the Brahman breed in Namibia. The council makes a point too of keeping abreast with modern developments in the world of pedigree breeding.

The council of the Society that picked up the reins from the South West Brahman Club in 1992, has done a remarkable job in steering the breed through its initial difficult years. Getting a newly formed breed society on track and functioning smoothly is no mean task; it requires dedication and much hard work. Thus far the Council and members of the Society have succeeded admirably; and in so doing, have set a worthy example to those who will follow.

This success revolves around one principle - before anything else, it is the *Brahman* breed that counts.

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PRACTICAL DEMONSTRATIONS

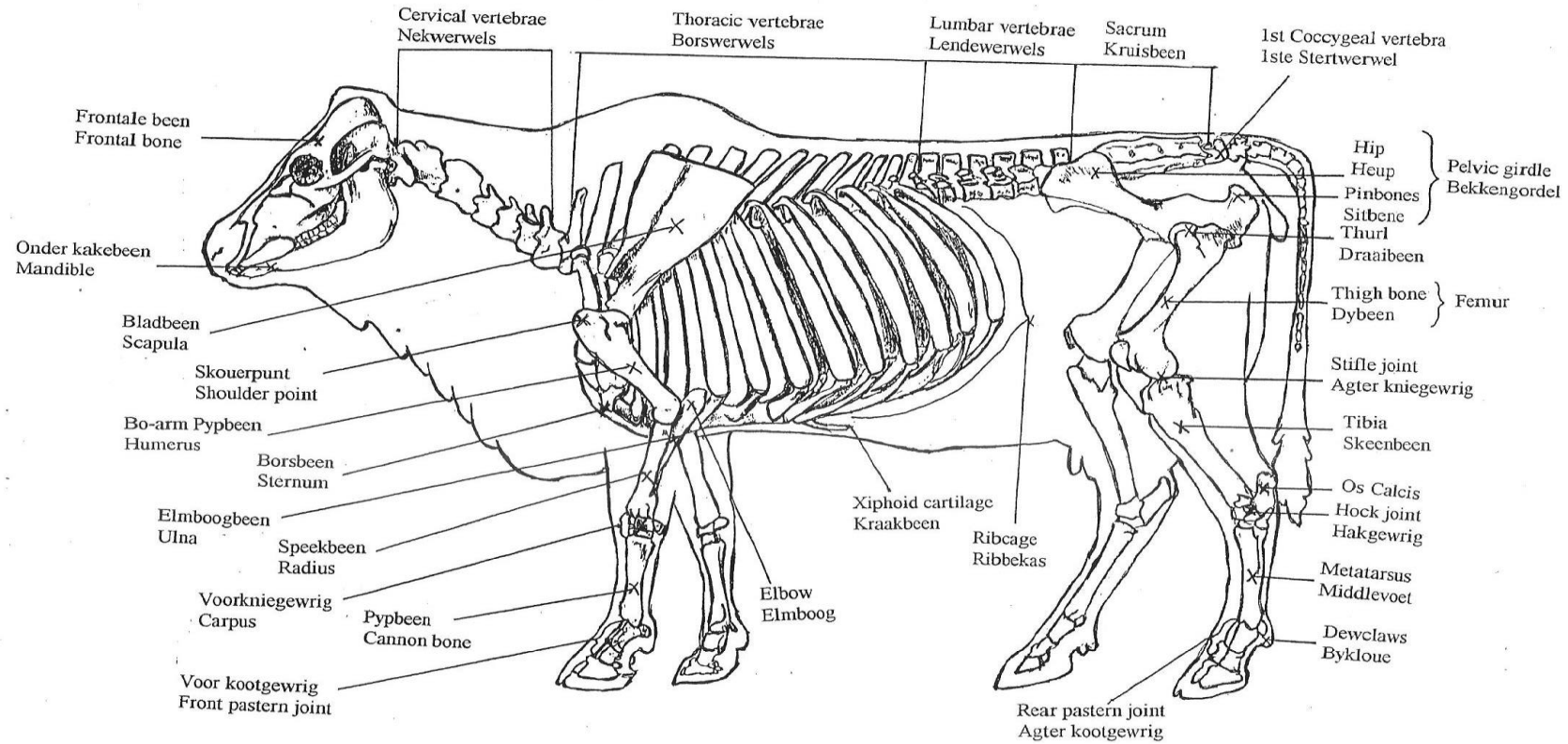
It is essential to become acquainted with the conformational and other aspects of Brahman cattle. In the practical demonstrations that follow, Course Leaders will describe and demonstrate in detail, the conformation of bulls and females. This will include the following:

1) **Conformation of the Brahman**

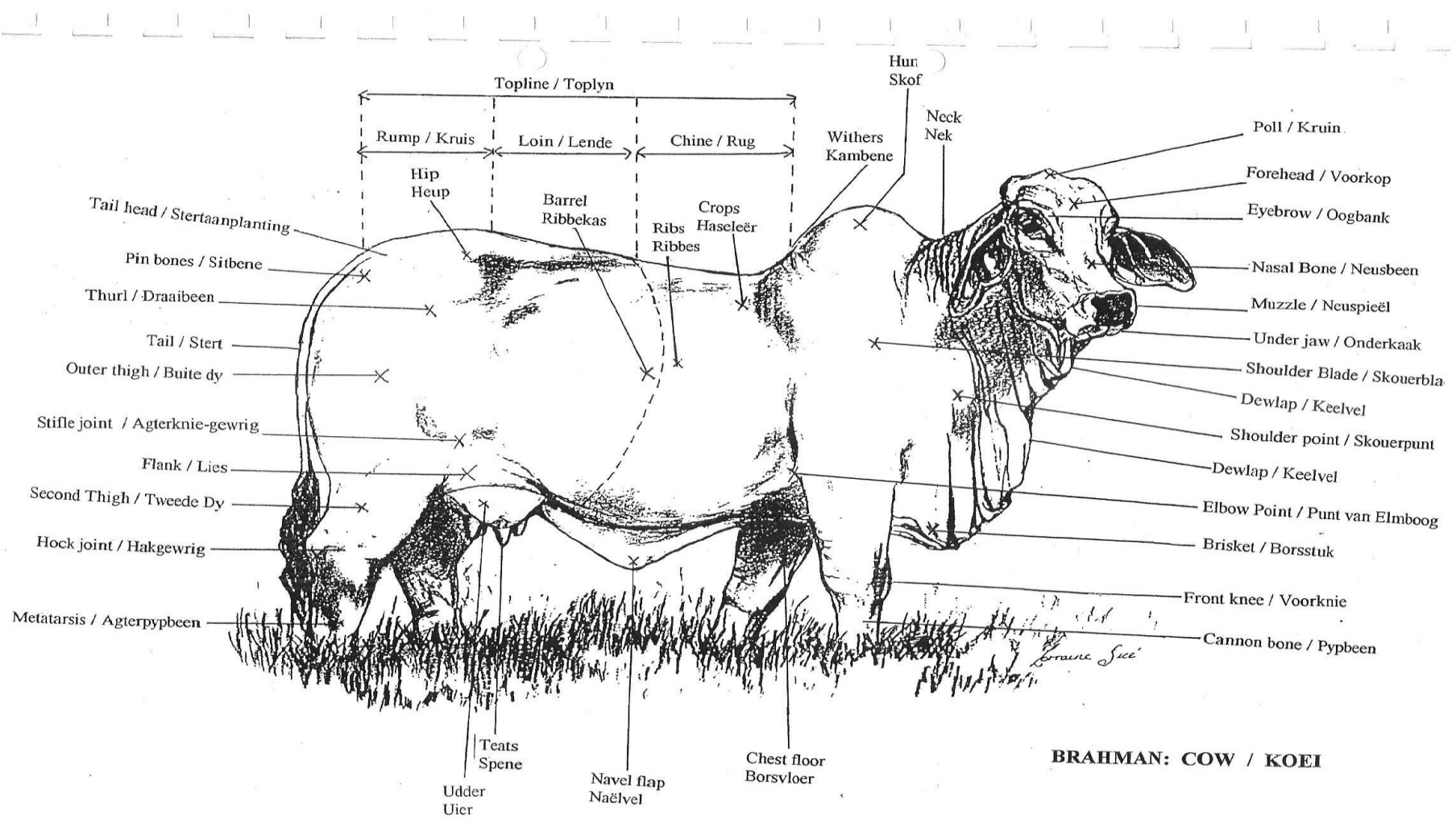
- * Pay careful attention as the Course Leaders name and describe each body part; refer to the relevant sketches.
- * Acquaint yourself with that most important structure that lies under the hide and out of our sight, namely the skeleton. Refer to the sketch! Remember that the exterior conformation of an animal relies entirely on its skeletal framework.
- * Make sure to learn and *remember* the location and names of all body parts.
- * When called upon to identify a body part, do not point vaguely to the general area; *go straight to the right place*.
- * Never ever refer to a body part as a '*whats-its-name*, 'or a '*that thing*,' or any other obscure term. Always use the correct name.

Skeleton

DIE SKELET - THE SKELETON

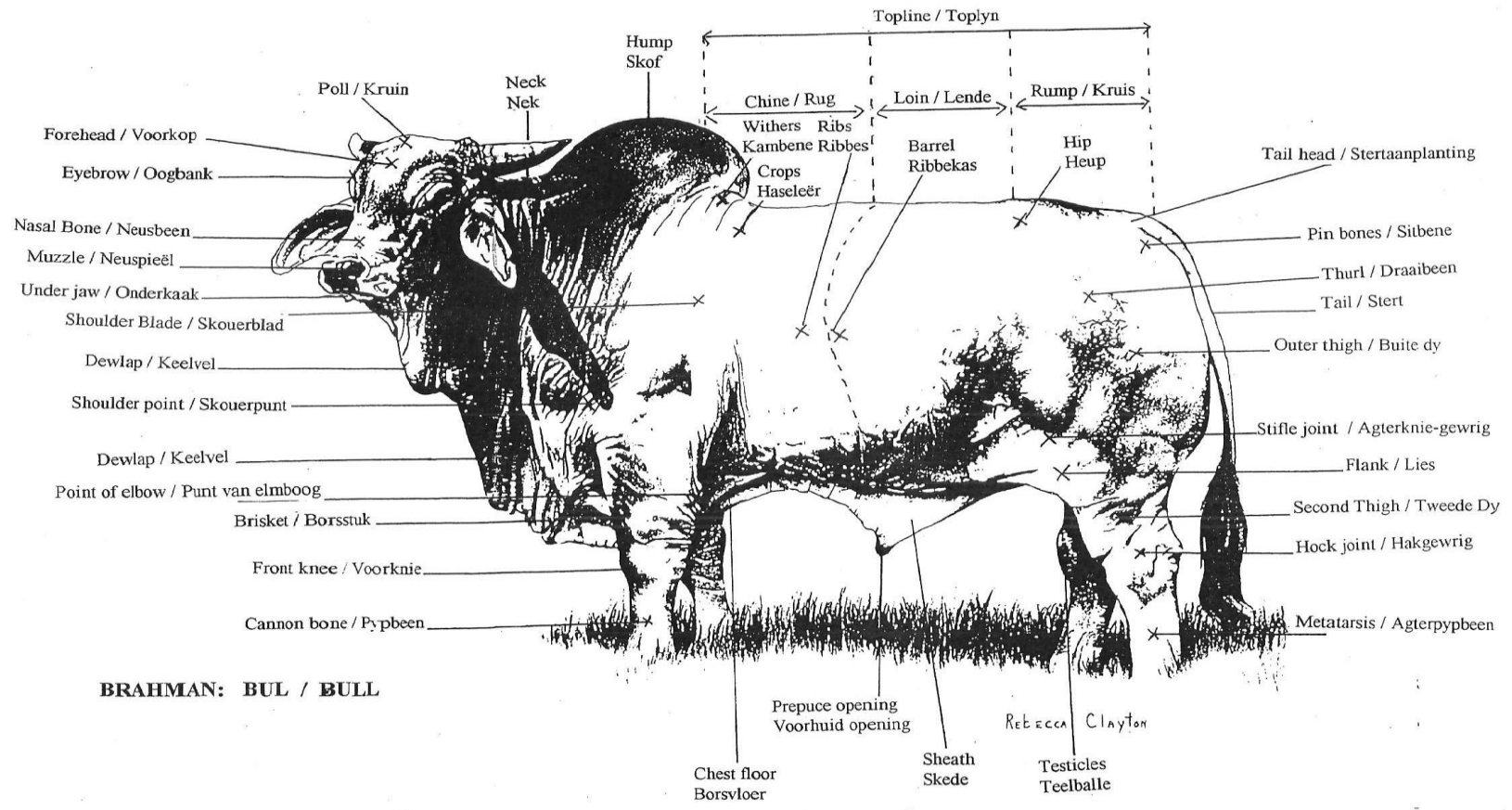


Sketch of cow



BRAHMAN: COW / KOEI

Sketch of bull



BRAHMAN: BUL / BULL

2) Conformation and the Standards of Excellence.

The Standard of Excellence provides a description of Brahman cattle that, according to those who originally drew it up, is as close to the ideal animal as one can get. Various Brahman Society's have made alterations here and there to fit in with their specific needs, but basically the standards have remained the same down the years. We should realise that this ideal Brahman animal, as described in the breed standards, is an extremely rare article in the flesh! Seldom in real life, will we come across all these ideal features in one animal, *and* still have it be highly fertile and a top producer. Such animals are there, but they are few and far between!

Cattle like people, differ in structure from one to the other; and the differences that occur in structure do not *necessarily* render the animals any less useful as efficient producers. Therefore, when we classify cattle we should not become worried if the animals do not conform to the last letter of the breed standards; they will not! We have to tolerate and live with certain conformational deviations, while waiting for better options to open up for us. We persist in searching for animals with perfect conformation. While there is nothing wrong with this, we must take care that in the process; we do not find ourselves not seeing the wood for the trees.

We should however strive to identify the basics correctly, and understand thoroughly how they interact on the animal. Not forgetting either, that it is only those conformational characteristics that we *know* go hand in hand with better production, that are really important. In essence, cattle should be structurally sound enough to get on with their function of reproducing and producing, without being hampered by defects in conformation.

The Standards of Excellence are therefore important for the beginner as they provide the key to the initial understanding of the Brahman breed. On the other hand, standing with breed standards in hand, and appraising a Brahman for the first time, can be a disenchanting experience. Somehow things do not always seem to work out as one feels they should! Nevertheless, becoming thoroughly acquainted with the breed standards is the first step one takes on the Brahman ladder. Make sure to go through them carefully, and compare them with the animals on the hoof. Rest assured that if you try hard enough, everything will eventually fall into place.

The various body parts interact upon each other in different ways. When evaluating cattle, knowledge of this process is essential. The Course Leaders will explain this in detail; please be sure to ask questions should anything not be clear.

Standards of Excellence

Description	Score	
	<u>Bull</u>	<u>Cow</u>
A) <u>General Appearance</u>		
i) <u>Size and Mass</u> - Well developed according to age. Mature masses: Bulls: \pm 800 to 1000 kg. Females: \pm 455 to 640kg. The frame has adequate depth, width and length, regardless of condition.....	10	10
ii) <u>Form</u> - Broad and long, with adequate depth and balance. Back straight, with a slightly rounding rump. Animal stands squarely, with hind legs well spaced when in motion.	8	8

	Bottom line straight, making allowance for sheaths in bulls and navel flap in females.....			
iii)	Quality - Hide soft, pliable and of medium thickness, Hair of medium texture and soft. Bone ample in substance, clean cut, dry and strong. Muscling long with good definition.....		4	4
B) <u>Body</u>				
i)	<u>Shoulders and Chest</u> - Shoulder blades moderately oblique, smooth, broad on top and covered by hump. Brisket not prominent. Chest wide and deep, good width on floor.....		8	8
ii)	<u>Centrepiece (Barrel)</u>			
a)	Back and ribs - Ribs well sprung from backbone, arched, with ample length to give adequate depth to body. Symmetrically joined to loin and crops. Excessive hollowing behind shoulders objectionable.			
	Short barrel, and excessive depth of rib not desirable. Back and loin uniformly wide, gently sloping to sides when viewed from behind Well covered with thick, firm muscling.			
	A sharp angle in the back, between and above the line of the hips to the hump, is undesirable.....		9	9
b)	Loin - Broad, thickly muscled, firm and level, blending smoothly into back and rump.....		8	8
iii)	<u>Hindquarters</u>			
a)	<u>Rump</u> - Good length from hips to pinbones; good width between the two pinbones, while the two thurl bones are also spaced well apart. Firmly, yet smoothly joined to loin.			
	Hips slightly below level of back, moderately spaced but not too prominent; slight fall from hips to pinbones. Tail neatly attached, not implanted too high, or too deep.....		8	9
b)	<u>Thighs</u> - Outer thighs thick, full, deep and firm; extending down to just above hamstrings. Inner thighs deep, and firmly rounded.....		8	8
iv)	<u>Feet and legs</u> - Moderate in length, straight and squarely placed. Bone with ample substance, strong and clean, tapering into well formed dense, dry joints. Hind legs perpendicular when seen from behind;		7	7

when viewed from the side hind legs incline slightly forward below hocks; muscular above hocks. Strong, moderately sloping pasterns. Hooves fairly large, uniform in size, straight and deep in the heel. The animal's gait is straight, strong and active.....			
v) <u>Muscling</u>			
<u>In the bull:</u> The animal shows indications of strong well defined muscling. Forearm and shoulder well muscled. Back and loin even and level, covered with thick, well defined muscle. Outer and inner thighs full and firmly muscled. Good muscling ensures that the widest point on the body of the young bull, when viewed from behind, is along an imaginary line just below the thurls. The animal stands and walks squarely on well placed legs.			
<u>In the female</u> muscling is smooth and even, with <u>no</u> sign of muscle definition.....		7	7
		55	56
C) <u>Breed and Sex Characteristics</u>			
i) <u>Colour and pigmentation</u> - Any colour, from grey, to red, to black; white or red speckled is also acceptable. Skin pigment is black. One deviation in pigment is allowed - on the muzzle, around the eyes, on the hooves, the switch or any other single body part.			
ii) <u>Head</u> - The head shows very clear evidence of sex character; i.e. bulls robustly masculine and females, sweetly feminine. Face moderately broad and long; nasal bone oval, muzzle full, nostrils wide and open, lips dark. Eyes mild, full and well spaced, with well developed eyebrows. Ears of adequate length and width.....		4	4
iii) <u>Neck</u> - Neck moderately short and well muscled in bulls; clean and flat in cows, blending smoothly into shoulders. Well developed dewlap.....		2	2
iv) <u>Hump</u> - In bulls the hump is large and strong, placed directly on top of the shoulders, moderate in thickness somewhat resembling a bean in shape and extending backwards. Females should show hump of moderate development, more oval in shape and located on top of shoulders.....		2	2
v) <u>Sheath</u> - Size small to moderate, closely attached to belly, not hanging too loosely. Prepuce opening small.....		3	3
vi) <u>Tail</u> - Neat, not set too deep into the rump; on a level with top line or slightly below. Long and slender with a black switch.			
vii) <u>Sex Character</u>			

a) <u>In bulls:</u> Throughout, bulls show absolute masculinity; visible in prominent muscling, robust development of head, neck and hump; testicles well developed.			
The hair colour is darker on the forehead, forequarters and outer thighs. In his entirety, the bull shows energy, vitality and power.			
<u>Testicles</u> - Well developed, evenly sized, hanging level; able to move freely up and down inside the scrotum. <u>Epididymides</u> well developed.....		4	
b) <u>In Cows and Heifers:</u> Cows and heifers radiate femininity and show a refinement in all their body parts in comparison with bulls. Necks clean and flat, good quality of skin, hair and bone. When viewed from the side the form of cows should show a distinct wedge shape with the open end at the rear, i.e. deeper behind than in front. Cows and heifers have a soft, radiant and feminine appearance, with no signs of localised fat deposits on the brisket, hips or pin bones.			
Udder and teats: Ample in capacity but not fleshy. Strong attachments at front, side and rear. Teats of moderate size and squarely placed under each quarter.....			4
vii) <u>Environmental Adaptation Traits</u> - Hide densely covered with hair of medium texture and oily to the touch. Hide can move along the sides of the animal when stimulated. Well developed dewlap, with soft, pliable skin, arranged in folds extending from below the bottom jaw to the chest floor. Little to moderate development of loose skin under belly.....		4	4
		17	16
D) <u>Temperament</u>			
Alert but docile.....		6	6
		100	100

3) Description of Some General Terms

Those entering the world of bulls and cows for the first time usually run up against a number of words and phrases that they have never heard of before. We find these words in daily use among breeders, ranchers, judges, etc. and they refer to certain characteristics that appear in cattle. As in all other enterprises, the cattle industry makes use of its own terminology and it is necessary to understand this jargon. We have accordingly selected some terms that regularly crop up and endeavour to explain their meaning and significance.

i) Constitution

Constitution in cattle is difficult to describe as it tends to be a vague term. This is probably so because it is not present to the same degree in all animals, and when it *is* there, it is difficult to see. Constitution is probably an inherited genetic component that enables some animals, under various environmental conditions and with the minimum of assistance, to maintain a sustained and superior level of production. Such animals manage to maintain this kind of performance year after year, without breaking down under the stress that such a stringent level of production must impose upon them.

One can say too that constitution probably also describes energy, vitality and an ongoing state of good health. The full expression of this inherent trait only becomes possible when the animal lives in complete harmony with its environment. In their outward appearance, fully adapted cattle with sound constitution, will show vigour, strength and good health. These are the essentials for a long and sustained productive life.

Constitution and hardiness are not necessarily one and the same thing. While we can say that animals with a strong constitution are surely hardy, we cannot however assume that all hardy animals have strong constitutions. The difference is that when the bad times come, cattle with strong constitutions still manage to maintain an acceptable level of production, while surviving as well. The hardy ones that do not have that extra spark of constitution in them will also survive the bad times, but at the expense of their production. In the case of the latter, the struggle to stay alive seems to place more severe limitations on their ability to produce.

That is why we say constitution is undoubtedly a very valuable trait, indeed a true jewel. Year in and year out these animals will ride the waves of fortune, for better or for worse and still come out on the other side! Maybe a bit bedraggled, but with a good calf at foot! They are truly in a class of their own.

Keep the following in mind in respect to constitution:

- The only certain way to recognise good constitution is by observing dependable and sustained production - year after year;
- It is therefore this tenacious and relentless performance over a number of years, that reveals the ultimate proof of sound constitution;
- Only time will tell whether a given animal has the constitution necessary to withstand the strain of persistent production.

We always try to *see* evidence of good constitution in an animal; however we should be careful here as it is easy to get hold of the cat by the tail. One would think that those older cows in particular, with proven records of good constitution, should show some or other special exterior features. There are probably many signs, some rather subtle, that provide clues to future performance. However, it takes an experienced eye to pick up on these things.

The trouble is that cattle with good constitution do not carry a flag to advertise the fact. What appears to be a reliable indicator however, is that those qualities' that we know go hand in hand

with good production, always feature very prominently in the exterior appearance of animals with a strong constitution. These animals also seem to radiate a kind of an aura; something that immediately appeals to those who have a close affinity with cattle and their ways. No wonder, such animals are *very* special!

It still remains a risky business though, to stick one's neck out on this constitution issue. When those characteristics that we believe usually go hand in hand with good constitution, appear on an animal, we still cannot claim with certainty that such an animal has good constitution. Rather say that all the animals with proven constitution that you have seen, always showed this or that characteristic.

It appears that the following qualities, (and there may be more,) come to the fore in animals with a proven constitution:

- * A strong broad muzzle;
- * Absolute masculinity in bulls;
- * Radiant femininity in cows;
- * A durable open framework;
- * A well sprung barrel with good spring of rib and depth; full behind the elbows;
- * Sturdy ligament and muscle attachments;
- * Clean dry joints and bone structure.
- * No serious structural faults

Do not bet your last dollar on these indicators either! It happens that one finds all these features on an animal that does *not* possess an exceptional constitution. We repeat that true confirmation of good constitution becomes apparent as the animal reels off one productive year after another; without fuss and regardless of circumstances.

ii) Bone

Cattle people are fond of using this term, 'bone,' and thereby cause much confusion in the minds of those not acquainted with cow talk. In the way cattle people use it; it is a strange term for those not in the know.

When commenting on their placings, judges repeatedly use the expression, '*the animal has good bone.*' When used in this context, '*bone*' refers to the amount of bone mass present in the skeleton, and visible at certain parts of the body. It has to do with the thickness, density and quality of the skeletal structure. Good *bone* means a refined bone structure that is flinty and durable, with clean, dry joints especially in the legs. The expression, 'clean and dry,' means that the joints themselves do not show any sign of puffiness or fleshiness; the structure of the joints being therefore sharply defined.

In attempting to describe these aspects in relation to *bone*, we repeatedly use the word refined. Please

note that we draw a distinction between the words, '*refined*,' '*fine*' and '*overfine*.' '*Refined*' meaning substance and durability, but not coarseness of bone; what we like to see. '*Fine*' means a tendency towards a lack of bone substance; and '*overfine*' indicates a complete lack of substance.

We judge *bone* in areas where the skeletal structure lies just below the skin surface and is easy to see. For example: In the front legs: the knee joints, (carpus) and the cannon bones, (metacarpus). In the hind legs: the hock joints, (tarsus) and the long bones extending from the hock to the pasterns, viz. The metatarsus. Also in the facial and jawbone structure, the shoulder blades or scapulae, the hipbones, thurls and pinbones.

A refined bone structure should go hand in hand with a strong and open frame. We use the word, '*Open*,' to describe a frame with adequate breadth throughout, that is, between the shoulder points, through the rib cage, and between the hips, thurls and pin bones. Remember that an overfine, narrow frame, is as good as no frame at all.

We have already mentioned that we judge bone at those places where parts of the skeleton lie just below the skin surface. We must remember that when we look at these parts, what we see from the outside does not accurately reflect the actual thickness of the bone itself. For example: The consistency of bone that we see from the outside is influenced by the thickness of the bones themselves, - plus connective tissue and blood vessels - plus ligaments - plus skin and hair. We should take this aspect into consideration when we judge bone in the legs.

In addition the marrow cavities also vary in diameter, while the bone wall that encases them, varies in thickness as well. A cannon bone and a metatarsus with a large diameter, may therefore only be larger because of a bigger marrow cavity, and not because of more or thicker bone and vice versa. We should bear this in mind when we consider this term *bone*, and not forget that our evaluation rests solely on what we see from the outside.

Some people become concerned when they see a well-framed animal supported by four seemingly *fine* legs. They feel that an imbalance exists between the bone structure of the legs and the bulk of the body. Therefore they would like to see thicker legs. This is an erroneous perception, for well structured legs composed of a refined and good quality bone; will carry the animal successfully for all its days.

Heavily boned legs often show coarseness, and lack the clean, dry bone structure that we seek. Thick coarse joints, in particular the hocks, usually do not show the outlines of the joint structure and ligament attachment; this being obscured by lumps and puffiness. This kind of swelling or fleshiness if you will, often indicates the presence of fluid pockets in and around the joint. Such joints are without doubt vulnerable.

iii) Muscling

Muscling refers to the distribution and development of muscle fibre over the entire frame and is responsible for movement in the live animal. While the only accurate means of determining muscle development is when the flayed carcass finally hangs on the hook, there are features on the live

animal that point to adequate muscling. The eye however must be trained to pick up these attributes. In evaluating muscling always consider the following:

* The distribution of the muscle covering on an animal's frame always remains in proportion. In other words' one will not find excellent muscling on the hindquarter and poor muscling on the forequarter.

* Muscle has form and shows firm and even rounding. Excessive subcutaneous fat covering on the other hand is soft to the touch, flabby and without definition.

* In evaluating muscling in animals on the hoof, take care to avoid confusing muscle development with fat covering, especially in well nourished individuals.

* In leaner animals muscle development and distribution is more clearly defined and therefore easier to identify.

* When discussing strong muscle development we always have the bull in mind. In females, prominent clearly defined muscle development is absolutely undesirable. This condition usually points to a hormonal imbalance and these muscled females always have fertility problems. Rest assured that a *well framed*, fertile and feminine female, has sufficient muscling for her own needs. We do not need to pack any more muscle on her!

* We always associate strong muscling with good capacity and spring of rib. Take note how flat sided, poorly sprung individuals always fall short on muscle development.

* One of the most reliable pointers to good muscling is the thickness of muscle on the forearm, that is, the area from the knee of the front leg to the point of the scapula. In a well-muscled bull the muscles of the forearm, from the knee to the shoulder point, will form a distinct V shape. Fat is not deposited in this area and what one sees here is *only* muscle. Because muscle distribution remains constant, strong muscling on a bull's forearm will indicate good muscle development over his entire frame.

* Muscling too means the presence of strong, well defined and prominent muscle on the back and loin, the rump, with full well-rounded inner and outer thighs. When viewing a well-muscled young bull of eighteen to twenty-four months from behind, the width through the outer thighs should obscure his stomach completely.

* As the bull ages accurate muscle assessment becomes more risky as secondary sex characteristics start to assert themselves. He becomes heavier in the forequarter and will begin developing a paunch; this is a completely natural process. However, it makes eye-balling for accurate muscle assessment more risky. The bull is then starting to lose some of his youthful athletic appearance. The best time therefore, to assess muscle development is at prime slaughter age.

* Beware of young bulls with paunches! In these bulls muscling is always suspect, and the condition points to the presence of other structural problems that we shall discuss later.

* An adequate stance of the front and rear legs are also indicative of good muscling, as muscle assists in keeping the limbs apart. In well-muscled individuals therefore, the legs stand squarely and well spaced.

* In Brahman bulls, a well formed, prominent and defined hump also points to strong muscling; the hump itself is entirely muscular.

* One will find that strong, prominent, well defined and hard muscle development in bulls always goes hand in hand with unmistakable virility and masculinity. Bulls that lack masculinity never have good muscling; the fullness that they show when in high condition, comes from fat deposition. See them when they are lean, and the true picture will emerge.

* Once again do not allow fat deposition to confuse the muscling issue. On the back, loin and thighs look for muscle *definition* and beware of smoothness on these parts. Always return to the forearm for an accurate assessment.

* A feature sometimes encountered in cattle is double muscling. This condition is an over development of all muscles. It appears as if another layer of muscle has been laid over the existing cover, hence the name. Such animals look distinctly abnormal and apparently have fertility problems as well. This is a very undesirable condition, though fortunately not prevalent in Brahman cattle.

* In conclusion then, just a brief summary on how we can approach the muscling issue:

Look at a young bull, ± eighteen months old. In respect to his condition is he - *very* fat, fat, or lean?

Does he show a well-formed hump, together with distinct strength and masculinity overall?

Does he stand squarely, and has he adequate width throughout his body?

Look at his forearm - this part of the foreleg should show that classic, strong **V** shaped muscling that we have described.

Look along the back and loin for hard well defined muscle cover. If the bull is in high condition, beware of smoothness here; it is probably fat deposition and could deceive you.

Stand behind the bull and see if his rump is well muscled;

Still behind the bull, visualise an imaginary line running across his hindquarters at a level just below his thurls. Here we have the outer thighs. At his *young* age, this should be the widest part of his body, and one should not see his stomach protruding from behind his outer thighs.

iv) *Capacity and Depth - Spring of rib*

This term refers to the centrepiece and to the extent that the ribs arch out from the spinal cord and then extend downwards; contributing towards the capacity and depth of the barrel. We have already mentioned that spring of rib and good capacity usually go together with strong constitution and muscle development. It is therefore an essential feature. Let's look at the following:

* The *spring and length* of ribs determine the *capacity and depth of body* - the better the spring and depth of the rib cage, the greater the body capacity. The extent of rib spring regulates body width, while length of rib governs body depth. The ribs are well arched, long, deep, wide and strong.

* In a correctly sprung animal, well spaced ribs will arch out roundly from the spinal cord and extend well down, forming a deep, full, firm rib cage or barrel. The fore ribs show good spring behind the shoulders (crops), thus providing an adequate heartgirth, while a fullness is evident in the area immediately behind the elbow points. This makes for a wide chest floor with sufficient width between the forelegs.

* Poorly sprung animals show a distinct lack of rib arch where the ribs come out from the spinal

cord; the ribs immediately slope downwards, ending below in a heavy gut or paunch. The area behind the shoulder (crops) is not well filled, and it feels as if a rugby ball would fit in the gap that sometimes appears behind the elbow points. The chest floor is narrow and the forelegs close together. The latter are classic pointers to insufficient spring in the fore ribs.

* The heavy gut or paunch referred to above, particularly in young animals, gives an immediate clue to inadequate spring of rib.. In addition, such animals will probably lack sound constitution, nor will they possess good muscling qualities. A look at the muscling on the forearm will confirm this. It is quite normal in cattle, and especially bulls, to develop a paunch as they grow older. However, this is definitely not on in young animals. The Americans refer to such cattle as being, 'gutty.'

* Some like to pass this 'gutty' characteristic off as good depth of body, but this is not the case, and we deceive ourselves horribly if we think like this. That 'gut' is nothing else but a big flabby stomach! Depth of body comes **with** well-sprung *long* ribs, forming a full, round and firm rib cage.

* To identify spring of rib, stand behind the animal and look along the back. From this point one can evaluate the spring of the fore and rear ribs. From the front, look at width of the chest floor and spacing between the front legs. From the side, look for fullness in the area immediately behind the points of the elbows.

v) *Early and Late Maturing*

We use these terms to describe the phenotypical changes that occur in cattle when puberty sets in, and animals start becoming sexually active. When an animal enters the stage of puberty, the *pituitary* gland begins to release a number of hormones, the working of which affects the animal's outward appearance in various ways. It is then that the male and female sex hormones play a significant role. Their influence brings about marked changes in the primary and secondary sex characteristics of young bulls and heifers.

One of the effects of this hormone action is the change that occurs in various bones, and in particular the long bones. On both heads of the long bones we find the *epiphysis*, that is the band of *epiphyseal* cartilage responsible for the growth in bone length. When puberty sets in, a process of ossification begins to take place in the *epiphysis*; and accordingly, the rate of growth in bone length starts to slow.

When the animal reaches sexual maturity, this ossification process is complete and further growth in bone length ceases altogether. This specific aspect of the hormonal process that occurs during puberty affects the animal's entire skeletal development, and is particularly evident in the long bones of the legs. As can be imagined this also has a direct bearing on the animal's eventual whither height.

* We must bear in mind that the genetic make-up of an animal will determine all its characteristics, including the functions of all its systems.

* When puberty sets in at an early stage of an animals' life, the premature arrestation of bone growth will result in the individual being more compact in body and with shorter legs. This kind of animal we refer to as early maturing.

* This condition asserts itself in varying degrees of intensity from one individual to the next. At one end of the early maturing spectrum we find the small, very close coupled, dumpy or pony types - they represent an extreme and are therefore undesirable.

* Further up the early maturing scale we find animals with wide, open frames giving good breadth of body and muscling. Their early maturing features are evident in a more compact body overall, strong secondary sex characteristics especially in bulls, and short cannon bones. They look impressive and are usually good doers, but take care - they tend to be very prepotent. Used judiciously though, such animals can make a positive contribution in a breeding programme.

* When puberty occurs at a later stage we have a longer legged, rangy, big bodied individual. This being possible because the long bones have had more time to grow before ossification of the *epiphysis* occurred. We refer to such an animal as being late maturing.

* In most cases late maturers carry these characteristics through to maturity and eventually grow into large, big framed animals. The main criticism levelled at them is that the nutrition required by their large bodies, especially under extensive conditions, more often than not exceeds the supply. When the going gets tough they seem to lack the necessary resilience. In saying this, we are not taking a swipe at large framed animals - all we say is that larger bodies require more nutrition.

* Go for animals that are neither *too* early nor *too* late maturing. In this respect, it makes sense to try to tread the middle of the road.

vi) *Temperament*

Most cattle breeders and ranchers understand the meaning of this term in that it refers in a positive sense, to calm, restful yet alert behaviour in cattle. In a negative sense, it points to virtually constant nervous, restless, irritable and sometimes worse behaviour. After hundreds of years of domestication, cattle are generally peaceful creatures that thrive on a quiet day to day routine. Nevertheless we sometimes come across inherently highly strung animals with really bad temperaments. When we complain about temperament shortcomings in cattle, it is these individuals that are the cause of all the trouble.

Bad temperament in cattle is a highly heritable trait that gives rise to unending problems, especially when working the animals. What aggravates the thing is that cows with evil temperaments consolidate the problem by being able to successfully teach their calves all their own ill behaved ways. There is not much that one can do about such animals, apart from sending them to slaughter.

* The tragedy is that people through ignorance or mere cussedness, often create bad temperament in a herd where it really does not exist. Primitive handling practices like stick wielding, stone throwing, arm waving and shouting; can turn an inherently placid herd into a nervous and unmanageable bunch of wild devils. It is strange how some

people believe that one cannot work with cattle without shouting and beating them with plastic pipes. With them, yells and blows seem synonymous with cattle handling! What an outlook!

* In herds subjected to the abusive handling methods mentioned above, one finds that because of the constant bad treatment the whole herd is irritable and nervous. The cattle are difficult to work with, and under such circumstances there is no point in even trying to identify the better tempered individuals. The chances are that despite their more benign natures; the abuse that they have endured has already spoiled them beyond redemption.

* Where a herd operates under management that ensures sensible and gentle handling methods,

animals with an inherently bad temperament soon identify themselves. With the owner walking quietly among the cows in the veld - take note of those few individuals that move nervously around the fringes of the herd. With heads up, ears erect and bodies tense, they carefully watch the person's every movement; ready to dash off even at the slightest thought that they may become objects of attention. They are the bad ones in the bunch, and they should go; without wasting any thought as to how pretty, or how good they might be!

* We should realise that it is *fear* that lies at the root of all temperamental dust-ups in the kraal. *Fear* - caused by short tempers in human beings; *Fear* - escalating in the cattle when the stones start to fly, the blows begin to fall and the yelling becomes loud and raucous! *Fear and anger* - that reach a crescendo when crazed animals start running around in a frenzy, trying to leap over the kraal fences and bearing down on everything with two legs. Workers frantically scaling fences to get away, the owner at wits' ends, blood pressure rising by the minute, raging at everyone! One wonders whether in these hectic moments, owners ever stop to consider that the *real* cause of the rodeo show, lies squarely at *their* door? Kraal scenes like these are unpleasant, nauseating, and worst of all - completely unnecessary.

* But we *have* to work with our cattle and sometimes we *have* to inflict pain on them as well. Therefore we should realise that tranquillity in the cattle kraal only comes once we have succeeded in reducing the fear factor to a minimum. Bear in mind that by herding cattle to the kraal; we have already taken them out of their day to day routine. Already this causes the stress levels to stir. From previous experience they know too that unpleasant things usually happen to them in the kraal; this escalates the fear levels still further. When they eventually arrive in the kraal and the gates close behind them, one can sense their anxiety. Now is the time for the owner and his assistants to apply common sense, by going to work patiently, quietly and firmly. It is amazing how well cattle respond to this treatment.

* People who regularly experience a temperament hassle when they work their cattle have probably never asked themselves: 'What do the cattle fear?' The answer to this we have already stated. But there is something else too, and this is the temperament and attitude of owners themselves. A person with a short fuse and a bullying approach will never get along with cattle, especially Brahmans. As the blood pressure of the boss starts rising in the kraal, negative signals immediately transmit themselves to assistants and cattle alike. That is when the business starts to touch on boiling point; and time too for the boss to leave the kraal, go sit under a tree, and sort out his attitude problems! Human impatience and good cattle relations are two things that can never mix!

* The ability to work with cattle in a calm and sensible manner is an art indeed; it deserves praise too, because it revolves around that undying virtue - *patience!* One can achieve this through common sense and dedication. Trying to force the issue is futile; it can probably achieve the ends, but the means **will** nevertheless reek. Do we not have more common sense and grey matter than our cattle?

vii) *Character and Quality*

These two terms have been part of cow jargon for many years. They probably originated in the show ring, where judges always try to find the right words to explain what they see. Used on its own, *character* is a subjective term and usually refers to bearing, carriage and deportment. In spite of all the training that show animals receive, some individuals just have it in them to look smarter. They contrive to keep their heads up, prick up their ears, and move briskly without much help from the handler. They look the part and we call this feature *character*.

Quality is also a term often used by judges to describe a sleek and shiny hair coat, clean strong bone structure, good conformation and general neatness all round. In show animals this quality

aspect is to a large degree, helped along by astute show preparation. Make no mistake; some exhibitors have a string of ideas up their sleeves to make their animals look more attractive. They are shrewd! It is amazing to see how they manage to have their cattle sparkling on judging day. This, together with the animal's own inherent and finer virtues, we call quality

Some people have another dimension of quality in cattle. They see quality in a bunch of good slick coated cows resting idly, while fat calves bounce around them in the quiet of a soft summer afternoon. Indeed, this quality too!

4) Desirable Traits to Select For.

Under this heading we list a number of traits that should be high among a breeder's selection priorities. Bear in mind however, that trying to select for all of them simultaneously will not work. Rather take time to sort out what problems need the most urgent attention and concentrate one or two, or at the utmost three, at one time.

Astute selection in a cow herd requires knowledge, determination and much patience.

It takes time before results become apparent.

In addition to the characteristics set out below; do not forget the aspects that we have already discussed. **Constitution, muscling, capacity, depth and temperament** are all traits that should also rate very highly on the selection priority list. While going through the items below, make sure to refer back to these five features - they are of the greatest importance!

i) *Adaptability*

We have mentioned before that everything starts with adaptability. It is only when animals adapt fully to their environments can we expect them to really produce efficiently. In a country like Namibia where cattle must produce under extensive conditions, proper adaptation is vital. In this respect the Brahman fares well. Its black skin pigment, heat tolerance, resistance to ticks and biting insects, foraging ability and being able to cover large distances in search of grazing, stand it in good stead.

Brahman cows are excellent mothers, all those who have had to do with newly calved cows will testify to the aggression that they show in protecting their calves. Those not acquainted with the breed, and who have had to flee from an irate Brahman mama, sometimes couple this behaviour with bad temperament. In truth, this is one of the breeds most outstanding adaptive features in an extensive, and sometimes hostile environment.

Accordingly, with their short slick hair coats, loose hides, and black pigmented hides, Brahman look the part. Note how the are eyes protected by well-developed orbital ridges, covered by supple, muscled eyebrows that close tightly over the eye when an obstruction threatens. Tap a Brahman on its body and see how it immediately jerks its skin to dislodge the irritation; on a hot day feel the coolness of the dewlap. When the temperature drops, see how the hair on the body immediately stands erect to conserve warmth. Notice how they show irritation by shaking their heads and flapping their ears, letting one know not to push things too far.

Brahmans exhibit an alertness to all that happens around them. They know at once when a stranger visits the herd, and will settle down only when they are sure that no harm is brewing.

Individual animals feel instinctively when they are being looked at, and it is amazing how they will contrive to hide themselves behind their companions.

When put into a new camp they will invariably first scout around before settling down to graze.

All these characteristics and behavioural quirks bear testimony to the fact that although the Brahman is a domesticated breed; it nevertheless retains a strong survival instinct. This has helped the Brahman breed a great deal in adapting so well on the large extensive farms in Namibia.

ii) *Functional Efficiency (Sex Character and Fertility)*

Tom Lasater, the old Texan cattleman of Beefmaster fame once said, "*A good cow is a cow that weans a good calf every year. Period!*"

This remark accurately describes the functionally efficient cow. It embraces her ability to conceive early in the mating season. To carry the foetus successfully through pregnancy; to calve easily and with no ado; to raise the calf without assistance into a heavy weaner. Get back into calf as soon as possible and repeat the process again - year after year. This is a tough assignment, and we cannot ask for more from a cow. Not all cows can get it right, but we certainly appreciate those that do. For these are indeed truly great cows!

The functionally efficient bull is a bull that possesses a driving libido. Without any nonsense, he will succeed in getting his herd of cows all safely in calf in the shortest time. We often crack jokes about the bull having the most pleasant job on the farm! However, to do his job properly, a number of things must go right for him, otherwise he gets the chop; do not be too keen to change places with him!

Phenotypically, functionally efficient bulls and cows possess one feature that sets them apart. They all show that most basic requirement, namely sex character, to a marked degree; and we should ensure that we can recognise this feature at once. Broadly speaking, it means that *bulls must look like bulls, and cows must look like cows*, with no grey areas! We will still come to the finer points of this phenomenon.

These cattle do not always look like show winners; but rest assured they get the job done. At all times we should bear in mind that functional efficiency in bulls and cows is without doubt, one of the *jewels* that we seek in the breeding of sound, productive cattle. Therefore it is essential to recognise the phenotypical features that we know will always accompany it.

It happens that true functionally efficient veld cows sometimes have an outward appearance that conflicts with the ideals to which the standards of excellence allude. Sooner or later however, we have to realise that the best looking cattle are not necessarily the most efficient ones. There is a saying that goes: "*Identify the most efficient animals in your herd, and learn to like the way they look!*" This we should imprint in our minds, and make sure that we see our cattle through the right glasses!

Phenotypically, functionally efficient cattle always show the following characteristics:

In the bull:

* A robust, strong masculine head, broad between the eyes with coarse, dark hair on the forehead. Well developed and pliant eyebrows protecting the eyes. A broad, strong black pigmented muzzle.

* Darkening of the hair coat on the forehead, forequarter, outer thighs, front knees, and the

front parts of the pasterns.

- * A thick well muscled neck extending into a large, firm, bean-shaped hump.
- * Hard well defined muscling on the forearms, along the back, the loin and inner and outer thighs.
- * A well sprung, firm ribcage with no sign of a paunch in younger bulls.
- * Two well formed and adequately sized testicles enclosed in a smooth skinned, pigmented scrotum.
- * As a bull matures he develops more depth in the forequarter. When viewed from the side therefore, the top line and underline reveal a wedge shape with the open side at the front of the animal. Therefore heavier in the forequarter than the hindquarter. This wedge shape (open end in front), is a vital requirement in the functionally efficient bull.
- * His ardent libido simmers continuously just below boiling point, and he takes a great interest in every cow or heifer that crosses his path!

In the female:

- * A clean, finely chiselled head radiating femininity. Fine wrinkles above the eyebrows, with an oval nasal bone ending in a broad black pigmented muzzle.
- * A refined and relatively flat neck usually with a series of fine skin pleats running perpendicularly down either side. The hump refined and oval in shape.
- * In contrast to the bull, the muscling of the back, loin, rump and outer thighs are smooth, without any hint whatsoever of muscle definition. This smooth bodily appearance is not spoiled by ugly lumps of localised fat.
- * A clean flat brisket, with the lower part of the dewlap running right around the brisket to the chest floor. The brisket is devoid of any fat deposition.
- * Genital organs well developed and adequately pigmented.
- * Udder well formed, with strong attachment at the rear, the front and at the sides; divided evenly into four quarters of even size. Teats of average size and squarely placed. The promise of a good udder to come in heifers, shows itself in the neat little folds on the rear of the young developing udder; together with small pointed teats.
- * As the cow matures and calves regularly, the increased udder development after every calf will assist in making her appear deeper at the rear than in front. When viewed from the side, the topline and underline therefore display a wedge shape with the open end at the rear of the animal. In contrast to the bull therefore, she shows greater depth towards the rear. This wedge shape (open end behind) is one of the classic characteristics of the functionally efficient cow.

While the general picture of the bull is one of strength, ruggedness and masculinity, the cow radiates femininity, refinement and sex appeal.

In the same way that we strive for functionally efficient animals, so we should make it our business to measure their levels of production as well. Performance testing, if applied objectively and not as a gimmick, provides an essential selection aid. Have the necessary performance data at hand at selection time, and use it with discretion and honesty. This makes an invaluable contribution to the breeding of functionally efficient cattle. One wonders how some people breed cattle without bothering to measure the performance.

iii) *Growth Ability*

The ability to grow efficiently is an inherent trait, the heritability of which is high. Because good growth ability brings with it definite economical benefits, it should always be an important component in a selection programme. However, while an animal may have a distinct genetic propensity for growth, we should always bear in mind that growth depends upon nutrition. Under extensive conditions therefore it remains essential that we provide the nutrition necessary to make the most of every animal's inherent ability to grow. This is where the measuring of performance has its greatest benefits.

It is quite amazing to see how artificial feeding can stimulate growth rate. One only has to compare animals of the same age that have remained on the veld, with those that have undergone show preparation or Phase C tests. However, from a financial point of view, it is simply not feasible to maintain entire herds on artificial sources of nutrition in extensive areas.

Calves sired by bulls with a proven ability of transmitting superior growth traits; can only give expression to these traits if their mothers provide an adequate and sustained milk flow. When we get this combination right and everything else is even, the inherently growthy calves show their worth within the first six weeks. They will wean heavier and will also maintain a satisfactory level of post weaning growth.

Cattle like all other living things must eat in order to grow. When a little calf hits the ground, the first thing in its mind is to fill its stomach. Indeed, filling its stomach will be its main preoccupation through the rest of its life. Only if it eats well, can it grow well; only if it grows well will it produce well. But some can grow better than others - those are the ones we look for!

iv) *Structural Soundness*

Structural soundness has to do with the structure of the animal, or in other words the bones that comprise the skeleton.

What we see from the exterior and call conformation, depends largely on the placement of bones on the skeletal frame. The skeleton is of course hidden from view by the hide, muscle, ligaments, etc. It therefore makes sense to acquaint one's self fully with this structure. Once we understand how the bones locate on the frame, and how they interact with each other, we can appreciate how this affects conformation and of course, efficiency.

In an article in the Beef Improvement Association Newsletter of July 1987, Peter Sporle describes structural soundness as follows: *"the ability to do the job with the least amount of effort."* He continues: *"Simple physics maybe; and that's a good starting point because soundness is all about the physical. It's all about bones set at angles, acting as levers, taking strain, supporting weight, propelling the body and most importantly, doing all this over many years."*

We always strive to attain correct structural soundness in our animals, and in this respect sometimes tend to go overboard in a fruitless search for perfection. Possibly we do not appreciate fully just how very many things have to be in place, in order to achieve a high degree of structural soundness. Bear in mind that when assessing soundness, concentrate on those characteristics that we know accompany efficiency. Take care not to become side-tracked by unimportant conformational quirks.

The Standards of Excellence give us a good idea of how we would prefer Brahman cattle to look, but we dare not become hung-up on structural soundness *per se*. Most of the time we have to put up with animals that carry various structural faults; for the simple reason that they are good producers. They pay their way, so *we cannot afford to get along without them*. Thank goodness for that too, otherwise we would go and cull *them* for their faults, and thereby lose all their hidden genetic treasures as well!

When it comes to structural soundness we human beings have one huge problem! We seem unable to see past the structural *faults*, and therefore fail to recognise those *virtues* that we need so badly. We simply must learn to accept that conformation problems will always be with us. If we wish to retain the valuable production traits, we have to stay aware of this fact and become accustomed to living with faults. In cattle we do not find animals with only *good* genes or only *bad* genes. Every animal inherits its packet of genes, and very well shaken up too, thank you very much! Of this we have to make some sense!

Astute and patient selection still enables us to make progress as long as we breed with productive animals, in spite of conformational shortcomings. The secret of course lies in their very productive ability, because this ensures that we can afford to carry on breeding with them. So it has always been and so will it continue to be. Modern selection aids such as BLUP and EBV'S will still confirm this truth. Taking into account some of the fixations on conformation that we always seem to cherish, we will yet look in amazement at the animals that these systems will throw up as being genetically superior. Ten to one we will be forced to modify our ideas in respect to what *good looks* in cattle is all about. Meanwhile though, we will of course try to get rid of the worst structural faults; but *never*, unless it is absolutely unavoidable, at the expense of functional efficiency.

In conclusion:

- * Concentrate on those aspects of conformation that have economic value.
- * Don't worry about insignificant quirks of conformation; if something like this catches your eye, ask yourself how can it affect production.
- * Cattle are fond of just slouching around, and in so doing show all kinds of ugly bumps and hollows that in reality are not there; make sure that they stand squarely when you evaluate them.
- * Always make sure that you see the animal walk; some structural faults only become visible when animals are in motion.
- * Never cast your eye quickly over an animal and come to a hasty decision; that is looking for trouble! Look well and look thoroughly!
- * Remember Peter Sporle's words about structural soundness: ' *the ability to do the job with the least amount of effort.*'

v) ***Skin, hair and bone***

We have already discussed *bone*, but just a few words about *skin* and *hair*:

Skin

In Brahman cattle we require a black pigmented skin. Indeed, its dark pigmented skin is one of the breeds most valuable assets; it plays a vital role in the Brahman's ability to adapt. The black pigment does not necessarily extend to the areas under the tail, between the legs and the underline. On these parts, in the absence of black pigment, skin pigmentation is amber to dark amber.

Brahman breeders are very aware of this feature and do not easily make any concessions in respect skin pigment. The standards of excellence for the breed, contain all the stipulations in

respect to pigment.

Hair

Brahmans have short slick hair coats; also an important feature in their ability to adapt. Now and then one will come across individuals that have an untidy, ruffled and long-haired coat, even in summer. This is undesirable and such animals should not qualify for registration; fortunately such an aberration in the hair coat occurs rarely.

An advantage of the Brahman in crossbreeding programmes is that Brahman bulls when mated to hairy cows of other breeds, have the ability most of the time, to produce smooth coated progeny. This is important in Namibia where long-haired cattle battle to achieve adequate levels of adaptation.

vi) *Milk production*

We should never assume that because a cow is a cow, she will be able to produce sufficient milk! Some cows simply do not have that ability! A cow may be as beautiful and fertile as one can wish, but if she is unable to produce enough milk to raise her calves properly, she cannot pay her way and must go. Good milk production is one of the most decisive requirements in a cow herd - another *jewel!*

The good milk producers are not those big, raw boned old mamas where one has to bend down to see if there really is an udder between the hind legs. The good milkers are the medium size and more refined cows. Udders and teats that play such a cardinal role in milk production and the raising of weaners, should rate high on the list of selection priorities. One must not accept blindly that between the hind legs is an udder and teats, that everything is always OK down there. Have look now and then! Obviously beef producers show far less involvement with the udders and teats of their cows than milk producers do. However, one gets the feeling that some more involvement by beef producers in the udders and teats of their cows, is not such a bad idea at all!

With Brahman cows on the point of calving, the presence of thick, swollen teats is a sign of drama on the way! One can think of many more pleasant things to do than to cut an angry Brahman cow and her calf from the herd, put her in the crush, and then try to milk her. Usually at a most inopportune time as well! However this is essential in relieving pressure on the udder, so that the calf can manage to suckle the teats on its own. At these times the air turns blue and profanities fly, while arms and hands receive a battering from kicking legs and sharp hooves!

Keep an eye on the teats, and beware of those thick, funnel shaped titties that with a full udder, can blow to an unbelievable size at calving time. Cows with such problems are definitely not worth all the hassles they bring with them!

vii) *Sheaths in hulls*

This is a problem area in the breed and one that requires constant attention. In a working bull, a sheath breakdown is a real pain in the neck, as it means that the bull will be out of action for a time. Unless a replacement bull is at hand, it's time for some quick planning.

Probably the safest way to get through this sheath maze is *not to take any chances* with suspect sheaths when buying bulls. Breeders sometimes use such bulls in the hope of obtaining their good features, but hopefully, *without the bad sheaths!!* Ten-to-one they are aware of the sheath problem, and send up a prayer every day that the bull will not pass his bad sheath on to his bull calves. Unfortunately it

seems that the heritability of this characteristic is quite high. While the bull might well pass his better qualities on to his calves, one can rest assured though that sooner or later, those sloppy sheaths will come too!

Commercial producers take a big risk when investing in a bull with a suspect sheath. For them, the possibility is always there of a sheath breakdown in the middle of the mating season, with all the hassles that go with it. For the stud breeder again, who takes the calculated risk of using a bull with a suspect sheath, many hours of utter frustration lie ahead. It is not a joke having to cull promising young bulls – **only** because of bad sheaths. Not even to speak of the thought of all those '*bad sheath genes*,' that now lurk around in the bull's female progeny.

To get through this sheath minefield it helps to be able to identify those characteristics that go hand in hand with good and bad sheaths.

Look for the following:

- * A sheath that hangs at about 45 degrees to the underline with a clean neat structure and light skin development;
- * A sheath with a small prepuce opening that can close tightly;
- * Look for sheath control - tap the bull lightly on the prepuce, if he lifts his sheath immediately it means that he can control it.
- * This is important - it is significant how many bulls with light, yet comparatively low hanging sheaths, go through life without picking up any problems. They seem to avoid injury from bushes and thorns, because the muscle contraction that they exercise on their lighter sheaths is not impeded by heavy folds of skin. Whenever they feel an obstruction, they can lift their sheaths out of the way immediately

Avoid the following:

- A sheath that hangs under the belly in a V, or a Y shape.
- A sheath showing a prolapse of the prepuce.
- A thick coarse sheath with heavy skin folds.
- A large prepuce opening that does not close tightly.
- A sheath that does not lift immediately when touched on the prepuce; no control.
- A sheath where the prepuce hangs significantly lower than the hock line.

Generations of Brahman breeders have wrestled with this problem of sloppy, low hanging sheaths. It does seem however, that careful selection for good sheaths brings a positive response. As mentioned above, if a bull has other features that they need, some breeders seem unable to resist taking a chance with a suspect sheath. However, taking chances with bad sheaths *just does not pay*; it is one of those aberrations with which we simply cannot live! The consequences of such an escapade will haunt the breeder from one generation of calves to the next, until the sheath problem finally becomes irrelevant. Be sure to remember that this takes a *long* time!

At all events, it remains safe to say that: 'a Brahman bull is only as good as his sheath.'

viii) *Legs - stance and stride*

Cattle hampered in performing their day to day functions by structurally unsound legs are truly non-starters. Easy mobility is such an important aspect, and plays a critical role in an animal's productive ability. We dare not compromise on sound legs and feet in the selection programme; even more so in extensive areas where cattle need to cover large areas in search of grazing.

In a standing animal, the experienced eye will pick up defects in the legs, but it is when an animal walks that the full impact of those defects on its mobility really becomes apparent. Therefore, *never* assess a set of legs without having seen the animal walk. A long, unhindered stride of both front and rear legs makes good mobility possible. To quote Peter Sporle again: "A 'free moving cow' is one that takes a length of stride proportional to the length of her body". Short jerky strides or excessively long strides, always point to the presence of structural problems somewhere.

When assessing structural faults in the limbs, we should always look further than the legs themselves to find the cause of the problem. For example, we can trace most defects in the front legs back to the placement of the shoulder blades. The angle of the shoulder blades to the ground determines the length of stride and the stance of the front legs. The placement of the thigh bone (femur), where it attaches to the hip joint (thurls), has similar effects on the hind legs.

Therefore, the abnormal placement of the shoulder blades and/or the thigh bones will give rise to an uneven distribution of weight down through the legs. The effect of any inherent tendencies towards splayed forefeet, straight or sickle hocks and sagging pasterns, will be exacerbated by the uneven pressure of weight being applied to the various leg joints. This in turn leads to an unnatural stride and of course impaired mobility; to say nothing of the discomfort that such animals have to contend with when standing and walking.

Faults such as straight hocks, sickle hocks, cow hocks, slack or upright pasterns, therefore do not come isolated and in neatly wrapped parcels; there is always a long string attached. Effective selection against these defects means being able to follow that string to its source; this also requires a sound knowledge of the skeletal system.

5) The Undesirable Traits to avoid

We refer candidates here to the list of defects as laid down in the Society's standards of excellence. Course Leaders will demonstrate and discuss all these undesirable characteristics. Do not become alarmed at the long list of defects that one can encounter in cattle; rest assured that no single animal will ever carry all these deviations!

The significance of these problems revolves largely around the *degree of intensity* of the defect. When considering the list of defects, take note that the emphasis moves from discrimination to serious discrimination to disqualification depending upon the severity of the deficiency. We must endeavour firstly, to recognise the defect; secondly to appreciate just how critical it is; and thirdly to decide whether it warrants the disqualification of the animal.

We should bear in mind too that perfection of conformation in cattle is largely a subjective term. Animals with a perfect conformation do not come at two-a-penny, and a state of perfection to one eye does not necessarily mean perfection to another! We repeat that the one aspect we must come to terms with is that in cattle, deviations in conformation, real or imagined, will always be present. We must learn to live with some of the real ones, and throw all the imagined ones out of the window.

Evaluation of Defects according to the Standards of Excellence.

A: Skew (Wry) Face and/or Muzzle.

Light to serious discrimination - in severe cases, disqualification, depending on degree.

B: Skew underjaw.

Underjaw more than one (1) tooth off centre - disqualification.

C: Overshot or Undershot Jaw.

Where teeth do not bite on pad - disqualification.

D: Legs

i) Lameness

- a) Seemingly of a permanent nature and obviously a hindrance to normal functions - disqualification.

N.B. If the abovementioned condition is not heritable, and has occurred after inspection, the registration certificate will not be withdrawn.

- b) Lameness ostensibly temporary and not causing hindrance to normal functions - slight discrimination.

ii) Stringhalt (Sudden jerking movements in hocks.) When visible - disqualification.

- iii) Straight hocks (Angle where tibia and metatarsus join at hock, on the front part of hind leg, too wide; hind legs take short strides when walking.) Serious discrimination - in severe cases, disqualification.

- iv) Cow hocks (Points of hocks together: hind feet splayed.) Slight to serious discrimination - depending on degree.

- v) Sickle hocks (The angle formed where the tibia and metatarsus join at the hock too narrow. Hind legs therefore tread too far forward under the animal when walking.) Serious discrimination - in severe cases - disqualification.

- vi) Splayed forefeet (Knees close together; hooves turning outwards.) Slight to serious discrimination - in severe cases, disqualification.

vii) Weak pasterns

- a) Excessive sagging in the pasterns - serious discrimination - in severe cases, - disqualification.

- b) Short, stiff, upright pasterns - slight to serious discrimination - in severe cases, disqualification.

E: Hooves

- i) Small twisted hooves (Usually subjected to uneven pressure.) Serious discrimination - in severe cases, disqualification.

- ii) Club foot (Also known as *Boklou*, or goats hoof, due to similarity in appearance.) Disqualification.

iii) *The "Rolled" Hoof* (Walls of the outer half of the hoof curl round underneath onto the weight bearing surface.)

Disqualification.

iv) *Shallow hooves* (Hooves lacking vertical depth, especially through the heel.)

Discrimination.

F: Upright Shoulder (Scapula placed too vertically)

Depending on degree - discrimination; In serious cases disqualification.

G: Pinched Heartgirth

Serious discrimination - in severe cases disqualification.

H: Deep Tailsetting (Tail attaches too deeply into the tailhead.) Depending on degree - serious discrimination.

I: Drooping Rump (Excess downward slope from hips to pins.) Depending on degree - serious discrimination - in severe cases, disqualification.

J: Lack of Body Size

i) Slight to serious discrimination - in severe cases, disqualification.

ii) Any signs of dwarfism or excessive close-coupledness, disqualification.

K: Pigment and Colour

i) Lack of black pigment in skin - disqualification. (See below)

A lack of black pigment is allowed on one of the following parts: Muzzle; around the eyes; hooves; tail switch; udder and teats; or the body.

ii) The following colours are not acceptable and their presence will result in disqualification:

- Gruella (A dirty brown colour.)
- Brindle (Brown or tawny, with black or other coloured stripes.)
- Albino (Total lack of pigment.)

L: Defects in Sex Organs

a) Bulls

i) *Cryptorchidism* (One or both testicles retained and not let down into the scrotum) - disqualification.

ii) *Hypoplasia* (Underdevelopment of one or both testicles) Serious discrimination - if below minimum requirement, disqualification.

iii) *Only One Testicle* - Refer to clause L: a) i) - Where one testicle has been surgically removed, a veterinary certificate in this respect must be available.

iv) *Twisted Scrotum*

Discrimination.

v) *General lack of masculinity*

Disqualification.

- vi) Permanent prolapse of the prepuce
Serious discrimination.
- b) Sheaths in Bulls
Loose hanging sheaths
Serious Discrimination - in severe cases, disqualification.
- c) Cows and Heifers
 - i) Excessive development in forequarters, short neck, prominent brisket; hard fat deposits on brisket, hips, pinbones and uneven fat deposition on other body parts; poor udder development: Disqualification.
 - ii) Where any of the above characteristics appear in isolation on female animals: Serious discrimination.
- d) Udder and teat defects
 - i) Poor udder attachments
Serious discrimination - in severe cases, disqualification.
 - ii) Uneven quartering of the udder
Serious-discrimination - in severe cases, disqualification.
 - iii) Balloon and 1 or bulbous (bottle) teats
Disqualification.
 - iv) Short, thick and stubby teats
Discrimination - depending upon degree.
 - v) More than four teats
Discrimination.
 - vi) Fleshy udder
Discrimination

M: Poor Temperament

Serious discrimination - in severe cases, disqualification.

N: Mixed Multiple Births

Unless proof of fertility of the female twin can be ascertained through blood testing: disqualification.

O: General

- i) Stringhalt, balloon and 1 or bottle teats

If such characteristics are observed in herds, and the animals concerned have already been approved for registration, the registration certificates of these animals may be withdrawn.

ii) Concealing of defects

Where efforts have been made to conceal structural, or any other defects - in show cattle, cattle put forward for inspection or sale animals, with the purpose of misleading judges, inspectors or buyers, the Society will regard such behaviour with extreme disapproval.

(Standard of Excellence discussed and revised by the Breed Judges Committee on 4 February 1992.)

6) Appraising or Evaluating Cattle

Surely one of the most difficult aspects in the appraisal of cattle is the development of an aptitude to compare a group of animals with one another, while accurately assessing the various virtues and flaws. Then with this evaluation in mind, be able to arrange the animals on merit and in a logical order of priority.

This ability takes years to develop. It comes from the judging of many cattle, and the comprehensive appraisal of many more in a variety of environmental conditions. It means the accumulation of extensive practical experience of cattle, as also a thorough grasp of how the different body parts function and how they interact with each other.

Time spent on pondering over the conformational oddities of animals seen from day to day and also over the years, helps the evaluation process along as well. Recalling how some, in spite of their conformational drawbacks, went on to become fine producers; and others, so handicapped by their conformational problems that they could not make the grade. How certain observations and theories on conformation, cherished for years, suddenly became invalid and proved wrong.

The question always remains if we are being consistent in our reasoning - why do we say this or that conformational condition is a defect - are our conclusions always valid? Sometimes, God's own creatures in the wild amaze us by showing the very features in their conformation that we object to in our cattle; yet see how well they adapt and survive. Is there not something for us to learn out there? Except to shrug our shoulders and say, "*We breed cattle, not antelope!*"

As far as the appraisal of cattle goes, there comes a day, sometimes after years of scrutiny, when the whole picture suddenly becomes clear. Eventually, one's *own image of the right animal* comes into focus and becomes imprinted in the mind. We then find that when confronted by a group of animals that we must judge or appraise, we no longer experience that paralysing feeling of uncertainty. No longer does our mind race in a frantic search for inspiration - now we can see the right individuals at once and what is more, we can describe what we see as well!

We wonder to ourselves, from where does this new found inspiration suddenly come? But we forget all those years of careful observation, the memories, and the pondering. At last these images are starting to bear fruit. All the while we have stored these things away; now we have found the key to unlock this fund of experience and let **it** work for us.

Once we have this image in mind, we think that cattle appraisal is not the daunting task we used to think it was. Let's not be fooled, the fact is that **it** is still every bit as daunting, but the difference is that we have a new insight and can now tackle the job with confidence.

Some people have difficulty in establishing this image in their minds. Maybe they do not think enough about what they see, maybe they do not remember what they have seen. Possibly the passion for cattle, and the urge to learn more and more about these creatures is just not there; maybe there is not enough dedication.

The word 'appraisal' when used in cattle terms is descriptive in that it means the identification of

phenotypical characteristics that have economical significance, and are firmly associated with production. It does not mean an obsession with an array of meaningless bumps and hollows on the animal's body. Sometimes people become really caught up with these trifling things. In Brahman cattle we must always remember that the primary objective of the breed is economical beef production - and it will remain so too! When appraising the breed, always keep this uppermost in the mind.

Appraisal is definitely not an exercise in avid fault seeking, and one should guard against slipping into such negative ways. Almost all cattle carry some or other structural deviation, so the way is usually open for the fault seeker to have a field day! Anyone with only a smattering of cattle sense can point out a hollow back, unsightly shoulders or legs, but it takes far more expertise to identify the *real* virtues. Remember too that these virtues, the jewels so to speak, are in many cases, far more important than most defects.

Ardent fault seeking always clouds the issue; it is any case an extremely fruitless exercise. Identify the desirable, efficient characteristics' first, then weigh the structural faults up against them. Try to appraise animals in their entirety, appreciating the virtues; *then* go to the structural problems. Never reject an animal for one shortcoming, until you have carefully evaluated it as a whole. Some defects point to consequences of such a dire nature, that even with the best will in the world; we cannot tolerate them.

When starting off with visual appraisal we all have problems in weighing the various defects up against each other. What is more important - a dip in the loins as opposed to splayed forefeet; a tendency to straight hocks against loose shoulders, etc. etc.? Then, how do we weigh the beneficial qualities that we need so badly, up against the structural faults in one animal?

To the beginner this represents a veritable maze, and while gaining more experience the best advice is - tread carefully! Give thought to the following:

* Always be true to yourself, the animals before you, and the owners. Cattle ranchers have to merely get wind of the slightest tendency of prejudice on your part, to have them lose all faith in your judgement.

* It makes more sense and is indeed much easier, to point out and discuss the good points, than to harp unnecessarily on the bad ones. Never, but never gloss over, or nonchalantly try to make light of obvious structural faults; this is a sure way to get

yourself nailed to the wall!

* If as an appraiser, you find yourself on the point of rejecting an animal for registration; or as a breeder of culling it from the herd, always take time to think again. If the animal carries any of the jewels that we constantly refer to, then think **once more!** Remember when it is gone, it is gone! Never lightly sacrifice these jewels on the altar of perfect conformation.

* Before starting to evaluate an animal, make sure to establish its age.

* Where an animal obviously does not fit into the group, especially in respect to growth and development, find out more before deciding its fate.

* When we start off appraising cattle, it is always difficult to gauge the standard of an animal within its own breed - is it a good one or an average one? Is it big enough for its age? We should have no trouble in picking out the poor ones! This aptitude comes with experience; so rather go carefully in the beginning.

Armed with our experience and knowledge we all set out to appraise cattle in our own way, however the following hints may help:

- * Always keep the function of the Brahman breed in mind;
- * Become thoroughly acquainted with the basics of functional efficiency, namely adaptability; sex character and fertility; capacity - spring of rib; muscling in bulls; udders and teats; a sound structure and temperament;
- * Always make sure to look for those characteristics that we *know* go hand in hand with fertility and production;
- * Make a detailed study of the skeletal system and observe how it functions when an animal moves; in your mind's eye, *see* those bones working under the hide! In other words, try and look *into* the animal as well as *at* it;
- * Identify the virtues' first, then go to the defects; do not be a mere fault seeker - the accurate appraisal of cattle involves far more than that;
- * Look carefully at cattle at every opportunity. See how they lie down, and how they get up; watch them as they stand and when they walk. Never look superficially, look well and remember! You will never remember all the cattle you see, but try to recall the those individuals from which you learned something. There will be quite a few!
- * Take note of and reflect upon the behavioural patterns in cattle. Try to understand why they behave and react in the way they do. When outbursts of temperament occur in a kraal, take time to think of the circumstances that could have given rise to this.
- * Never become dogmatic about aspects that you might believe in, but where no documented proof exists; you could come to earth with a bump! Rather keep your ideas to yourself, and test them on all cattle you see. In time you will come to know if your theories hold water or not.
- * Pay attention to people who know cattle; one can learn a lot from them. Be careful however of the *wise guys*; those who talk much, but who know little!
- * Think, think, and think again! Take the time to ponder carefully over what you have seen. This will give rise to more questions, and consequently more meditation! But don't despair, any time is time to think about cattle!

Having ploughed through all the stuff on the preceding pages; you could well find yourself somewhat down in the dumps. However, do not despair! If it is any consolation, remember that all those who really know cattle, be they breeders, judges, or breed inspectors have traversed this same minefield of bovine appraisal. They have all gained their knowledge the hard way.

At some time or another, all judges have landed in the hot seat because of a wrong decision in the show ring. All breeders can look back ruefully on selection slip-ups, that they have sorely regretted; while all breed inspectors can remember occasions of acute embarrassment when they did not get it right! It's all part of the learning process and everyone goes through the same mill; there are no quick-fixes or instant remedies in getting to know cattle.

We must accept that we will all make mistakes. As long as we do not repeat them, but manage to learn something in the process, the heavens will not fall. In conclusion remember: *"Those who think they have all the answers, have simply not heard all the questions!"*

Good luck to you all!

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