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Drought-Related Animal Health and Nutrition Risks

Colleen Janse van Rensburg

With the prolonging drought gripping the country, livestock owners not only have to worry about where the next feed and water source will come from, but they will also need to watch over the health of their remaining animals. Low feed and water intakes place a tremendous amount of stress on animals that directly affects immunity levels. Drought, however, also has an impact on the surrounding environment exposing livestock to additional nutrition and health risks.

Water is an essential element of life that regulates many important physiological processes in the body. Reduced water intake will result in reduced feed intake. While the lack of water during droughts is already a serious problem, the quality of any available water is also cause for concern. Increased concentrations of total dissolved solids (TDS) during droughts, affect the palatability and toxicity levels of water. High amounts of some nutrients, such as sulphates and nitrates, will have an adverse effect on animal health and performance.

The presence of algal and bacterial blooms, most specifically blue-green algae, on open water sources further poses a risk to animals. Animals crowding around and in waterholes and ponds may contaminate the water, thus increasing the nutrient load in the water which promotes the growth of algae and bacteria. Blue-green algae (Cyanobacteria) can release neurotoxins into the water and cause liver damage in animals.

In drought disaster areas, feed sources are severely limited with farmers resorting to feeding any available feeds. These feeds are often much poorer in quality (deficient in both energy and protein), than what is normally fed. Feeding feeds of poor quality

can exacerbate deficiencies of important minerals and vitamins resulting in several metabolic diseases due to the mineral imbalances.

Further health risks come with feeding alternative feeds not commonly found in the diets of animals. Feeds such as sweet potatoes may be mouldy or animals may eat sharp grass awns or spiny plants that can injure the lining of the mouth and digestive tract, and become infected. Animals are also prone to plant poisonings either through the consumption of poisonous plants not usually eaten or consuming plants that may become toxic when drought-stressed. Nitrate and prussic acid poisonings are such examples.

Extension Suite Online provides a wide range of information in terms of nutrition and herd health during times of drought that farmers can access. Together with a veterinarian, a health programme can be devised to ensure animals are vaccinated against essential diseases including respiratory and clostridial diseases, given vitamin injections and treated for external and internal parasites. This will help to limit health and nutrition risks caused by droughts.



Colleen Janse van Rensburg

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Liven up your computer's desktop with an Extension Suite Online wallpaper. Download wallpapers directly from the ESO newsletter e-mail or on the ESO media website: media.esuite.co.za



Tips and tools for advisors

Portia Phahlane

Managing Heat Stress in Farm Animals

South Africa is currently experiencing high temperatures with some areas reaching over 40 °C. The high temperatures affect farm animals in a number of different ways. Common symptoms of heat stress include: increased respiratory rate and panting, drooling, increased water intake and decreased feed intake which may result in poor performances.

To help minimise heat stress in farm animals, the following can be considered:

- Provide shade for animals during the day
- Provide a sufficient supply of fresh, clean water
- Reduce stocking rate and avoid overcrowding
- Sprinkle animals with water
- Move feeding times to cooler parts of the day
- Use sprinklers and fans to help cool housed animals

TOP NATIONAL ESO USER: JANUARY 2016

The monthly national ESO user will receive the following prizes: First time National ESO User 2015: **4 Gig USB memory stick**, second time National ESO User 2015: **Digital Camera**, third time National ESO User 2015: **Nokia Lumia 520**, fourth time National ESO User 2015: **Samsung Galaxy Tab**.

Congratulations to Sizwe Louis Nzuzwa, the Extension Suite Online® National Top User for January 2016.



Sizwe Louis Nzuzwa

Sizwe originally comes from Mtunzini (Obanjeni) in KwaZulu-Natal. The village is situated on the east coast, enjoying sea breezes and good weather for farming, primarily sugarcane.

Sizwe started working for the GDARD, Gauteng in February 2009 and 2016 marks seven years of Extension Practice by our current top user. He's area of operational jurisdiction is within the Johannesburg Metro Municipality, covering the A, B, E, F and D (partially) Regions. He specialises in Plant Production and is enrolling for a Masters degree in Disaster Management.

His immediate supervisor is Mr. T.T Mabuza, and his regional manager is Mr. C.K Lungu - with their offices situated in Randfontein, on the West Rand. He explains that he works with seven (7) community farming groups - with some of them registered as co-operatives. The average number of farmers per project is 5 (five).

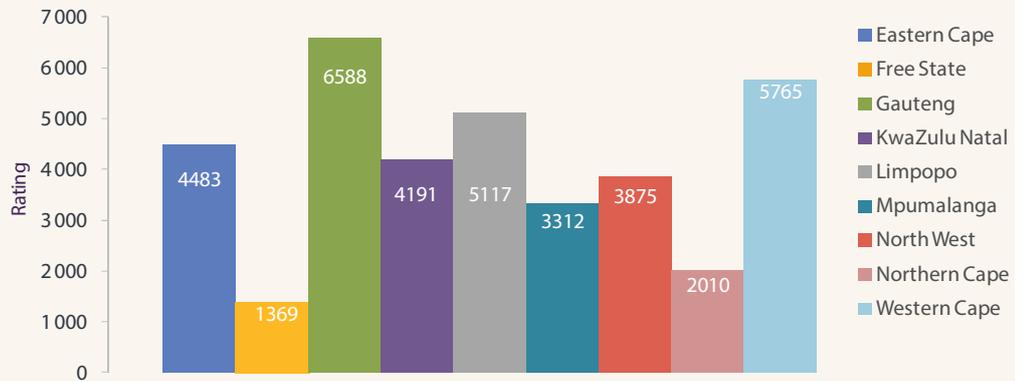
One of Extension Suite Online's star performers, Vhuthu Gavhi, encouraged Sizwe to start using ESO as an alternative, efficient agricultural solution to improve extension services to their farmers. Sizwe found that to be true, and has since become one of the Top Users by extensively using the system. Sizwe found the system to be user-friendly, and because he could find relevant solutions on the spot when access to internet/intranet was available, improve his service delivery output.

In closing, he emphasised that ESO is a most innovative agricultural decision-making tool as it enables extension officers to improve extension services to farming communities.

EXTENSION SUITE ONLINE UTILISATION: JANUARY 2016

Extension Suite Online (ESO) utilisation is determined through monitoring user utilisation in the nine provinces and by attaching values to Visits, Pages Visited and Duration of Visits; a rating is calculated to establish the ESO National Top User of the Month.

ESO PROVINCIAL TOP USER GRAPH



ESO PROVINCIAL TOP USERS

Province	Name
Eastern Cape	Sindile Magoda
Free State	Setene Mooko
Gauteng	Sizwe Nzuzwa
KwaZulu Natal	Dumisani Nzama
Limpopo	Jeremia Murovhi
Mpumalanga	Monyamane M Mochaki
North West	Mompati Gabanakgosi
Northern Cape	Johan Le Roux
Western Cape	Riaan Nowers

PEST TALK:

EARTH FLEA ON ALFALFA/LUCERNE

Further information on all featured pests can be found on ESO.

Scientific Name: *Sminthurus viridis*

Popular Name: Earth Flea

Earth Flea are minute green-yellow insects that are equipped with a springing organ. This enables them to leap into the air when disturbed. They are abundant only under damp conditions. They leave distinctive feeding damage of 'windows' of transparent leaf membrane.



Sminthurus viridis

ESO TECH TIPS:

Jeanne-Louise Bekker

Managing files and folders on a computer can become a tedious process, make use of these keyboard tricks to speed up your file management in 2016.

Rename a file: Click on the file or folder that you want to rename and press **F2** to be able to change its name quickly. Now press the **TAB** key without deselecting, to allow you to edit the next file as well.

Rename more than one file at a time: Select all the files that you want to rename, right-click the first one and select "**Rename**" from the dropdown menu,

type the new name. This will automatically change the other files to the same name and add a suffix (1), (2), and so on. This way you can easily batch rename files at once.

Select multiple files: Press **Shift + Down Arrow** to select a single file or press **Shift + Page Down** to select a large group of files at once.

Undo a rename: If you renamed a file by mistake you can quickly revert the changes by pressing **CTRL+Z** which will undo the name change. This will even work if you have deleted a file by mistake, just immediately press **CTRL+Z**.

Create a new folder: In Windows 7 and up, you can quickly press **CTRL+SHIFT+N** to create a new folder.

Do you have any technology related questions? Send them to newsletter@esuite.co.za, with your name, province and the question and we will answer them in a following newsletter edition.



Editor:
Thembeke Zengele

Publishers:
Manstrat Agricultural Intelligence Solutions (Pty) Ltd.

Correspondence:
newsletter@esuite.co.za | +27 12 460 2499



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