



# Sharing Simbra success with fellow breeders

Stefmar, one of the top Simbra studs in the country has delivered many champions. **Fanie Maré** shares his journey with the Simbra.

**S**tefmar Midnight, Stefmar Cornel, Stefmar Jenny and Stefmar Olga. Ask any Simbra breeder, and they will know about these animals and their breeder Fanie Maré.

After getting married, Fanie and his wife Settie settled on his father-in-law's farm Ysterspruit in the Klerksdorp district. At that stage, Fanie was working at the Klerksdorp municipal council and was only involved in the farming operation part-time.

Encouraged by his in-laws, he resigned in 1976 to farm full-time and became partly responsible for crop-farming and were put completely in charge of the beef cattle, mainly Afrisim cows. Brahman bulls were used with

great success on these cows. In 1980, he bought the entire Overbrahm Brahman stud herd and joined the Brahman Cattle Breeders Society.

But in the early 1980s, Willie Snyman, at the time an animal scientist at Vleissentraal, put him on the Simbra path. In 1986, he joined the Simmentaler/Simbra Cattle Breeder's Society and for the next few years ran both the Brahman stud and his new Simbra stud under the banner of Fanie Maré Simbras.

"I managed the stud herd and my father-in-law's commercial herd in the same manner," he recalls. "One of my most important selection criteria at the time was fertility. I used a very short breeding season – six weeks from 1 November to mid-December for heifers,

**ABOVE:** The bull FM 06 39, a son of Jared, one of the founding bulls of the Stefmar Simbra herd. COURTESY OF THE SIMMENTALER/SIMBRA CATTLE BREEDER'S SOCIETY

and ten weeks, from mid-December to the end of February for cows."

## PHASE D GROWTH TEST

The joint management of two breeds gave Fanie an opportunity to compare them. He undertook extensive Phase D growth tests as part of the performance testing programme of weaned bull calves.

"When the bulls of both breeds were tested under the exact same conditions, I got around R450 per calf more for culled Simbra bulls on auction, in spite of the fact that I got more per kilogram for the Brahman calves. But in terms of conception and weaning percentage, there was little difference between the breeds."

Fanie admits that it differs from year to year, but in the past he has weaned Simbra bull calves at 200 days at an average of 305kg. His average for this year was 258kg as it was a difficult year, but now he also weans the calves earlier because the market favours lighter weaners.

Thanks to the Brahman's great popularity at the time, Fanie found it increasingly difficult to afford a good bull. Good Simbra bulls, although not as freely available, were far more affordable. As culled Simbra calves were more popular than pure-bred Brahman calves, he increasingly focused on the Simbras. In 2001, after 21 years, he sold his Brahman to continue with the Simbra herd.

From the outset he attended as many courses and farmer's days as possible. In 1995, he was one of the first people to pass the Simbra course with an A-symbol. These days, he is a breed examiner and was one of three judges to adjudicate the Simbras 25-year Festival Week in Parys in September.

## SELECTION CRITERIA

Fertility remains his primary criterion, the second being the ability of a cow to wean a healthy, strong calf.

"I expect my cows to wean a calf at 45% her own body weight at 200 days," Fanie says. "Initially, I retain 70% of the heifer crop and at the age of one year I select again, this

time on conformation and Breedplan figures. At 16 months the breed selectors do a third selection, and the fourth and final heifer selection. The latter includes a veterinary technologist measuring the pelvic passage just before the heifer is put to the bull.

"The breeding season also serves as an additional selection tool. If heifers do not conceive at 18 months, they get another opportunity during the summer breeding season. If they still fail to conceive, they are culled."

In the past, Fanie

must be as close to the ideal conformation as possible."

Fanie believes that at least three of his bulls should be related to his cows. At present, he uses the sons of the three American bulls Patriot, Prevail and Becherovka. This year, he plans to use two sons of Red Bullet.

The Prosim study group, of which he is a member, negotiated a Phase D growth test with a feedlot for its members. The feedlot buys bull calves from the breeders and feeds them for a specific time without any growth

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eliminated good genetic material from his herd when a cow skipped a breeding season no matter for what reason. These days, he gives a cow skipping the summer breeding season another chance during the winter breeding season, but sells the cow and her calf at a production sale the following May.

**BULL SELECTION**

Fanie is well-known for two bull lines in his herd that performed exceptionally well and those of other breeders: the J-line (Jared) and the V-line, which Fanie refers to as the fifty-line.

"I try to keep these two lines as separate as possible, but will experiment within a line by, for example, mating a Jared granddaughter with one of his direct sons. I will then do the exact opposite in the fifty-line.

"The choice of bull depends as much on performance figures as on what I can see. The figures must be acceptable, of course, but visually he

stimulants. After the test, each breeder can buy back their own bulls that performed well. In both cases, the current market price serves as a guideline.

**AUCTIONS**

Fanie has presented production auctions for the past nine years. His son Jaco, of Jacmar Simbras, has joined him and they now present a joint auction "It is important that my offering is on a level that will draw buyers. That is why I offer some of my very best cows. I try to offer a variety – heifers, pregnant cows, cows with calves and three-in-ones. But I retain at least one good calf in my own herd."

This year he presented the cow Stefmar Jenny FM 05 174, winner of the Super Cow Trophy at the International Championships in Vryburg in 2010, along with a heifer calf. However, he retained her two outstanding daughters and her 2011 heifer calf in his own herd. Her buyer entered her at the Royal Show, where she was once



**ABOVE:**  
The exceptional Simbra cow, Stefmar Jenny (FM 05 174).



**RIGHT:**  
Fanie and Settie Maré of Stefmar Simbras.

again the Super Cow!

Fanie stresses that bulls on auction should be fit and in a good condition, enabling the new owner to use them right away. Now and again he also offers a tried and tested stud bull, but only if one of his sons can replace him.

**ACHIEVEMENTS**

Several of Fanie's animals have made an impact on the breed. In 2005, Stefmar Olga was the International Junior Champion, Reserve Breed Champion and Interbreed Junior Champion. Stefmar Jenny is another example. In 2010 she was the International Super Cow and her son, Stefmar Cornel, was the

Grand Champion Bull in Lichtenburg. There is also the well-known Stefmar Midnight, which was sold as a calf with his mother, FM 02 21C.

"This illustrates the benefits of making outstanding animals available to other breeders. A number of bulls would have been just another bull if they had stayed in my herd. But, in the hands of new owners, they became nationally known. The great publicity I received boosted my stud. I owe the buyers of these animals a debt of gratitude."

• Contact the Simmentaler/Simbra Cattle Breeder's Society on 051 446 0580/2 or at [info@simmentaler.org](mailto:info@simmentaler.org)