SPECIAL EDITION

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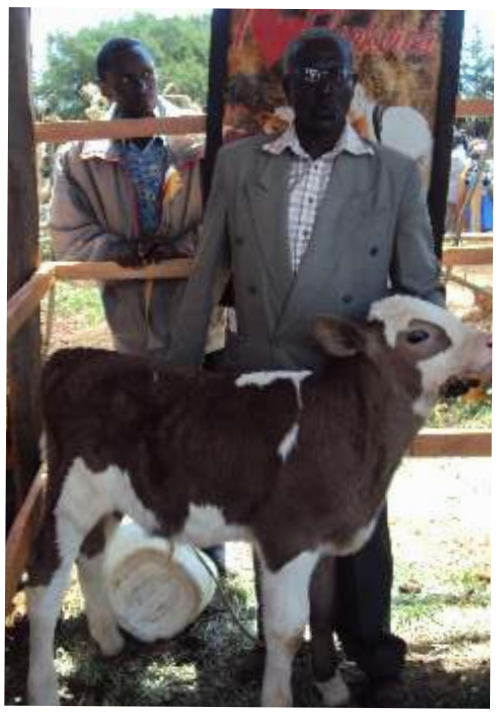
Community eye

Providing Missing Link In Fight Against Rural Poverty

Issue No. 048 Kshs 30

FLECKVIEH CAPTURES THE IMAGINATION OF KENYA



The year 2009 will go down in history as one during which the Kenyan dairy sector experienced some of the most memorable developments.

One of the greatest occurrences that captured the imagination of Kenyas was the introduction in June of the Fleckvieh breed of cattle.

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Fleckvieh Genetics (E A) Ltd imported two mature cows from South Africa for the Breeders Show and Sale organized by Brookside Dairies. The cows were Amani, which is 100% pedigree, and Mwanzo, a cross breed of the Holstein and Fleckvieh.

FULL STORY ON PAGE 16

In the pictures, Clockwise: President Mwai Kibaki was one of the many people impressed by Fleckvieh cows at the Nairobi International Trade Fare; Mzee Borniface Kabugi of Nyahururu Ngano, with a one-moth-old Fleckvieh calf in Olkalou; Cental (Western) Regional Commissioner Mr. Wycliffe Ogallo, Olkalou District Commissioner Mr Samson Ojwang, Delight Promotions MD Mr. George Wambugu, Mr. Jared Kinyosi and Olakalou Council Chairman Mwangi Nyaga admire Amani; Vice President Kaloinzo Musyoka listens to explanations by Mr. Teurie Van Heldon, chairman livestock committee of Agricultural Society of Kenya on the special traits of Amani, the Fleckvieh cow.

How to interpret Fleckvieh Bull Catalogues

Dr. Muchira Gathira (BVM)

The common practice of breeding and artificial insemination in Kenya is to select the bull to be used on a cow based entirely on the aspect of price. For example, when an inseminator arrives in a farm, s/he will certainly ask the farmer which bull to serve with; the common response to this question is, 'Give me the low cost bull'. In certain cases, a session of negotiation and haggling takes place whereby the two parties settle on the price, rather than the bull.

The ideal situation would be where the bull to be used is selected based on its traits, and those of the recipient female; so that at the end of the breeding exercise, the daughter will be better than the mother, thus genetic gain. Without any genetic aim during breeding, Kenyan farmers are not reaping from the benefits associated with artificial insemination.

BREEDING AS AN INVESTMENT

Many dairy farmers fail to see the process of breeding as an investment; as such, the immediate cost of semen and services is commonly perceived as a bother rather than an opportunity to improve on the production of the herd. However, if the farmers should analyze the situation correctly, then s/he would see the benefit of selecting superior genetics; and having animals on the farm with a long and sustained productive period.

With Fleckvieh genetics, the farmer stands to gain from any successful insemination due to the unique nature of the breed. Previously, dairy farmers experienced absolute losses from any insemination which resulted in a bull-calf; however, that is set to change with the introduction of the dual-purpose breed, Fleckvieh. This is due to the fact that Fleckvieh buuls are know to attain 300kgs in 6-9 months; from then on, a farmer can make a decision whether to sell the animal or to keep it for fattening.

SELECTION OF SIRES;

It is important to understand the process through which a bull goes through before it is designated as a breeding; and thus how to choose the correct bull for your herd. At Fleckvieh Genetics (EA) Ltd, we usually give a brochure to interested farmers highlighting our sires and their various attributes. These sires form a part of the breeding herd of Bavarian Fleckvieh Genetics in Germany.

Bavarian Fleckvieh Genetics buys most of the 120 sires tested each year at livestock auctions in Upper Bavaria.

About 50 of these young sires come out of so called planned matings, which means especially selected sire-dams were mated to the best Fleckvieh sires available.

Further 40 sires that are bought at the auctions come out of regular but promising matings with herd-book cows. In these bulls besides the production data great value is set upon bloodlines. Each year 20 bulls are tested within this program. The selection of the bulls for this program is focused on fitness traits and service life.

Last but not least almost 10 sires are bought from other countries each year (such as Austria, The Czech Republic, Australia, and South Africa). After the quarantine period is over (28 days pre-quarantine and 28 days main quarantine period) 1.200 doses of semen of each sire are collected and used in farms that take part in milk recording. The goal is to get data about the lactations of at least 50 daughters of each young sire in order to judge his hereditary performance.

This testing period lasts for six weeks. Each bull is tested in different regions (crop farming, grassland). This guarantees that regional effects do not have a major influence on a bull's breeding values.

Waiting bulls:

After the testing period further 5.000 semen straws are collected from each sire. Afterwards the sire is kept on one of our waiting stations at Börnchen / Saxony, Anzing or Dietramszell, till the first production data of his daughters are published. This takes about four years. This process is known as progeny testing.

Progeny Testing:

It is used in the breeding of both plants and animals, but is most commercially important in animal breeding to determine the value of an animal in terms of the sex-limited characters of its offspring, for example milk production in females. A bull for example cannot be assessed for milk production; however the performance of its female offspring can be used to determine the use of the animal for future crosses, provided of course the character has a high heritability. A progeny test is performed by mating the male with a number of females with proven performance. The average performance of the offspring is then found, giving a measure of the male's respective value to the breeder.

Proven sires:

After about 50 100-day production results are published and at least 30 daughters were inspected for their type traits and their general appearance "the wheat is separated from the chaff". Then the positive sires (20 - 25 % of all young sires) get a breeding license. (Total merit index at least 114, frame, muscling, conformation, udder and cleanness of the udder at least 88 points). 3% of these sires are used for planned mating in order to produce the new generation of test sires.

Our sires;

At Fleckvieh Genetics (EA) Ltd, we have introduced 8 sires in the country. Of these, seven are proven sires while one, Weltenburg is a waiting bull. These are the bulls which have been highlighted on our brochures together with a few of their attributes as determined through the process of progeny testing.

Interpreting the information;

The information provided on the brochure has been derived from the process of progeny testing as mentioned before. As such, the figures depicted portray the actual performance of the daughters of these bulls.

Take for example Inzhagi. The average milk production of his heifers is 6668kg in 305 days (lactation). Within this group of daughters, the best produced 973kg above the average figure. As such, the daily production for such a heifer can be calculated as;

(6683+973) kg ÷ 305days = 25.1kg/day for a first-calving heifer.

All the other traits can be interpreted in a similar manner for their respective measurement. Traits such as udder and feet conformation are given scores rather than absolute measurements.

The total merit index is the single comparative figure which factors in all the traits of the bull; and which is used to determine the top bulls in the line-up. In our selection, there are three top bulls namely; Rustico, Waterberg and Mangfall.

SELECTING A BULL FOR YOUR HERD

The ideal basis of selecting a bull for your herd should be based on the traits of both the bull and your cow. The main aim should be to correct for any anomaly which may be present in your herd. For example, when choosing for good udder conformation, the sire Inzhagi would be the best breeding candidate. As such, depending on the needs of the herd, the top bull may not necessarily be the best bull for your cow. This is what we mean by selecting a bull based on traits rather than price.

CONCLUSION

Kenyan dairy farmers can stand to benefit from the genetic gain derived from artificial insemination; however, they can only attain this if they adopt the correct method of bull selection. At Fleckvieh Genetics, we advise farmers to get a Herd-evaluation prior to the breeding exercise so as to indentify the genetic needs of the herd. This way, the farmer will have a prior knowledge of the ideal bull for their cow; and will have ample time to prepare themselves financially so that price or cost doesn't factor-in as a criteria for bull selection.

Dr. Muchira is a Veterinary surgeon working with Fleckvieh Genetics (EA) Ltd. Correspondence drsimonpeter2009@gmail.com or info@fleckviehgeneticsea.com

More Kenyan farmers keen on Fleckvieh

Small scale dairy farmers in the country are keen on the Fleckvieh breed which has been introduced to Kenya. Several farmers who spoke to Community eye from a cross-section of Kenya said they were eager to adopt the Fleckvieh breed for they have been longing for a cow that can serve both purposes of milk and beef production.

Mzee Boniface Kabugi of Nyahururu Ngano, Central Province, a dairy farmer, who owns two acres of land with two milking cows said Fleckvieh was most suitable for his farm. He said because the cows have a high capacity to convert feeds, he will have no problem producing forage for the cow to produce 30 lkilos per day as compared to 10 kilos which he gets from his Friesian after lost of feeding. He added that Fleckvieh would be good for him because it would still fetch enough money when sold for meat. Another advantage of Fleckvieh he said is its resistance to ECF because the cow's thick skin is not easily penetrated by ticks.

Mr. Kabugi who retired as an extension worker with the Ministry of Agriculture in 2003 said that he was awaiting his cows to be on heat so that he would serve them with Fleckvieh semen. He however called upon the management of Fleckvieh genetics to ensure a wide distribution of their services and products in Laikia and Nyandarua districts.

Meanwhile Mr. Waweru Mbichu, a 36 year old farmer from Olkalou District Rift Valley Province, said he was shocked at the huge size of the Fleckvieh cows he saw at the Olkalou trade fair recently. Mr. Mbichu said his two dairy cows were quite small compared to Amani and Mwanzo which have big bodies and produce much milk. “My ambition is to have a cow like this which can give me more profit and help me make more money at less cost. Am planning to buy Fleckvieh semen”, said Mbichu.

At the same time Mr. Alfred Karanja of Thanduka farmers Ngenia area in Limuru said he was choosing Fleckvieh cows because their calves grow quickly compared to other breeds which farmers have in Kenya today. He also said Fleckvieh was better for farmers as they would prevent inbreeding because cows such as Holstein and Ayshire were introduced in Kenya long time ago and have been bred for a long time meaning that there might be a chance of in breeding.

Mr. Karanja a retired Telkom Kenya worker specializing in dairy farming for the last 15 years, keeps 10 cows on his one quarter acre of land under zero grazing. He said that he had inseminated all the ten cows with Fleckvieh semen and he is expecting his first calf early in the year.

Mr. Karanja urged fellow farmers in Limuru to adopt the Fleckvieh breed because it is likely to lower their losses from mastitis which is prevalent in the area. He said mastitis has affected many farmers' incomes in Limuru causing them to cull highly producing animals, but with the introduction of Fleckvieh which has a high resistance to mastitis the farmers will begin to recoup losses and make profits from the dairy enterprises.

Clockwise: Mr. Jared Kinyosi, Mr. Karanja, George Cheruiyot and Jeremiah Bett with Mr Besseling in Kitale, Chief Benson Mathenge of Olkalou, Mr. Omoga of Fleckvieh Nairobi Office talks to farmers in Bomett.

Community Eye

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MORE NEWS

SKY: LIMIT FOR BUTERE GIRLS

MUMIAS FSA DECLARES

LUGARI DISTRICT PLANS NATIONAL FARM INPUT EXHIBITION

UTILIZE CDF WELL; BUTULA TOLD

TRANS NZOIA: KWANZA RESIDENTS DEMAND SECURITY

EQUITY BANK SALVAGES BUNGOMA FARMERS

2009:
The year Fleckvieh came to Kenya

The year 2009 will go down in history as one during which the Kenyan dairy sector experienced some of the most memeorable developments. One of the greatest occurrences that captured the imagination of Kenyas was the introduction in June of the Fleckvieh breed of cattle.

The Fleckvieh proved to be the major attraction of the year pulling large crowds, right from the head of state, senior government ministers, provincial commissioners, and district commissioners, large scale farmers to the small holder farmers owning one or two cows.

Fleckvieh Genetics (E A) Ltd imported two mature cows from South Africa for the Breeders Show and Sale organized by Brookside Dairies. The cows were Amani, which is 100% pedigree, and Mwanzo, a cross breed of the Holstein and Fleckvieh. There may be no appropriate words to describe the impression left on farmers' minds but it may be fair to say that it was one of relief and excitement. Wherever the cows were seen, whether in Eldoret, Kitale, Nakuru or Nyeri, farmers' reactions were all the same.

Farmers feel relieved because at last here is an alternative to the traditional genetic pool of Holstein, Jersey and Ayrshire. They were also excited because of the economic prospects presented by this breed which is the only dual purpose cow in the world. In other words for farmers Fleckvieh is a win-win as it gives them returns from both beef and milk both of which it supplies in big quantities.

Fleckvieh is the best choice for farmers in Kenya today as it presents the potential for the next level of livestock development. It has the ability to substantially contribute to solutions of food security by providing quick maturing cows as well as the ability to give farmers better in comes through reduced costs of maintenance coupled with high quality volumes of milk. In short Fleckvieh is Godsent for Kenya.

Unlike the other grade cows in Kenya, Fleckvieh can adopt to any climatic and ecological zones from the hot semi desert areas to the cold highlands of Central Kenya. Fleckvieh unique thick skin makes it hardy and resistant to vector borne diseases such as ECF. Additionally farmers in Eastern, Western and Nyanza Provinces, areas where tsetse flies have prevented keeping of high grade cows, now have an opportunity to become producers of milk through Fleckvieh.

For farmers in the arid and semi arid areas who lost their cows during the severe drought, Fleckvieh gives them a choice as they think of restocking. There is also the added advantage of increasing the quality and quantity of beef among the herds with additional premium of milk production. The Maasai people of Narok and Kajiado should seize this opportunity.

In order to make the semen and information services accessible to all farmers in the country Fleckvieh is partnering with other stakeholders in to ensure that no one is left out of this great opportunity. In 2010 the management of Fleckvieh Genetics (EA) Ltd sponsored and participated in several shows, field days and farmer training sessions in several districts including Nairobi, Nakurum, Nyeri, Eldoret, Kitale, Olkalou, Bomett and Limuru. This year plans are underway to get the services to more farmers.

With the lower input costs and veterinary bills, plus better quality milk and a greater price for cull cow, the Fleckvieh is the ideal breed for the farmer wanting to crossbreed his way into profit.

Farmers are advised to keep their eyes and ears open as Fleckvieh will be coming to you soon.

For more information contact Fleckvieh Genetics (EA) Ltd. Muthaiga Road, Mobil Plaza 1st Floor. P.O. Box 19055-00501, Nairobi. Telephone 0712 095555; Fax 020- 2463393, Email:Info@fleckviehgeneticsea.com; websitefleckviehgeneticsea.com

Elsewhere in this newspaper you will also find the list and contacts of distributors and service providers of Fleckvieh nearest to your farm.

DISTRIBUTORS OF FLECKVIEH

	Name of Agent	Address	Telephone Number	Officer	Physical Location	Street	Premises	Contact Persons	Person Handling product
1.	Country Veterinary Services	Box 12242 Nyeri	0612034645	0722406668	Nyeri	Asia Quarters	Tazama	Dr. Wameo	Rose Wairimu
2.	Karatina Vet. Services	Box 1299 Karatina	06172829	Dr. Kamau	Karatina	Karatina	Starbucks Building	Wambugu	Agnes Wanjiru
3.	Menengai Agrovet	Box 360 Nakuru	0512214087 0722808701	Dr. Muthui S. K.	Nakuru	Kenyatta Avenue	Molo hs. Opp. Ukwala s/ market	L.W. Karanja	Leah
4.	Ukulima Agrov. Services	Box 1034 kerugoya	06021942 0722566917	Dr. Cyprian Muriithi	Kerugoya	Market	Treety	Dr. muriithi Thiakunu	Karimi
5.	Country Focus Agrovet	Box 1846 Nyahururu	0725262265/ 0722261532		Nyahururu	Sharp Road (Githaini)	Muhoya Ruii Building	Dr. Gaita Peter	Patrick Ngugi
6.	Thika Farmers Centre	Box 1408 Thika	06721737 0733787977	John Nganga	Thika	Mama Ngina Drive		John K. Mwangi	John K. Mwangi
7.	Elika Agrovet Supplies	Box 828 Muranga	06031125	Margaret N. Mwangi	Muranga	Uhuru Highway			Margaret N. Mwangi
8.	Nanyuki Vet. Services	Box 859 Nanyuki	06232454 0722899470		Nanyuki	Iumumba	Joskaki Building	Dr. Lucy	Charity W. Mbogo.
9.	Simuka Vet. Centre	Box 1872-00900 kiambu	0725438631	Dr. S.M. Kabaiya	Kiambu			Dr. S.M. Kabaiya	
10.	Kathenju Agencies	Box 350-00208 Ngong hill	0722892686 imutea@yahoo.com	Julius Aritho Mutea	Ngong Area				
11	Moses Kiptanui		0722745688	Moses Kiptanui	Eldoret	Market Street	Komora Centre	Moses Kiptanui	Fred 0721950312
12	Mrs. Gumo		0734681770 0722724219 0710884042		Kitale		Akamba booking offices		Mr. Koech 0720425180
13	Oriics Farm		0720101927	Mr. George	Olekalau				Al Mwaniki 0722542839
14	Miss. Eunice		0717041564 0712095555		Nyeri & Karatina				Miss. Eunice 0717041564
16	Nairobi	Box 19055-00501	020-2463393 0712095555	Mr. Omoga	Nairobi	Muthaiga Road	Mobil Plaza	Omoga	Mr. Kihara 0733970975

More Kenyan farmers keen on Fleckviev

Mr Karanja's goal is to sensitize 1000 farmers by the end January 2010 adding that by December 2009 over 500 cows in the area had been inseminated using Fleckvieh genetics. Mr. Karanja can be reached on 0723158680.

In Trans Nzoia District, large scale farmers who attended a symposium at Kitale Club congratulated Mr. Gerard Besseling, Managing Director of Fleckvieh Genetics (EA) for introducing the breed in the area. Mr. Nelson Kirior of Cherangany who owns 160 cows said, “nimependezwa sana na hii ng'ombe kwa sababu iko na maziwa mingi na ni all purpose”. Mr George Cheruiyot who also owns 160 dairy cows said he was going to take advantage of Fleckvieh's high butter content to improve the quality of milk on his farm.

Another large farmer in Kitale Mrs. Betty Kipsaita, who owns over 300 cows, asserted that with Fleckvieh she can increase income from her herd by selling quickly maturing bulls and culled cows for beef at profit.

A small scale farmer from Kimilili, Bungoma, Western Province, Mrs. Regina Mekenye who saw the cows at the Kitale ASK show 2009, was excited at the prospect of improving her dairy enterprise with Fleckvieh breed. She however, called for the establishments of an effective distribution network in Bungoma District to enable farmers get quick services when required.

Likewise during field days held in Longisa and Itembe in Bomet district, members of Sotik Dairy Farmers group said that so long as the semen was available within their district they will ask their inseminators to stock Fleckvieh semen. They introduced their local inseminator to Mr. Omoga of Fleckvieh office in Nairobi.

In Kinangop District, members of MUKI Cooperative Society, urged officials of the cooperative society to make a contract with Fleckvieh genetics to be the main supplier of semen to their organization.

In Molo District, members of Mochorwa Dairy Farmers' Group are planning to hold several field days and a road show to cover Molo, Keringet and Olenguruone areas so as to sensitize more farmers about Fleckvieh genetics.

The chairman of Mochorwa Dairy Farmers Group Mr. Jared Kinyozi said, the farmers were hoping to improve the quality and quantity of their cattle so as to get more income from supplying more milk to the two cooling plants in the area. They called upon other stake holders including Equity bank, K.C.C, Brookside, Pembe feeds and the government to support them in their plans.

Bank managers based in Kitale hailed the introduction of Fleckvieh breed in the area saying they will support farmers to get loans to buy cows and other services from the company . Mr Augustine Pisinen the Agricultural Finance Corporation Branch Manager said “we are moving to more flexible products and interest rates will still remain 10% per a year”. The Equity Branch Manager Rael Tuiyot praised Fleckvieh saying that such cows can be a solution to poverty reduction in Kenya.

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