

LRF NEWS

Highlights from the LRF 17th Annual Stockman School

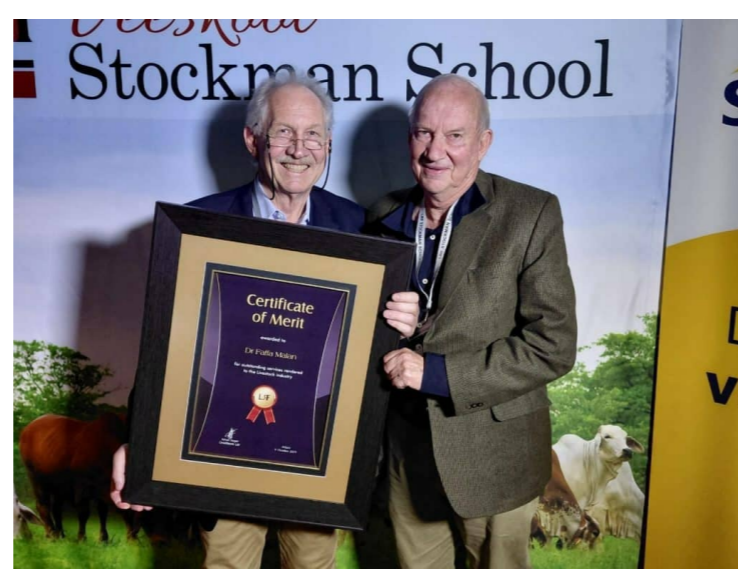
The 17th LRF Annual Stockman School lived up to its reputation as one of the premier gatherings in the livestock industry. With the theme: Smart Stockmanship: Back to Basics

Day 1 launched with energy and purpose, setting the tone for the rest of the event. A stellar lineup of speakers tackled the most pressing issues facing the beef industry today—from export readiness and market competitiveness to genetics, veld management, and bull fertility. The sessions were rich in insight and sparked meaningful conversations among delegates, laying a strong foundation for the days ahead.

Day 2 built on that momentum with another round of impactful lectures focusing on profitability, rumen development, reproductive efficiency, and feed strategies. The afternoon shifted into practical mode with demonstrations led by Kobus Bester on functional efficiency and Dr Danie Odendaal on animal health. A special thank you goes to Mornay Verster for bringing his exceptional Brangus cattle, which added tremendous value to the hands-on sessions. Delegates then participated in two of five targeted workshops, choosing from topics such as financial management, soil health, traceability, cow/calf performance KPIs, and vaccine handling—each designed to equip producers with practical tools for success.

Day 3, though shorter, was no less impactful. The final sessions focused on maternal performance, advanced disease prevention, consumer-driven breeding, and producer fundamentals. These presentations offered clear, actionable insights and left delegates with renewed motivation to apply what they had learned in their own operations.

A heartfelt congratulations goes out to all our Stockman School award winners. We proudly recognized breeders who achieved 4.5 and 5-star Completeness of Performance ratings, those who won Proven Bull of the Year and Cow Group of the Year, and the winners for the Most Genetic Progress over five years. The Services to the Industry award was presented to Dr Fafa Malan for his lifelong contribution to livestock health and education, and the prestigious LRF/Santam Stud Breeder of the Year award was awarded to Koos Kooy, a Simmentaler breeder, whose commitment to genetic excellence continues to set the benchmark for the industry. Congratulations to all our winners—your dedication, innovation, and pursuit of excellence are what drive this industry forward.



Johan Styger (left) with the winner of the LRF Services to the Industry award, Dr Fafa Malan (right)



Michelle Mosia (left) from Santam with the winner of the LRF/Santam Stud Breeder of the Year award, Koos Kooy (right)

We are also honoured to announce the recipient of the 2026/2027 LRF Michael Bradfield Bursary: Danielle Alberts, a PhD candidate in Animal Breeding and Genetics at the University of Pretoria. This bursary, offered in memory of the late Dr Michael Bradfield, supports deserving postgraduate students who are committed to advancing the field. The LRF wishes Danielle every success in her studies and reaffirms its belief in investing in future scientists who will shape and strengthen our industry.



Johan Styger (left) with the winner of the LRF Michael Bradfield Bursary recipient, Danielle Alberts (right)

To our sponsors—thank you for your unwavering support. Your contributions are the backbone of Stockman School's continued success. To our bronze, silver, and gold sponsors, your generosity enables us to deliver a world-class program year after year. To our media sponsor, Plaas Media, your coverage and partnership help amplify the reach and impact of this event. We deeply appreciate your commitment to the livestock community and your belief in the power of education, innovation, and collaboration.

And finally, to our delegates—thank you for your participation in the LRF Stockman School. Your enthusiasm, curiosity, and willingness to engage made this year's Stockman School truly special. We hope you left with new knowledge, meaningful connections, and a renewed passion for smart stockmanship. We look forward to welcoming you back next year for another unforgettable experience.



Gold, Silver, Bronze and Media Sponsor representatives at the 17th LRF Stockman School



The LRF Team with Acting Managing Director at ABRI, Dr Christian Duff



Dr Christian Duff with members from the Brahman Office

Monthly Tipsheet and Video Series: October Focus – Gestation Length

Each month, the LRF focuses on a key trait, explaining why recording matters, how to record accurately, and how to submit your records to your breed society. It's all the information you need, presented in an easy-to-follow one-page tipsheet and a concise video!

September's spotlight was on 600-Day Weight. If you missed it, don't worry—catch up now! Access the one-page tipsheet and 2-minute video below to stay informed and up-to-date.

[600-Day Weight Tipsheet](#)
[600-Day Weight Video](#)

For October, our focus is on Gestation Length (GL)

What is Gestation Length?

- Gestation length (GL) is the period from the date of conception (i.e. when the female gets in calf) to when the subsequent calf is born.

Why Record Gestation Length?

- GL affects birth weight, calving ease, re-breeding performance, and weaning weight of calves.
- Shorter GL is associated with lighter birth weight, improved calving ease and improved rebreeding performance among dams.
- Calves born with a shorter GL may be heavier at weaning due to more days of growth post-birth.

How to record GL?

- GL EBVs are calculated from both the artificial insemination (AI) date and date of birth records for calves conceived by AI.
- The information that needs to be recorded for the calculation of GL EBVs includes: the birth date for each calf and the AI date (submitted with calf registrations).
- AI information submitted through mating lists are not used.

Considerations when recording GL

- Only AI calves are included in the analyses of GL EBVs.
- GL Information is currently excluded from the BREEDPLAN analysis if:
 - The calf is an embryo transfer calf or twin.
 - Only one animal is represented in a contemporary group.
 - More than 2/3 of animals in a contemporary group have the same GL.

Interpreting GL EBVs

- Gestation Length EBVs provide an estimate of genetic differences between animals in gestation length.
- Expressed in Days.
- Lower or more negative Gestation Length EBVs are considered to be more favourable.
- For example, a bull with a Gestation Length EBV of -2 days would be expected to produce calves that are born earlier, and more easily, than a bull with a Gestation Length EBV of +2 days.

[Gestation Length Tipsheet](#)
[Gestation Length Video](#)

HerDMASTER/BREEDPLAN NEWS

HerDMASTER:

1. Update on EBV's:

- To import EBV's into HerDMASTER5 please request a .csv file from the society.
- Due to an update on EBV's in HerDMASTER5 the .dat files are no longer relevant.

Auto Updates

Stop your HerDMASTER 5 from automatically searching for updates.

To do this:

- Open HerDMASTER 5
- Navigate to Setup/ Site Option
- On righthand side of Program Settings, uncheck the box "Check for updates on start"
- Check the "Disable automatic Updates" block
- Click Save on the top right and close

You will manually need to check for updates when convenient

To do this:

- Open HerDMASTER5
- Navigate to Help
- From the dropdown select "Check for updates"

Important: You will not have access to the latest bug fixes and enhancements until you have updated to the latest version of HerDMASTER 5.

2. HerDMASTER 5 Updates:

In the event that the HerDMASTER 5 automatic updates struggle to finish, do the following:

- Cancel the update
- Close all HerDMASTER windows
- Navigate to the desktop
- Locate the update icon



- Double click and let the update run

This should complete the update. You can now open HerDMASTER 5.

BREEDPLAN:

ABRI Leadership Update

We're pleased to share an important leadership update from ABRI (Agricultural Business Research Institute). Effective immediately, Dr Christian Duff has stepped into the role of Acting Managing Director for a three-month tenure. This interim appointment allows the ABRI Board to continue its open and competitive recruitment process for the next permanent Managing Director.

To ensure a smooth transition, Anita Kauffman, who has led ABRI with dedication over the past 15 months, will remain involved in an advisory capacity on a casual basis. We extend our sincere thanks to Anita for her outstanding leadership and contributions. ABRI is currently exploring options for an Acting Chief Operating Officer to fill Christian Duff's substantive position. We look forward to continued collaboration with ABRI under this interim leadership and will keep you informed of further updates.

IN THIS ISSUE

LRF NEWS

- STOCKMAN SCHOOL
- MONTHLY TIPSHEET

HERDMASTER & BREEDPLAN NEWS

- HERDMASTER: UPDATE ON EBVS
- BREEDPLAN: UPDATE ON LEADERSHIP CHANGES

CALENDAR

- 12 DECEMBER 2025
- LRF OFFICE CLOSURE

www.lrf.co.za

