



(Press Release: 28 March 2018)

EFFECTS OF THE DROUGHT WILL CONTINUE

Although good and even excessive rains have fallen in many areas to the north, this is not true for most of the Western, Eastern and Northern Cape Provinces. Animal numbers are down and there are therefore less surplus animals to be sold, with lower incomes for farmers. Breeding cows and ewes have or should have been culled to the minimum, to allow for the recovery of herd and flock numbers without sacrificing quality, which may take several years.

Farmers could be tempted to increase herd numbers hastily, buying in livestock once first rains have fallen, but this practice brings about its own unforeseen dangers. For example; a single, apparently healthy cow carrying brucellosis (contagious abortion) could infect the whole herd, with dire consequences; or a single, apparently healthy ram could infect the whole flock with paratuberculosis (Johne's disease), with very serious consequences. Thus, steer clear of the temptation to want to recover quickly from the effects of the drought. Every farmer has to continue applying the right measures in this difficult economic environment.

- 1) Lessen the demand on recovering veldt and pastures by:
 - selling or slaughtering unproductive livestock before they lose too much condition;
 - retaining the minimum replacement heifers and maiden ewes; and
 - weaning calves and lambs on to extra feed to spare cows and ewes as well as veldt.
- 2) Ensure that livestock are fed sufficient amounts of quality feed by:

- using the scientifically established animal stocking rate as a maximum for the extensive farming system;
- condition scoring all breeding females and ensuring that sufficient quality feed is available for livestock requiring supplementation; and
- sourcing and storing extra roughage, if possible, ahead of the forecasted high demand.