

Good red-and-white Holsteins are scarce in South Africa, but there is certainly a market for them. And the best red-and-white semen, according to breeder Boet Reinecke, comes from the Netherlands and Germany. At the 2008 national show in Bloemfontein he took the red-and-white grand championship with a cow imported as an embryo from the Netherlands: Taco Pietje.



Boet Reinecke: "I am more of a breeder than a milk producer"

Boet Reinecke only has a few red and whites in his herd, but they have had considerable success at the South African National Show. The senior champion was his Faber daughter Grootmoed Rooies 2, and reserve champion heifer was Ricksma Bookman Juweel. And the best red-and-

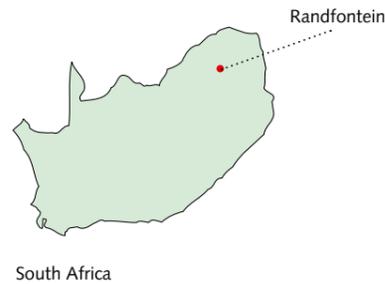
white bull, also offspring of the Canadian sire Bookman, also came from his farm. Champion young cow and grand champion was Taco daughter Pietje, who Boet bought as an embryo from the Netherlands.

"I had five embryos, but they eventually produced only one heifer calf and one bull calf," he says. This full brother to Pietje, is on the books of Taurus, South Africa's biggest AI company.

Boet farms in Randfontein, to the west of Johannesburg. His farm covers 1,000 hectares. On 300 hectares he grows maize for the maize meal industry. A thick porridge of maize meal is the staple food of the South African population and most like to eat it with meat. And Boet also supplies the second part of the meal: he

has a herd of 300 Bonsmara beef cattle. They graze 650 hectares of 'veld' – natural grassland on rocky ground.

Ricksma Goldwyn Glenda, a bull dam out of the Eastland Cash family



Maize is grown in rows 2.3m apart due to South Africa's dry climate

On the remaining 50 hectares he grows maize, which is fed to the dairy herd – the third part of his large business. Boet milks 70 pedigree Holsteins and, above all, he is a great breeding enthusiast.

"I am more of a breeder than a milk producer," he admits with a smile. "In our situation, you can't get by just with commercial dairying unless you've got 1,000 or more cows. But I just wouldn't enjoy that. I'm far too interested in

have done their job. In the middle of February he sold a pair at a local breeding cattle auction for around £680. "You can tell that the market is a bit weak because of the low milk price."

Heat tolerance

Boet started out more or less from scratch 35 years ago with cows he had bought.

"I stick to a good type, first-class udders,

The herd is predominantly black and white, but Boet would like to increase the proportion of red and whites from today's 15%. "I have always liked red and whites, but good red-and-white bulls are very few and far between," he says. "Red and whites are in demand because a lot of producers have the idea that they withstand the heat a little better than black and whites. Bulls in particular are highly sought after."

Boet is happy to serve that market. By preference, he orders semen from the Netherlands and Germany. "That is where you find the best red-and-white bulls."

At the moment, he is inseminating mainly with Classic and Taco. Taco Pietje is currently in-calf by Classic. As a heifer she was flushed with the German bulls Casimir and Lichtblick. One Lichtblick son is in AI. In May she calved a heifer calf by Mr Burns.

The Dutch girl still looks superb. Pietje and her cohorts are kept outdoors – Boet does not have a cowshed. The only shed he has is for the bulls and young calves. The cows stay out in their paddocks all year round. There is no actual pasture in this dry part of South Africa. Even the maize is grown in rows 2.30 metres apart. "It is not feasible to grow more plants per hectare."

Calving interval

The herd is split into three groups – heifers, fresh cows and dry cows. However, they all get exactly the same ad-lib mixed ration consisting of 20kg of maize silage, 15.8kg of concentrates (21% protein), 2.8kg of cottonseed, 2.2kg of long-stemmed Eragrostis hay, 1.4kg of molasses meal and 1.3kg of maize straw.

Due to flushing for ET work, the herd's calving interval is a little longer than for most herds at 430 days. Milk yield is around 37kg of milk per cow per day all year round – twice the South African average of 15.2 litres. And, according to the milk testing results, daily yield in January averaged 36.9kg, with 3.85% fat and 3.17% protein.

"This means that annual yield is, on average, more than 10,000 litres," says Boet, "and I have some individual cows that give between 12,000 and 14,000 litres."

Gineke Mons

Boet Reinecke: "Quality breeding cattle are still bringing in good money"

Breeding red and whites in South Africa

breeding. And by selling high-quality breeding cattle I can keep the dairy side of the business going."

Boet gets around 3.10 rands per litre of milk, or 23ppl, but a price increase to around 3.50 rands, or 27ppl, appears to be on the cards. "Although incomes are falling sharply in South Africa's dairy sector, good breeding cattle are still commanding a good price," he says. Boet sells around 30 heifers, cows and bulls a year to private buyers and to AI companies.

"For a real top-quality heifer you get the equivalent of around £1,700." For breeding, Boet buys in good recipient cows and sells them on again once they

excellent feet and legs and sufficient milk with high components." The cows also have to last well. The choice of bull is just as simple as the breeding objective. "I always take the top bulls from the Canadian, American, German and Dutch lists," he says.

All the cattle in the herd, which are more than 22 months of age, score 86.09 points for total type, including two excellent scores. One of Boet's favourites is the beautiful Ricksma Goldwyn Glenda, an 88-point Goldwyn daughter from the famous Dutch Eastland Glenda family.

A Mr Burns son and a Buckeye son out of Goldwyn Glenda are on the books at Taurus.



National champion Ricksma Taco Pietje at the feed bunk