

Sernick launches research and innovation division to improve beef production

Sernick has added a new division to undertake the role of research and innovation with Phillip Oosthuizen, head of research and economics; Dr. Piet Swiegers, ruminant nutritionist and feedlot operational head, and David Smit, feedlot administrator and research operational manager at the helm. According to Sernick Group chairman, Nick Serfontein, the reasoning behind the new division is to improve beef production in terms of profitability and quality.



Phillip Oosthuizen and Dr. Piet Swiegers (Image Supplied)

“As with any business, which includes the agricultural sector, what has worked before will not necessarily work in the years to come. This is particularly true for the beef feedlot industry where we face big challenges because of the relatively little research done in comparison to other agricultural sectors,” Serfontein explains. The decision to add the new division strengthens Sernick’s philosophy to set new standards within the industry by challenging the status quo.

Serfontein ends by saying: “Most agricultural products have always been ‘just another’ commodity, but if we want to survive and accelerate into the future, we will have to distinguish ourselves, as well as the perception of our products.”

Measuring the effect of growth stimulants

The research and innovation division’s first project will be to measure the effect of growth stimulants, both implants and B-Agonist on growth, feed conversion, profit margins and meat tenderness. This project will commence in December 2017 and should be completed by April 2018. Economic analysis in terms of feedlot profitability, product quality and consumer requirements are ongoing processes.

“We are exploring new products and methods to increase profitability and product quality. This research will allow us to determine the balance between profitability and meat quality through a combination of different products and assess the users’ method thereof,” says Oosthuizen.

Determine the profit-maximising feeding period for different breeds

A second research project is planned to start in May 2018. The goal will be to build on the Sernick Precision Feedlotting project done in 2015. The objective is to determine the profit-maximising feeding period for different breeds of beef cattle where the backgrounding or pre-conditioning period is included. The profit-maximising feeding period model will be

strengthened through additional factors considered and data incorporated.

“The 2015 research established a platform to differentiate between different beef breeds on the grounds of genetic potential to excel in the feedlot. This differentiation and relevant market prices are used to optimise feed periods and increase feedlot profitability. The new data and upgraded model will allow for optimised feed periods with more accuracy,” Oosthuizen explains.

According to Oosthuizen, the objective of their research is to innovate the red meat value chain which includes various products, the use thereof, processes, technology, business models and sectors within the industry. “We are extremely excited and passionate towards our work and confident that we will make a significant contribution towards our future in South Africa,” says Oosthuizen.

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