

# Cattle ownership and production in the communal areas of the Eastern Cape, South Africa

Edited by Andrew Ainslie

with contributions by  
Thembele Kepe  
Lungisile Ntsebeza  
Zolile Ntshona  
and Stephen Turner



SCHOOL of  
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University of the Western Cape, Private Bag X17, Bellville, 7535, Cape Town.  
Tel: +27 21 959 3733. Fax: +27 21 959 3732. E-mail: vmagerman@uwc.ac.za

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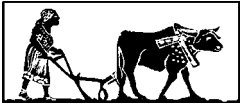
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\* Please note that the contributing authors have each included their own acknowledgements in their respective chapters.

# Executive summary

**T**his report documents a study of the social and economic structure of cattle ownership and production in the communal tenure areas of the Eastern Cape (i.e. the former Bantustans of Transkei and Ciskei).

The report begins with a review of the conventional arguments relating to cattle production systems in communal tenure areas, i.e. that they are inefficient and irrational. In seeking to challenge these pervasive assumptions concerning the way in which cattle production systems in these areas apparently work, it is argued, *first*, that very little systematic and detailed knowledge of these systems actually exists on which to base arguments that have had considerable impact and, *second*, that cattle ownership and production for African people in the Eastern Cape, quite apart from its obvious utility and cultural resonance, has been, for many decades, expressly about political-economic struggle against the state and its varied policies, which have had the effect – if not always the explicit intention – of the gradual proletarianisation of the rural population.

To support this argument, the history of cattle ownership and the impact of a range of programmes of intervention carried out by the state at various times in the Eastern Cape are reviewed. Despite wide-ranging state intervention, cattle ownership continues to hold considerable appeal for rural people. Evidence of this is that cattle *numbers* (although not numbers of cattle owners) have remained remarkably con-

stant for close to five decades, with mostly drought-induced fluctuations.

The study focuses on patterns and trends in cattle ownership and production in four magisterial districts (as defined in the pre-1999 Demarcation Board period) in the province: Xhalanga, Lusikisiki, Maluti and Peddie districts. No claims are made about the representativeness of this sample of districts, but a number of issues emerge that may be applicable more widely across the province. These issues point to several developments in the sector that are giving rise to tensions among rural residents: less than half of the households in rural areas now own cattle. Grazing resources are under pressure in many areas, largely as a result of the considerable encroachment of residential sites onto the available rangeland. Stock theft continues to pose a serious challenge to both the owners of stock and law enforcement agencies, and appears to be giving rise to increased vigilantism. A lack of clarity about the long-term future of existing government support programmes, such as the dipping and inoculation programmes, is giving rise to further uncertainty. The concern among rural cattle owners that the youth are not interested in livestock production is widespread and, as a possibly significant future trend, is likely to lead to greater concentration of cattle ownership in future. The ongoing lack or inadequacy of infrastructure and facilities, as well as the unequal terms of trade, continue to frustrate stock owners' efforts to selec-



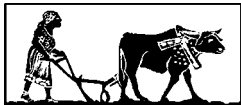


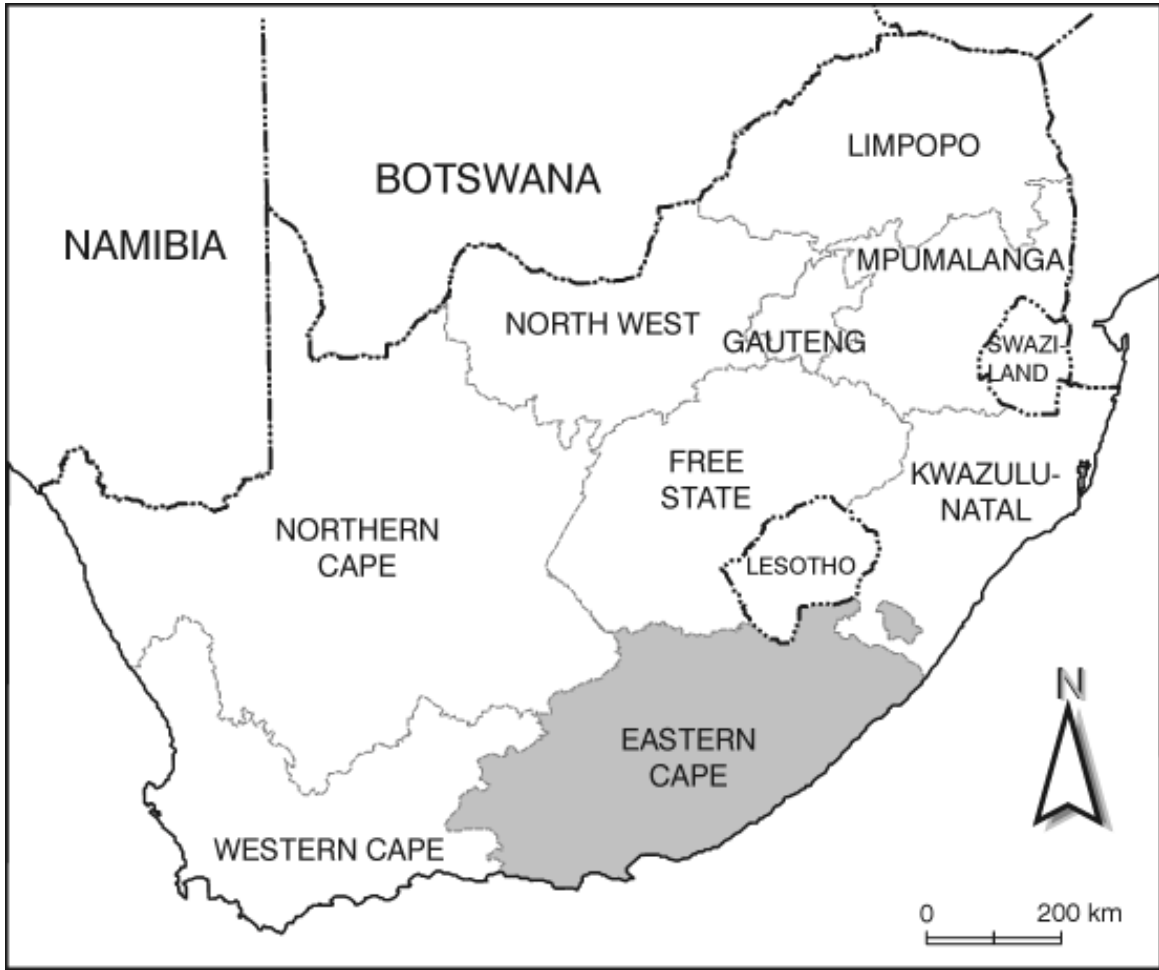
tively increase their sales of cattle.

Clearly, cattle ownership will continue to be a culturally relevant, economically rational and socially acceptable form of accumulation in rural areas of the province for the foreseeable future. It is argued in this report that, in terms of its overall development agenda *and its constitutional commitments*, it is squarely in the interests of the state to safeguard and enhance these specific investments (i.e. cattle) by rural people with targeted interventions. Such interventions should aim to increase the productivity of cattle in former Bantustan reserve areas (for example, by improving weaning percentages) and at improving the real value (i.e. in rands) of the herds in

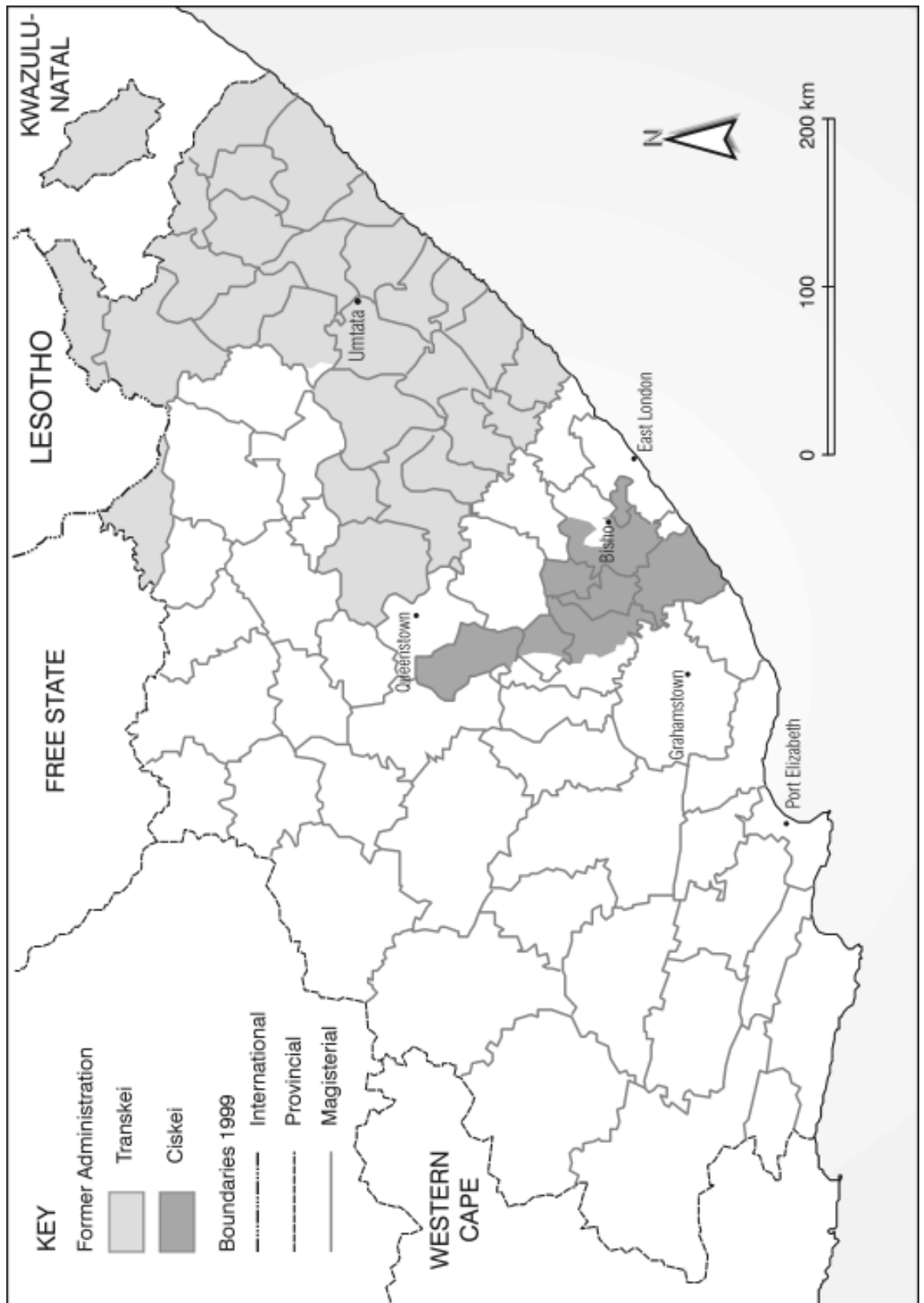
these areas. It seems clear that the critical point of engagement for both of these is the radical improvement in the scope and quality of the animal health programmes offered to cattle owners in rural areas.

If this study itself has one glaring shortcoming, it is that the role of cattle has been considered in isolation from that of goats, sheep, equines and other stock that are owned in considerable numbers by rural people in the province. This is a function of the time and personnel constraints under which the study was conducted. As with much research of this nature, this initial stab at what is a complex topic has thrown up a wide range of areas in need of further investigation.

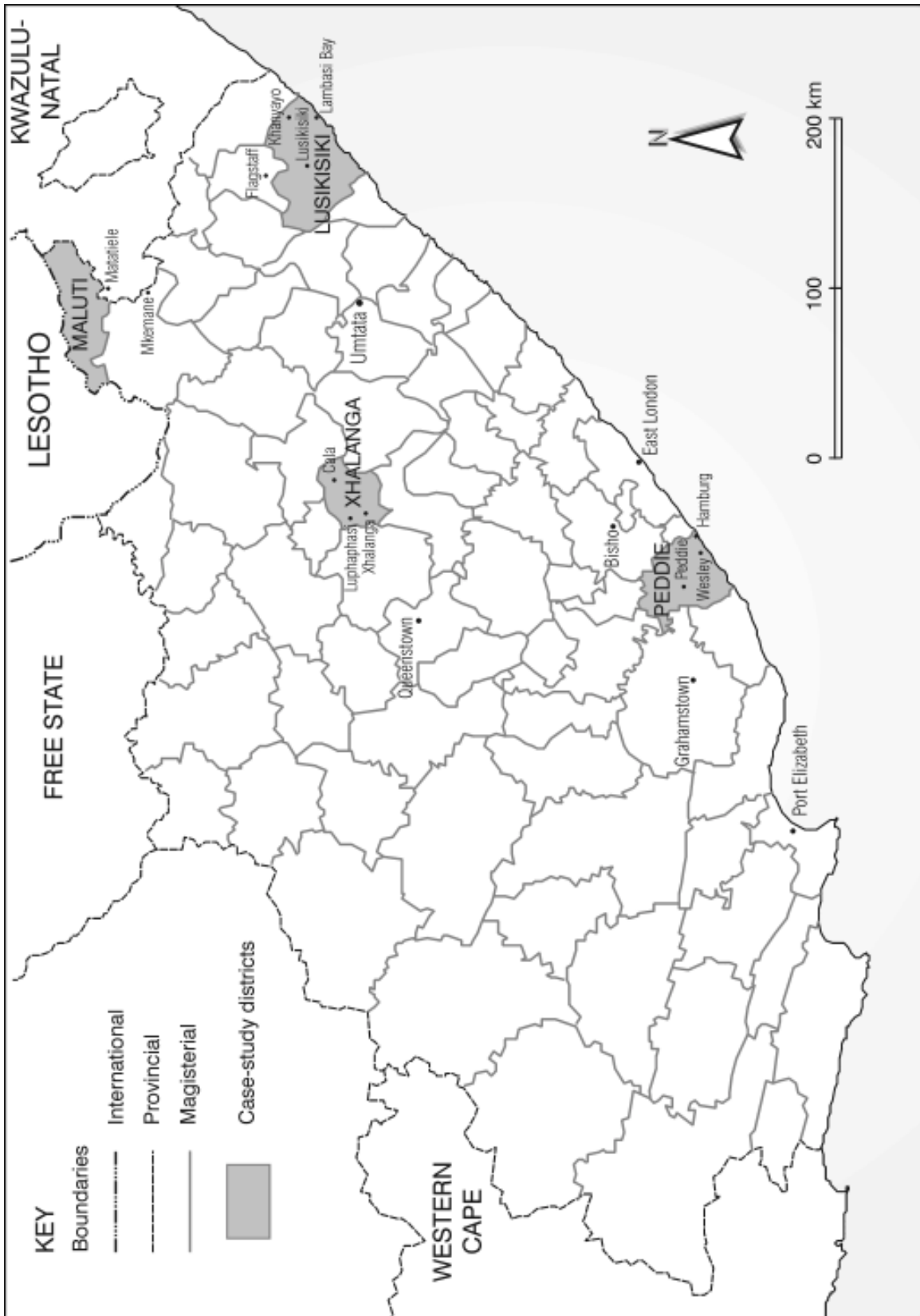




Map 1: The Eastern Cape, South Africa



Map 2: The former Transkei and Ciskei



Map 3: Magisterial districts used for the case-studies

# Chapter 1: Introduction: Setting the scene

Andrew Ainslie

## Background to this study

Even a cursory survey of the literature dealing with livestock production and its correlate, rangeland management, in the former 'reserves', Bantustans or 'independent homelands' of South Africa, reveals that analyses in this area are predicated on essentially four interrelated assertions.<sup>1</sup>

These assertions are that:

1. *Compared with commercial agricultural enterprises* in the rest of (formerly 'white') South Africa, rangelands in communal areas are vastly overstocked and on the brink of ecological collapse.
2. This situation arises because of the free rider problem *inherent* in communal systems, which means there is no incentive to manage grazing, and consequently, use of grazing resources takes place in a 'free-for-all' environment.
3. Off-take (to the market) is negligible, invariably well under 10% of total herd size per annum, and consequently these production systems are wasteful in terms of their use of scarce grazing resources.
4. Livestock production techniques in the communal sector are backward and exhibit little or no regard for scientific production techniques, such as herd improvement through selective breeding or disease control.

Significantly, each of these assertions, which continue to be restated with depressing regularity in the literature (see Hobart Houghton 1973:70–5; Bembridge 1984:71, 370; Van Zyl, McKenzie & Kirsten 1996:254; Bembridge & Tapson 1993; Erasmus 1996:61), relies on a

remarkably small body of empirical studies of Bantustan livestock production systems, some of which were conducted several decades ago. In fact, many of the key arguments of the latter can themselves be traced back to the sporadic and partial accounts of early travellers and missionaries from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and to studies conducted by anthropologists in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Not only this, but there is considerable and somewhat arbitrary cross-referencing of studies across time and space so that 'composites' emerge of, for example, Transkei livestock production, with arguments and assertions that are based on data from other communal areas in the country. Steyn (1988) for instance, quite unproblematically states that the 'essential diet of the Xhosa consists of milk', when this was certainly not the case in the late 1980s!

Of course, it is *possible* that little has changed in communal livestock production systems over the past century and that all communal areas in the country exhibit similar characteristics, but this seems highly unlikely and should not simply be accepted without some more rigorous attempt at empirical verification (see Tapson 1982:41).

With respect to the veracity or otherwise of the first of the four assertions,



O'Reagain and Turner (1992:43, 44) point out that 'it is regrettable that, after nearly sixty years of rangeland research in Southern Africa, basic questions in rangeland management remain unanswered'. They go on to caution that 'the research community as a whole should adopt a more critical attitude so as to actively prevent the assimilation of untested hypotheses into accepted theory'. In the same vein, Shackleton (1993) has weighed up the evidence for the long-standing calls for intervention to 'save' the communal rangelands of the country from ecological collapse, and found these arguments sufficiently wanting to advocate a policy of non-intervention – in respect of not trying to match livestock numbers to official carrying capacity estimates – in the first instance, particularly in the moist and mesic grasslands of the country.

Similarly, Tapson (1993:12) acknowledges that 'a major problem [in formulating policy for the communal sector] is the paucity of reliable information especially regarding levels of production' and later (1993:52), 'At the technical level, very little research has been done on production systems under sub-optimal conditions ... little information is available to support this type of production.' Cousins (1996:185) notes that 'there appears to have been relatively little detailed research on how grazing resources in South Africa's black rural areas are actually used'.

Significantly, data on off-take from these areas (i.e. the sale, slaughter and exchange of livestock) are probably least complete, with practically all reports on this aspect of livestock production in the province relying on just three references, namely Benso (1976) and latterly, Fraser & Antrobus (1988) for the Ciskei and for the Transkei, Bembridge (1984). In his analysis of one year's (1981) annual statistics for cattle in the Transkei, Tapson (1982:5) admits to 'an abiding sense of unease' when the figures do not balance and over 6 000 cattle remain unaccounted for in the data and his analysis thereof. Further to this point, Antrobus et al. (1994) also

decry the 'dearth of primary data for the Ciskei and Transkei areas' and *the consequent need to rely on secondary sources*.

The question as to why these key assertions have been so pervasive and enduring is addressed in a later section of this report. Clearly, however, it is incumbent upon any fresh attempts at analysis of this sector to pick their way carefully through the existing corpus of material on communal area livestock production and rangeland management systems, remaining alert all the while to the possibility of unsubstantiated assertions masquerading as factual evidence. It is nevertheless the case, however, that in respect of the documented history of livestock ownership and production in the communal areas of the province, this body of work, taken with the official livestock census records, of which we have every right to be similarly critical (see below), is most often the only data we have to go by.

### **Why analyse communal cattle production in the Eastern Cape?**

In terms of the monetary value of people's investments, the largest agricultural sector in the former Transkei and Ciskei parts of the Eastern Cape province is undoubtedly that of livestock production (see Tapson 1982:2).<sup>2</sup> Department of Agriculture (1998) estimates suggest that taken together, the former Transkei and Ciskei hold over 1.7 million cattle or 38% of the national herd in the so-called 'developing areas' (i.e. former Bantustan areas). These areas also hold upwards of 2.8 million sheep (84% of the national 'developing areas' flock) and nearly 2 million goats (46% of all the goats in the 'developing' sector of the country). The former Transkei is said to hold 65% of all the cattle in the Eastern Cape province as a whole (Antrobus et al. 1994:16). MALA (1998) estimates that cattle account for between 80% and 90% of the asset value of livestock in the small-scale sector.

The considerable numbers of livestock held in the former Bantustan areas attest to the significant appeal that livestock con-



tinue to have for large numbers of rural and urban-based people (see Lenta & Maasdorp 1988:227). It is perhaps primarily in the relative absence (and the perceived unreliability) of other repositories of savings, such as banks, that livestock continue to serve as 'stores of wealth' *par excellence* for thousands of rural families. Several studies note, however, that an increasing concentration of livestock ownership is a feature of this sector.

### **The role of government in livestock production**

It is probably fair to say that government policy, certainly at provincial level, has not yet been clearly articulated at the present time. Certainly no overarching strategies and programmes for 'livestock development' in the communal sector are yet in evidence.<sup>3</sup> This apparent lack of clarity in terms of provincial policy continues to frustrate livestock owners, particularly in communal areas, not least in respect of such day-to-day practical concerns as the erratic provision of dipping materials by the Veterinary Directorate of the Department of Agriculture.

Should the provincial government be paying closer attention to the development of clear and coherent policies for the management and development of this sector? Very much so, I would argue for at least four reasons.

*First*, the vast numbers of livestock in this sector underscore the fact that livestock form a substantial component of both the national agricultural sector and the provincial economy. This is unlikely to change in the short- to medium-term.

*Second*, given these high numbers of livestock, it is an enduring conundrum that the Eastern Cape continues to be a net importer of meat from outside the province,<sup>4</sup> because of low levels of meat production (Daily Dispatch 16/02/1999). As Tapson (1982:2) argues for the former Transkei, given its high overall number of cattle, 'it would be reasonable to expect organised, purpose-designed marketing'. Yet this does not happen in the former

Bantustan areas. While the reasons for this deficiency are multiple, a clear starting-point appears to be the provision of infrastructure and facilities to promote such economic activity.

*Third*, the (commercial) animal-production sector is by far the largest employer of labour in the agricultural sector of the Eastern Cape. For a province in which unemployment is rife, any potential avenues for further job creation must be identified and carefully nurtured.

*Fourth*, grazing land comprises 81% of the total surface area of the province, a ratio that is much higher than the national average, making a strong case for this valuable resource to be managed wisely through the new millennium (Erasmus 1996:57).

Given the economic and cultural importance of livestock to rural people in the Eastern Cape, it is essential that government begins both to address these knowledge and policy lacunae and to ensure that a more nuanced understanding than that encapsulated by the 'four assertions' (above) is nurtured in public officials at all levels within this sector.

### **Dualism in the conventional understanding of the agricultural sector**

Since the early, influential work on the structure of the South African economy by Hobart Houghton (1960, also see Lipton 1977), a dualist model has been an entrenched feature of economic analyses of the country as a whole (see Bundy 1979:2-3 for a critique of this model). In terms of this dualist model, and particularly in respect of cattle, the western side of the Eastern Cape province is regarded as a generally well-resourced, commercial beef and dairy producing sector which consists of some 6 552 almost exclusively 'white-owned' farms (Antrobus et al. 1994:8).

Significantly, much of their economic activities – in sharp contrast to those of livestock owners in the communal areas – take place in the 'formal' economic and



institutional sphere, in that:

- they are at least *liable* to pay taxes (both income and value-added taxes);
- they are organised in producer organisations (formerly 'produce boards') that keep records of production outputs;
- they are supported by agricultural research and extension services that have maintained detailed records of farm production histories (primarily for the purposes of implementing and monitoring government support programmes, such as drought relief schemes);
- they were (and are) eligible for low interest bank loans from dedicated lending institutions such as the Land Bank; and
- they participate in official agricultural censuses.

As a result, the contribution of these commercial farmers to the formal economy (as measured by the Gross National Product – GNP) is, by and large, amenable to economic and statistical measurement.

What generally remains unquantified, however, is the extensive cash-based trade that has been going on for decades between white and Xhosa livestock owners (particularly in 'border' areas of, for example, Komgha, Peddie, Albany, Bathurst, Maluti and Kokstad). White farmers and speculators have for many years bought, sold and exchanged livestock to Xhosa-speaking farmers in the former Bantustan areas. As these transactions are cash-based, the actual transactions are not recorded anywhere and only feature in the official statistics as aggregates of livestock 'bought in' by livestock owners in communal areas. Thus, in a situation where herd mortality virtually equals births, the purchase of livestock from white, commercial farmers to restock drought-depleted herds in communal areas, contributes in no uncertain terms to prosperity of the 'formal, commercial' sector (see Tapson 1982:4; Steyn 1988:330; Cousins 1997:32).<sup>5</sup>

The largely quantifiable situation of commercial farmers is often contrasted

with that of an under-resourced, largely 'subsistence-based' production system that is carried on in a relatively unorganised fashion (i.e. without organisational support) by a much larger number of Xhosa-speaking livestock owners in the former Bantustan areas<sup>6</sup> in the central and eastern parts of the province. This is the so-called 'developing agricultural area' of the province (Antrobus et al. 1994:12).

In this area, as mentioned above, little is known about *aggregate* production levels, regional specialisations or even basic investment and expenditure in livestock management. For instance, it is well-known that rural cattle owners buy and sell cattle to each other, but the extent of these transactions and the nature of their subsequent investments remain virtually undocumented. Crucially, nothing beyond crude estimates is available on the contribution of this sector to GNP. The effect of this relative lack of information and understanding about the communal sector has been its characterisation as an undifferentiated, stagnant ('subsistence') economic backwater that does not merit official attention, other than the patchy, and what were inevitably perceived as politically-motivated, development efforts of Bantustan regimes.

Based as it is on some 150 years of official agricultural policy in South Africa, this dualist model is very resilient and continues to be influential in the 'new' South Africa, specifically among many of the role-players in the province. It continues to allow for the rote bifurcation of analyses of agriculture that permeates the official records, policies and practices inherited from the recent past. This reality and its manipulations by role-players in the sector is revisited below.

### Challenging the assumptions about cattle production in the communal sector

The central aim of this report is to challenge the key assertions (listed above) made in relation to cattle production in the





former Bantustan areas of the province. Taken together, these assertions constitute a particular development narrative that purports to explicate 'the problem' of communal livestock production. In so doing, the narrative, like all narratives, seeks to structure and define the possible universe of both policy and practical responses directed at addressing this 'problem' (Hoben 1995:1008). As such, it constitutes 'not merely a set of beliefs or a theory but a *blueprint for action*' and can thus be a dangerous instrument in the context of policy formulation and programme implementation. For this reason alone, the 'four assertions' need to be subjected to critical scrutiny.

### Low off-take

This is the assumption on which the dualist model largely rests: the issue of low off-take in the 'subsistence' or 'communal' sector. Taking the orthodox view that livestock production equates (or *should equate*) with beef production specifically for the *commercial market*, many analysts have been critical of the historically low *beef* output of the communal sector. The low rates of off-take, it has been argued, relate to the largely 'subsistence' and 'cultural' reasons why people in the former Bantustan areas keep livestock, and hence why they have historically been so reluctant to sell their livestock.

*First*, however, it is worth noting at the outset that figures produced in previous studies (mentioned briefly above) should be regarded with circumspection, as they often only record 'formal' sales, i.e. through agricultural parastatals, co-operatives, to abattoirs, at stock auctions, and so on. These figures do not, in general, record the out-of-hand sales to speculators and to neighbours, which to date have remained difficult to quantify accurately and which would tend, significantly, to outweigh the former (see Tapson 1982:4; Cousins 1997:28). It is also important to note that a very significant number of cattle are recorded annually as having been 'slaughtered for home use' (usually for ritual

purposes): in 1981, this amounted to 79 771 animals in the Transkei (Tapson 1982:4). An informed estimate of the number of home-slaughtered cattle in the former Transkei for 1997 was 120 000 animals.<sup>7</sup> Many of these cattle are, in fact, sold locally for cash, to other 'homes' which require them for ritual slaughter.

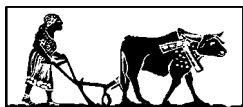
*Second*, it is now well-known and widely accepted that rural people in communal tenure areas have widely ranging reasons for keeping livestock. In short, these reasons include keeping livestock as *stores of wealth*, for reasons of *utility*, such as the provision of milk, draught power, manure and, less frequently, meat (Cousins 1997:32). Ownership of cattle, in particular – but also of goats and sheep – bestows *prestige and status* on the owner (and his/her household) in the community. In some instances, cattle are still used for *lobola* (bridewealth) payments and, more commonly, for ritual slaughter. Cattle thus serve as *social goods* that underpin social relationships in quintessentially non-market ways.

Furthermore, cattle are not only inheritable goods (when the present owner passes away) but are subject to overlapping claims by people within an agnatic cluster or family. This means that the 'owner' of a beast may not be free to sell it when he or she chooses, because other people who have 'shares' in the beast, may need to be consulted first. It is also the case that holding animals does not equate with owning them, as absentee, urban-based owners leave stock in the care of rural relatives or employ herders to care for their cattle.

Moreover, the colours and patterns of the hides of animals (and sometimes the fact that they have horns, i.e. have not been polled) – rather than only or primarily the current physical condition of the animal – may also affect their social or ritual utility, since the performance of certain rituals requires animals of a particular size, colour and horn shape (see Steyn 1981:25; Tapson 1982:15; Bembridge & Tapson 1993:368).



To summarise, rural people keep cattle for a number of reasons other than the production of beef or dairy products (Schmidt 1992). They thus attach a higher value, relative to commercial beef farmers, to the non-beef and non-market related uses of cattle, or what Cousins (1999) refers to as the 'invisible capital' of live-stock production in communal areas (Lenta & Maasdorp 1988:227-8). In the former Ciskei, in the early 1970s, for instance, Brown (1971:179) found that oxen, which were retained for draught purposes (and eventual sale or slaughter), comprised nearly 38% of the total cattle population. These complex factors, which are individually weighted by each live-stock owner according to his or her own social circumstances and accumulation strategies, significantly affect the incentive of particular cattle owners to keep cattle purely for their cash value, i.e. solely for beef production, and hence to subscribe to a strictly 'commercial' model of production.



*Third*, as previous studies have pointed out, the average herd size in the communal sector – *for those people who own live-stock at all* – is 5-6 head of cattle, 3-4 goats and 13 sheep *per owner* (Tapson 1993:17). Another study found that 78.2% (Transkei) and 69% (Ciskei) of cattle owners had ten or less head of cattle (Bembridge 1987). These averages mask considerable regional and local variation. The low numbers of individually owned livestock translate into owners who are not in a position to market animals regularly and who are instead constantly trying to build up their livestock holdings.

*Fourth*, the actual marketing of live-stock in many parts of the former Transkei and Ciskei areas continues to be a formidable challenge:<sup>8</sup> poor transport networks (roads and rail) to get livestock, especially cattle, to markets; poorly developed or non-existent formal marketing channels for the regular and reliable marketing of cattle; arbitrarily strict regulation of the movement of livestock from one 'controlled' area to another; inadequate abattoir facili-

ties; a consequent dearth of knowledge about market prices and quality criteria among cattle owners; and the perception that unscrupulous buyers (often 'white' speculators) pay highly variable but generally below the 'real' market prices for cattle in rural areas (Cousins 1997:35; Tapson 1982:2).

### **Overstocking and overgrazing**

There is the decades-old contention that the apparently excessive (i.e. in excess of some perceived notion of 'carrying capacity') numbers of livestock held in the former Bantustan areas has had, and continues to have, a deleterious effect on the availability and condition of communal grazing resources.<sup>9</sup> This, in turn, adversely affects the quality of the livestock and hence both their reproductive rates and their market value. Indeed, given the fact of finite grazing resources, 'overstocking' and 'overgrazing' are seen as two sides of the same coin.

Recently, some analysts (see Scoones 1995; Shackleton 1993) have challenged the notion that rangeland degradation in communal areas is the inevitable result of what is officially regarded as *excessive* overstocking (as compared to stocking rates in line with recommended carrying capacities). This 'new' approach to rangeland science has seriously questioned the applicability of much of the conventional, commercially oriented understanding of rangeland dynamics to particularly the communal sector.

This approach argues that in typical African savannah rangelands, rainfall and not livestock numbers plays the pre-eminent role in determining forage availability. The impact of this non-equilibrium approach has been to throw into question the (until recently) widely accepted truism that all communal rangelands are uniformly overstocked and overgrazed and hence degraded. It has tentatively been drafted into national agricultural policy, although it continues to encounter opposition from many conventional rangeland scientists.

### Rational vs. irrational livestock owners

An often-cited reason for the perceived overstocking of these areas, is a value judgement which is attributed to the livestock owner in communal areas. This is the dictum that 'quantity is more important than quality' and that, in line with Hardin's flawed 'tragedy of the commons' thesis, each *rational* livestock owner will attempt to increase his/her animal numbers *ad infinitum*. This is because each owner knows that the returns on the additional beast will accrue to him/her, but the costs in terms of negative effect on the grazing resource, will be shared by all the owners of livestock.<sup>10</sup> However, since these (ever-increasing) animals are generally in poor condition, reproductive and weaning rates are low and natural increase is generally much slower than in commercial beef farming systems. Viewed from a commercial perspective, the former approach constitutes an inefficient (i.e. wasteful or irrational) use of the resources (land, grazing, water – not to mention government subsidy of dipping and vaccination programmes) that are used to maintain these high numbers of 'unproductive' animals.

This narrative, constructed with such apparently compelling and seductive simplicity, actually masks a whole range of contentious issues. *First*, as has been argued above, livestock production in the communal areas is not *only* about commercial (i.e. beef or milk) production, since livestock have considerable social significance and hence 'non-economic' value. In this sense, even periodically emaciated animals have social and (some) utility value.

*Second*, and as a barrage of recent studies have pointed out, the greatest flaw in Hardin's 'tragedy of the commons' argument was the conflation of common property systems with open access situations, where grazing is literally 'free-for-all'. In practically all communal areas in the Eastern Cape, there are mechanisms which, at the very least, exclude those who are blatant outsiders<sup>11</sup> from access to

grazing resources. This is despite the best (if not always intentional) efforts of the apartheid state and its Bantustan surrogates to undermine these conventions of exclusion by removing and resettling groups of people in virtually every corner of the province, thereby disrupting extant local patterns of control over resources.

*Third*, as argued above, livestock in communal areas are not subject to decisions made exclusively in the profit maximising domain of rational choices available to actors (i.e. livestock owners). Rather, besides the undeniably *rational* multiple use values that derive from animals (their draught, milk and manure benefits), other more 'social' factors are also often taken into account in terms of their consumptive uses. So, for example, in selling a cow to a neighbour or kinsman, a person may seek to increase their local standing in respect of socially desirable qualities such as a reputation for generosity and fair play (perhaps by selling the animal at a reduced price as well as letting the buyer pay this amount in instalments with no interest charged), often at the expense of economic profit (see Hunter 1936:69). This constitutes an act of economic irrationality by the standards of a commercial livestock owner.

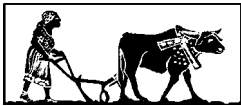
*Fourth*, an interesting and revealing aspect of this argument is that it portrays livestock owners in communal areas as *both* rational and irrational in their actions: they quite rationally seek to increase their individually owned numbers of livestock *ad infinitum* (thus apparently supporting grave misgivings of the inevitable results of communal land ownership), and then they *irrationally* do not concern themselves with the condition or health of their animals or the condition of the forage available to their animals. This irrational neglect results, among other things, in lower reproduction rates for livestock owned by people whose main aim is to ensure that they multiply. What this reveals, I would argue, is that the many criticisms of livestock production in communal areas are more expressions of faith<sup>12</sup>



that this system is intrinsically 'wrong' or 'unworkable' than empirically grounded arguments for imaginative engagement in this sector.

### The communal tenure system: The 'real problem'?

At the heart of the 'problem' of high animal numbers and low off-take, it is conventionally argued, lies the intractability and backwardness of the communal tenure system itself.<sup>13</sup> It is this system, it is said, which impoverishes the vast number of people living in these areas by denying them the opportunity to own and invest in land as a basis of individual (or household), private economic accumulation. Indeed, livestock development programmes in sub-Saharan Africa have, over the past four decades at least, had two broad objectives, that of increased (commercial) animal output and of rangeland conservation: both of these have been tackled primarily by means of tenure reform (Behnke & Scoones 1993; Lane & Moorehead 1995; Cloete 1989:18).



To be sure, a historical perspective on these matters is critical to arriving at a more balanced characterisation of communal tenure areas: these areas are certainly not to be naively equated with pre-colonial, 'traditional' forms of land tenure and land use. In every significant aspect of their make-up and functioning, they are creations of the colonial, Union and apartheid state to (changing) imperatives in the desire to control the lives of rural African peoples in the countryside.

It is also worth keeping sight of the fact that criticisms of African land use and 'irrational' livestock ownership have a long genealogy in South Africa: they first surfaced in the Cape Colony in the face of increasing shortages of grazing land for the expansionary *trekboers* followed by the rapacious<sup>14</sup> competition for farmland engendered by the awarding of farms to British settlers in the hinterland (Marquand & Standing 1939:83–85; Peires 1981:122; Bundy 1979:22–25; Beinart 1984:56ff). Residual areas of African settlement were a

thorn in the side of these settlers and their acquisitive interests.

Also, as Beinart (1984:62) notes, the concerns of settler farmers were seen to be directly or indirectly impacted upon by what was happening in the then reserve areas: scab in African-owned sheep could threaten white farmers' flocks, the ticks that carried East Coast fever did not respect fences and boundaries and these scourges had to be eliminated across the board if settler livestock were to be safe in future (see Beinart 1997:246ff).

This discourse of an 'irrational and inefficient' African sector was taken up by the last decades of the nineteenth century with the growing need for African labour in the burgeoning mines and industries on the diamond fields and the Witwatersrand (Bundy 1979; McAllister 1992:204).

One influential solution to the 'economic problems' inherent in communal areas in South Africa – most notably as proposed by Tomlinson (1955) – is an assault on the perceived evils of communal tenure itself. The far-reaching proposals of Tomlinson's Commission aimed to abandon the 'one-man-one-plot' policy that was introduced into the reserves with the inception of the Glen Grey Act in 1894. Tomlinson sought to reverse the breakdown of 'institutional controls', by advocating the consolidation of land into 'economic units', by removing the 'superfluous', landless half of the rural population from the rural areas and into the cities, by addressing issues of land degradation and by promoting greater commercialisation in livestock production, i.e. by increasing livestock quality and off-take rate (see Bundy 1979:227; Beinart 1984:79).

Although many of Tomlinson's recommendations were swiftly rejected due to changing policy emphases in the apartheid state (Bundy 1979:227), it is striking that Tomlinson's ideas continue to resonate in the neo-liberal arguments about 'too many people, too many animals' that are still current in recent studies of former Bantustan areas. Advocates of his broad approach are still to be found in the work

of Lyne and Nieuwoudt (1990) and Louw (1988) amongst others.

The essence of the debate about communal tenure can be reduced to an ideological tug-of-war over forms of property: a neo-liberal, market perspective regards communal ownership as inefficient and as a hindrance to the unfettered operation of the market. The opposing view is that forms of communal ownership of land in rural areas can and do offer a residual safety net to the more vulnerable categories of people in society (see De Wet & McAllister 1987; McAllister 1992; Cross & Haines (eds) 1988; and Cousins (ed) 2000 for debates on these issues).

### Livestock in communal areas

So how does livestock ownership in communal areas of the Eastern Cape work? At the most basic level, a combination of birth and residence in a communal area in the Eastern Cape affords a person the right to run all the livestock s/he owns on the communal rangeland. Not only this, but absentees from rural areas are allowed to run their stock on rural rangelands. In a situation of increasing socio-economic differentiation, the ownership of livestock in these areas must almost inevitably become more concentrated. This has given rise to the contention that the communal tenure system is 'unfair' to the poor who do not own livestock, because a small number of people with large numbers of livestock are able to monopolise the grazing resources – see McAllister's (1992:211ff) critique of the Transkei Agricultural Development Study (TADS 1991). One proposal which takes this line of argument to its logical conclusion is that of formally recognising people's 'rights to grazing' (TADS 1991; Tapson 1982; Bembridge & Tapson 1993:370). These rights, it is posited, should be quantified – based on a negotiated *finite* number of livestock per person allowed in that area for a particular year – and issued as shares, which can then be traded between local people, depending on their individual/household needs and differential livestock numbers. While the idea is not without

appeal to technocrats, it would face formidable obstacles if it were to be implemented in rural areas. Such a system would, even if it managed, against considerable odds, to win the support of all rural constituencies, require a well-developed management system at local level, replicated around the province. It would also require recourse to a higher authority to set the rules of the game and to adjudicate in the event of disputes. But probably its weakest area would be in the regulating of the essential 'livestock per person' aspect, which would conceivably remain open to manipulation on a grand scale and, in so doing, undermine the whole project.

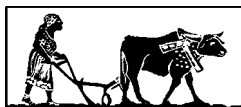
In contrast to these and other radical proposals and efforts aimed at social and landscape engineering in communal areas, it has been recognised more recently that communal tenure systems still hold considerable appeal for large numbers of rural people (including rural élites), even though the degree of socio-economic differentiation present in these systems is an unavoidable reality. Again, account must be taken of the wider social benefits afforded to the rural poor by the livestock that are owned by their kin and neighbours. For example, the redistributive aspects of ritual events (i.e. the free availability of meat and food) that are commonly held in all rural areas, and which are attended by all local inhabitants, may in fact be a conscious component of the survival strategies of the poor.

Critically, it must be stressed that it is not so much that common ownership and use of rangeland are *intrinsically inefficient*, but that, for a variety of reasons, such systems may suffer from an absence of clear definitions of user groups, of locally endorsed operational rules and of an appropriate, nested legal framework that supports its functioning (Cousins 1996b:169–171; MALA 1998). If this level of institutional support, which is legally afforded to landholders in the parallel freehold system, is extended to areas under communal tenure, then the latter can be a viable form of land owner-



ship and management. This is especially so given the flexibility that this form of tenure allows for (DLA 1997; McAllister 1992). Far from being done away with, communal tenure systems are being modified and given a new lease on life in the form of communal property associations (CPAs) and other common ownership arrangements, including more controversial 'tribal' land-owning initiatives currently said to be in vogue.

This policy direction suggests that the proponents of the conventional paradigm of livestock production in communal areas have failed, at least partially or for the moment, to convince policy-makers that private ownership of land is a prerequisite for livestock development in these areas (see MALA 1998).<sup>15</sup> Indeed, given that the extensive evidence, especially from African countries with broadly similar agrarian circumstances, suggests that tenure reform towards a system of private land ownership often creates more problems than it solves, it is difficult to imagine exactly how the project could be undertaken in this country on a large scale and yield a different result (see Shipton & Goheen 1992:318).



## Beyond dualism?

It is somewhat ironic that, in stressing why and how the multiple objectives of the livestock owner in the communal sector differ substantively from those of the commercial beef producer, proponents of the 'new paradigm' of rangeland management buttress the dualist model that inevitably carries so much baggage.<sup>16</sup> Does the 'new paradigm' make it more difficult for policy-makers to delve beneath the rhetoric and general opacity that still characterises our limited understanding of the communal sector?

In contrast to the dualist model, consensus appears to be building, in policy documents at least, around a perspective which recognises that livestock owners lie on a 'continuum of scale of activity, from the specialised, simplified systems of purely commercial farmers, through those

who – *when given the opportunity* – diversify their enterprises and consume some of their output, to those who consume the bulk of their output [or have uses for it, other than commercial] but who may [sometimes] supply a portion to the market' (Tapson n.d:3). This perspective has the potential, I would argue, to move the debate forward and away from the dichotomy of the 'commercial vs. subsistence' model and away from the obsession with typologising and seeking out 'real' farmers from among the many gradations of rural cattle-owners (Van Averbek & De Lange 1995:50).

## Who stands to gain by emphasising agricultural dualism in the 'new' South Africa?

Whatever official consensus, if any, is reached about the continued dualism within the agricultural sector in the Eastern Cape, particularly in terms of how this should be taken account of in the formulation of policy, it is interesting to note that the proponents for the ongoing existence of such a dualism have changed substantially. In the past, the supposed existence of a sharp dichotomy between 'commercial' and 'subsistence' sectors was used by organised, 'white' agricultural unions to assert their claim for the lion's share of state resources to be channelled to their 'commercial' enterprises, which helped (at least in theory) to fill government coffers. This rhetoric became increasingly self-fulfilling as the gap between the 'two agricultures', in terms of measurable (and, as I have argued, *measured*) output, concomitant state support and, indeed, 'rationality' was seen to widen. It was those livestock owners in the communal areas who had some inclination towards commercial production that were to be most sorely frustrated under this dualist regime.

As the consolidation of the Bantustans gathered speed in the 1970s and early 1980s, a new category of 'emerging black farmer' – even the patronising name is suggestive (Where have they 'emerged' from?) – was created, made possible by

the vacation of previously white-owned farms then within 'consolidated' Bantustan boundaries.

These 'emerging farmers', among them senior bureaucrats, agricultural officials, other civil servants and businessmen drawn from the ranks of the Bantustan petty bourgeoisie, began to participate in agriculture with a significant degree of Bantustan (and RSA, often in the form of financial support from the Development Bank of Southern Africa) government support, and with greater or lesser degrees of success. These 'farmers' began to blur the sharp (racial) lines between commercial and subsistence sectors.

In the post-1994 period, these 'emerging' farmers have become an increasingly vocal and mobilised force within agriculture. These people (and increasingly many of them regard themselves primarily as aspirant or fully 'commercial' farmers), are involved in an intriguing contest: they are desperate to see the processes of land redistribution<sup>17</sup> speeded up, so that they can take titled ownership of farmland which they now occupy and, in many cases, over which they have a rather tenuous hold (see Bernstein 1997:23–4, 27).

At the same time, these farmers, in a post-1994 era of rapid and, for many, surprisingly radical, adoption of neo-liberal economic policies by the national government, are attempting to distance themselves and their enterprises from the 'hopeless' (my term) position of communal areas (see NERPO n.d:41). This strategy would seem to suit formerly 'white'-dominated agricultural bodies that are under enormous pressure to, in the parlance, 'broaden the profile of their membership' by attracting articulate black farmers into their ranks. However, 'emerging' black farmers have thus far managed to evade what they perceive to be the expedient embrace of organised 'white' agriculture, especially with the political capital of the latter group at an all-time low (see Cousins 1997; *Farmer's Weekly* 19/03/1999). With disarming candour, black farmers argue that until such a time

as they have enjoyed all the government-provided material benefits previously enjoyed, over many decades, by the 'white' commercial sector, it is not in their interests to do away with the (racial component of the) dualist model. What they are instead trying to do is to insert between, at one level, the dualist notions of 'white-commercial-freehold-advanced' and 'black-subsistence-communal-backward', the new category of 'black-commercial-disadvantaged-in need of freehold title-but progressive and politically loyal' (see NERPO n.d.).<sup>18</sup>

One such group is the Eastern Cape Emerging Redmeat Producers' Organisation (ECERPO), which is the biggest affiliate to the National Emerging Redmeat Producers' Organisation (NERPO). Such organisations are engaged in the process of strategically positioning themselves in debates within the national agricultural sector. On the one hand, politicians are keen to be seen to be listening to, and addressing, the many concerns of 'black agriculture', to the point of public endorsement of the organisations purporting to represent these interests.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, these bodies have not yet managed to put together a package that clearly articulates their needs and concerns and to present this to government in a way that it can assimilate and begin to incorporate more definitively into policy. This has led to exhortations by the Eastern Cape MEC<sup>20</sup> for Agriculture and Land Affairs, Mr Max Mamase, for black farmers to 'get organised' and to 'form co-operatives' (*Daily Dispatch* 18/07/1998, 4/02/1999).

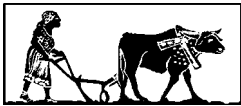
The lesson to take from the discussion above is, I believe, a fairly self-evident one: that agriculture in South Africa, based so fundamentally, as everywhere in the world, on access to and ownership of land, is and has always been deeply politicised. Moreover, in the absence of any visible progress being made in land tenure reform and redistribution (as opposed to restitution), there is no reason to expect any changes to this situation in the foreseeable future. The sector will continue to witness



a considerable degree of uneven government intervention, in terms of both policy and practice in future, and each of these interventions is likely to be highly contested throughout the province.

With this perspective in mind, then, questions arise as to what is known about the current state of livestock production in the communal sector in the Eastern Cape? What are its defining characteristics and to what extent are these undergoing change? Given that the programmes of the government in the overall management of the sector will hopefully become more focused over time, what insights can new research provide into the complex nature of livestock production in the former Bantustans and thereby contribute to policy formulation in the Eastern Cape and nationally?

These questions are all central to an analysis of the social and economic role of livestock in communal tenure areas. While not all of them can be addressed in this study, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the renewed interest in this area of enquiry.



## Objectives of this study

1. The first objective of this study is to begin the crucial task of consolidating our knowledge by *revisiting historical debates and materials* and by critically reviewing current information about cattle production and ownership in the 'communal' areas of the province.
2. The second objective is to *provide an analysis of rural livelihoods*, specifically looking at the many, dynamic reasons why rural people living in the Eastern Cape at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century still own cattle, what reasons they have for disposing of their cattle, and what constraints they face in doing so.
3. Reliable, up-to-date and accessible data on livestock numbers and ownership profiles is an obvious starting point for any meaningful analysis of, and intervention in, the sector. For this reason, the third objective is to *develop a better understanding of the numbers and*

*distribution of cattle and of the patterns of ownership across the province.*

## Research methodology

This study made use of various research techniques: a literature review of published material and 'grey' literature on cattle production in the former Bantustan areas was conducted to inform the provincial overview. Archival research was conducted into the historical antecedents of cattle ownership and management in these areas, particularly in the district level case-studies. Key informant interviews were conducted with a number of the major role-players in the province to establish an overall picture and understanding of the current state of cattle production, and government thinking and policy in this regard, in the province. Two conferences (of ECERPO and NERPO) were attended by members of the project team during the course of the year.

Four detailed case-studies into cattle ownership, production and management issues were undertaken across the province. These case-studies were conducted in the (then) magisterial districts of Cala (Xhalanga), Lusikisiki, Maluti and Peddie. The research involved conducting semi-structured interviews with local stakeholders and key informants. It also involved tracing records on cattle numbers and production for each district as far back in time as possible. In some instances, it included administering questionnaire surveys to a sample of livestock owners in the district.

## Limitations of the study

The primary limitation of the study is that it is mostly restricted to an analysis of cattle production only, and does not look at livestock production more generally (i.e. including goats and sheep). This was a pragmatic decision, based on the time and resource constraints under which the project was completed. In the context of rural production systems in the Eastern Cape, however, it is clear that cattle cannot be seen in isolation from goats and sheep



and, to a lesser extent, equines (Shackleton et al. 1999). This fact should be borne in mind when reading this report.

Another limitation is that the four case-study districts are not necessarily representative of the former Bantustan areas. The case-studies were selected because all the researchers who conducted the studies already had an established research presence in these districts. Generalising on the basis of four district case-studies, for an area of the province which until recently had 36 magisterial districts (11% sample), can be criticised. Nevertheless, the districts selected represent a consistent (albeit convenient, non-random) sampling of the overall study area, namely one of the eight districts of the former Ciskei (13%) and three of the 28 districts of the former Transkei (11%).

Lastly, as the four case-studies were conducted by researchers already established in the four districts, who are all conducting their own, longer-term, independent research projects, it was not possible to entirely standardise the research instruments used. For this reason, the questionnaires administered in Maluti district varied from those in Xhalanga and in Peddie, while no questionnaires were administered in the case of Lusikisiki for the purposes of this study (see case-study chapters for more details on research methodologies).

## The structure of this report

This report consists of seven further chapters. In Chapter 2, the historical antecedents of current cattle ownership patterns by Xhosa-speakers in the Eastern Cape province are explored. The attempts of the successive colonial, Union and apartheid state(s) to intervene in issues involving cattle ownership and production are also analysed in some detail.

In Chapter 3, the issues around the recording of cattle numbers, including the methods employed by the government to record livestock numbers and the accuracy of these figures, are examined. The available data for the communal areas of the

province, and specifically for selected districts within the former Ciskei and Transkei, are presented and reviewed.

Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 comprise the district case-studies, which examine aspects of cattle ownership and production in Xhalanga, Lusikisiki, Maluti and Peddie districts that are of relevance to this study.

Chapter 8 concludes the report and offers some insights that could inform both future research and government/private sector initiatives in this area.

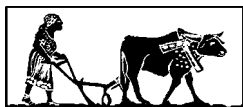
## Endnotes

1. Each of these assertions is treated separately below. See McAllister (1992:214,217) for a trenchant critique of a similar list of such 'assertions' and Lenta & Maasdorp (1988:226-8), Tapson (1982:43) and MALA (1998) for a lucid consideration of the same issues.
2. For all the 'reserves' in South Africa, the value of pastoral production was around two thirds of the value of total agricultural output in the period 1920-1960. Stock holdings were the most important capital asset in Transkei agriculture during this period (Simkins 1981:260). This is a trend which has only become more accentuated since the 1960s.
3. What is clearly not still in incubation is the firm conviction of the National Department of Agriculture that applied research needs to be 'reorientated to a considerable extent towards the requirements of small scale, resource-poor farmers'. In particular, the government recognises that 'special research programmes to understand livestock management systems in the former homelands are needed in order to improve fertility and off-take, and avoid stock losses during winter' (MALA 1998).
4. From places as diverse as Australia, Ireland, New Zealand (mostly mutton), France and, until the BSE-scare, Britain.
5. Steyn (1988:330) notes that the increase in cattle numbers in the former Ciskei in the years subsequent to the devastating



drought of 1983/84, were 'almost entirely due to imports from the RSA [sic]'. (emphasis added)

6. Many Xhosa-speaking farm workers on white-owned commercial farms also own and farm with livestock, but their predicament is not a focus of this study.
7. N Khayltash, Deputy Director, Eastern Cape Veterinary Services, personal communication, 21/08/1998.
8. As recently as 1981, Steyn noted that the Amatola Basin in Ciskei 'is not served by a railway, has no main road link, no regular bus service, no electricity and no recreational facilities' (1981:13-14). The dipping facilities were 'most inadequate' (1981:29).
9. An early preoccupation of the state was with the incidence and causes of soil erosion in both settler and peasant areas. See Beinart (1984) for an authoritative analysis of these issues.
10. Also see Crotty (1981).
11. The issue of who exactly constitutes an outsider is complicated by claims of birthright in an area, kin group and clan membership, as well as by claims that result from resettlement, both forced and voluntary (see Bank 1993).
12. Based on weakly grounded economic models that seek to *depoliticise* the core issues.
13. See Tapson (1982:43) for a critique of this argument.
14. Peires (1981:122) notes that 'the possibility of reselling land obtained for next to nothing created an unquenchable thirst [among Settlers] for new grants' (also see Beinart 1984:61).
15. But see below for the discussion of 'emerging' black farmers who want the issue of their ownership of farmland urgently addressed (cf. Cousins 1997).
16. Similarly, this study concentrates exclusively on the former Bantustan areas of the province, endorsing in some ways a 'dualist' model. It will be shown, however, that the 'two sectors' or dominant production orientations (commercial and subsistence) are far more closely integrated than is generally perceived.



17. The work of the Heath Special Investigation Unit (SIU) into the 'legitimacy' of land transfers and purchases in the former Bantustans is generally welcomed by this group as part of an overdue process of conferring more secure tenure (i.e. private ownership) over this farm land (see NERPO n.d:21).
18. Indeed, at the recent ECERPO congress, one influential speaker, spoke of the need to 'identify the "real" farmers' in the former Bantustan areas.
19. Former President Mandela, the premier of the Eastern Cape and a veritable 'who's who' of national cabinet ministers and directors-general were scheduled to address the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Congress of NERPO in Port Elizabeth, 13-15 October 1999. Several of these high-profile guest speakers did not attend in the end.
20. Member of the Executive Council of the provincial government.

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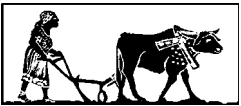
# Chapter 2:

## The historical context of cattle ownership

Andrew Ainslie

### Pre-colonial cattle ownership by Xhosa-speakers

From what has been written about the ownership of livestock by Xhosa people before the arrival of European travellers (and later settlers) in the Eastern Cape, it is clear that these Xhosa-speakers were agro-pastoralists who arrived in what is now the Eastern Cape around the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Sansom 1974; Crais 1992:16). Here they encountered Khoikhoi groups of pastoralists, as well as San hunter-gatherers (Hall 1986). The Xhosa-speakers established political control over the area between the Mbashe River in the east and the Sundays River in the west (Crais 1992:17; Hall 1986:48).



Xhosa-speakers depended on the presence of ample grazing resources in the region to sustain their herds of cattle, and they engaged in systems of seasonal transhumance and of maintaining cattle-posts away from settlements. Hall (1986:44) notes, for example, that the Mbalu chiefs maintained their settlements in the vicinity of the Tyhumie Valley at the base of the Amatola range, where *sourveld* provided the summer grazing for their livestock. During winter, they took their stock down to the *sweetveld* areas along the middle reaches of the Koonap River. Similarly, the Ndlambe are known to have moved their stock between the coastal area around the Bushman's River and the *sweetveld* of the Fish River valley.

Xhosa-speakers also engaged in loans and exchanges between kinsmen and between patron-clients to disperse their herds and flocks in order to reduce their losses in the event of disease outbreaks or

raiding (Peires 1981; Beinart 1984:74).

Economically, Xhosa-speakers were agro-pastoralists: they were cattle and goat keepers and hoe-culturalists, cultivating maize, millet, sorghum, kidney beans, pumpkins, melons and tobacco (Hammond-Tooke 1969:89; Bundy 1979:16; Crais 1992:19). They depended on their livestock, particularly their cattle, for their basic protein intake, in the form of milk, sour milk and, less frequently, meat. They also hunted game and gathered wild plants, tubers, roots and berries (Bundy 1979:17,19).

Among the Mpondo, Hunter (1936:68) recorded the economic primacy of cattle. The Mpondo are reported to have 57 terms for describing the colour and markings of beasts and five for horns (Hunter 1936:70). Not only were cattle important for subsistence purposes, but cattle-racing was a favourite pastime (Bundy 1979:49; Shaw 1974:94). All of Hunter's informants

were emphatic that less land had been cultivated formerly and that 'milk and meat [formerly] played a greater part in the diet of the people than they do today, yet even today [i.e. in 1931] they are principal items in Pondo diet' (Hunter 1936:70).

Cattle, unless they died from sickness, in which case they were eaten, were mostly slaughtered for ritual occasions. Consumption of beef was, however, complicated by rules of distribution based on criteria of kinship and residential association. These rules hindered the use of meat as a commodity to be marketed (Sansom 1974:152). Nevertheless, meat-eating was 'eating capital and a fine example of conspicuous consumption', i.e. it might constitute a display of one's wealth in animals (Sansom 1974:152).

Before contact with Europeans, clothing was made of hide, supplemented by the skins of goats and wild animals. Cattle hides also provided war shields and thongs (Bundy 1979:17). Dung was used on floors and as binding and plastering material in the construction of houses.

Cattle were the principal medium of exchange and the medium in which court fines were levied. Wealth was accumulated mainly in cattle. The possession of cattle conferred social importance, for they were the primary means of securing many wives (through bridewealth transfers) and adherents, and of dispensing hospitality and showing generosity, on which virtues status largely depended. The cattle of commoners was appropriated for the marriage of chiefs to their senior wives, for the payment of fines and through witchcraft accusations, the latter particularly associated with chieftainship (Crais 1992:21).

The investment in cattle by individuals (and homesteads) created considerable potential for socio-economic differentiation or what Sansom (1974:152) refers to as 'spectacular discrepancies in wealth'. Cattle ownership made for a highly capitalised economy among Xhosa-speaking groups.

Cattle were also the means of obtaining sexual satisfaction, since a legal marriage

could not take place without the passage of cattle (Shaw 1974:94). Fines for illegal relations were levied in cattle. Furthermore, cattle were the means of keeping on good terms with the ancestral spirits (*amathongo*), and so of securing health and prosperity. Crais (1992:21ff) presents a perceptive analysis of the role of cattle in broadly Xhosa-speaking culture in which, he argues, cattle represented 'a critical intersection of economics, authority and cosmology':

*The inhabitants of the umzi [homestead] sacrificed cattle for the ancestors who had been prominent heads of the settlement, sharing in the consciousness of the past of the umzi and re-enforcing the authority of the senior male of the homestead ... At one level cattle constituted the material embodiment and continuation of the economic order. By restricting access to cattle as lobola the senior male maintained control over the labour-power employed in the economic activities of the homestead.* (Crais 1992:21)

The economies of pre-colonial Xhosa groups were by no means static, and the mobility of these groups was engendered by two factors. First, in the face of periodic droughts and *sourveld/sweetveld* seasonal migrations, there was a constant need to seek out fresh grazing resources. This mobility brought different groups into contact with each other. In the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, contact between westward moving Xhosa-speakers and Khoikhoi peoples increased, especially during the reign of the Xhosa paramount, Tshiwo (Crais 1992:25). Slowly, Khoikhoi groups were incorporated in Xhosa chieftaincies.

Second, the segmentary tensions that succession in Xhosa notions of chieftaincy engendered, meant that contests, and indeed protracted conflicts, over leadership were a feature of the Xhosa politics. These conflicts were perhaps particularly pronounced in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Crais 1992:25ff; Peires 1981).<sup>1</sup> After



Phalo's death in 1775, as a notable example, his sons Gcaleka and Rharhabe came out in open conflict against each other. Rharhabe was vanquished, but was later permitted to move west with his followers and settled near the present-day Stutterheim.

Not only did conflict at the level of chieftaincies result in mobility, but the segmentation at the level of every *umzi* gave rise to an expansionary tendency, as mature sons married and established their own *imizi*, apart from those of their fathers. In the context of the ever-present tendency towards a decentralisation of political power, in which commoners<sup>2</sup> could amass considerable wealth in cattle and gather a following around themselves, the position of the chieftaincy remained an ambiguous one: chiefs who failed to redistribute wealth to their followers could quickly find themselves deserted in favour of others who did (Hammond-Tooke 1965; Kuper 1997).

From the 1770s, the Dutch-speaking pastoralist *trekboer* entered this unpredictable ecological and volatile political environment, with disastrous results for both Khoikhoi and Xhosa-speaking peoples (Crais 1992:36–52). Over the course of the ensuing century, the majority of Khoikhoi peoples were to be exterminated by disease, hunted down and murdered by white colonists or became slaves, peons and indentured labourers on white-owned farms. Nor did the Xhosa-speaking groups fare much better: they were engaged in no less than nine 'Frontier Wars', banished from the land that had been under their control for centuries, economically and politically subjugated and unequivocally brought under the heel of the colonial state, forced to labour on white-owned farms and, later, in distant mines and emerging industries.

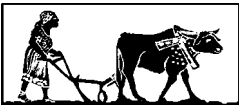
For over a century following the 1870s, the further elaboration and consolidation of racially based subjugation entailed what may be regarded as an unbridled assault on Xhosa identity and culture. Beinart (1980:91) notes that the homesteads of

Mpondo chiefs, which had been among the wealthiest in the pre-colonial period, sought to hold onto their position in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They often had large numbers of cattle and small stock, and herds which were passed down from generation to generation. Some of these chiefs still invoked 'customary' tribute rights to claim stock from commoners and also ran courts and exacted fines in livestock, even though their judicial powers were not recognised by the colonial administration. Having existing economic resources meant that these homesteads could exploit economic opportunities more readily than those that were less well endowed. These early signs of socio-economic differentiation would develop as the century unfolded and were to have a considerable impact on poverty levels and on rural inter-household relations throughout the ensuing decades.

Throughout these fundamental changes that were wrought in the overarching political economy, Xhosa-speaking people have sought variously and with greater or lesser degrees of success, to hold onto their cultural notions and ideals by resisting, accommodating, rejecting, incorporating and challenging the imposition of European notions and institutions of society and social organisation (see Hendricks 1991:194–5). As Hunter (1936:141) noted for the Mpondo: 'Because they now trade Pondo [sic] are directly affected by affairs in Europe and America.' Critically, however, Xhosa-speakers have continued to identify in multifarious ways with their patrilineally organised cultural universe and, specifically, with the central place of cattle in this universe (see Mayer 1961; Hendricks 1991; McAllister 1985, 1997; Beinart & Bundy 1987).

### Government intervention in cattle production systems<sup>3</sup>

It is important to note, as Hendricks (1989:306) does, that there is often a wide discrepancy between the stated objectives of government plans and policies and their





eventual implementation. This observation serves as a warning against the inclination to view 'the state' as a monolithic, single-minded institution which analyses the complex issues confronting it in rational ways, and proceeds from there to the coherent formulation and the uniform exercise of power, including the implementation of policy, in ways that are somehow entirely free of contradiction (see Ainslie 1998:73–78).

Rather, the colonial, Union and (post-1948) apartheid and, indeed, the post-1994 democratic state in South Africa can usefully be viewed as successive sites of ongoing contestation over competing interests and meanings in the developing political economy in the country. A generic feature of all states, namely the extension of bureaucratic and social control over its citizenry for the purposes of, *inter alia*, taxation, with the aim (at least, theoretically) of facilitating the provision and subsequent administration of public goods and services, including education, health care, law enforcement, basic infrastructure and defence, are clearly at work here.

It is, however, the differential, racially biased nature of this extension of control over its citizenry which has left a particularly telling legacy in rural South Africa and which is of primary interest here. To narrow it down still further, it is the legacy of intervention by the state with respect to patterns of cattle ownership and production that are especially relevant to us. Three areas of state intervention, which sometimes but not always overlapped in practice, were attempts to:

1. control the spread of livestock diseases;
2. introduce stock limitation programmes as part of the various permutations of land rehabilitation (including Betterment Planning); and
3. increase the off-take of cattle in these areas.

### Mobile cattle and roving diseases

The main mode of transport in the Eastern Cape by the late 1860s was the ox wagon. Between the larger towns of East London, King William's Town, Port Elizabeth and

Grahamstown and the rural hinterland where traders were setting up their trading stations, Europeans and Africans alike were making a living as transport riders and contractors (cf. Bundy 1979:54ff, 67). They transported consumer goods, including hoes, picks and, significantly, ploughs into rural areas and came out with agricultural produce, especially wool and hides, but also wheat and maize (and other products such as firewood) for sale in the towns and for export (Bundy 1979:58).

The discovery of diamonds also provided a welcome boost for agricultural production in the Eastern Cape. Bundy (1979:67) characterised this boost as a 'virtual explosion of peasant activity in the 1870s'. Indeed, Beinart (1997:246) points out that the number of oxen recorded in the Cape census rose dramatically from 249 000 to 422 000 between 1865 and 1875.<sup>4</sup>

These new forms of economic activity had two key consequences in terms of cattle production:

1. the increasingly widespread use of cattle (oxen) in providing draught power, both for ploughing and for transport; and
2. the increased investment and sales of livestock (cattle, but also sheep) and livestock products to meet the growing demand for cattle.

Both of these developments meant that all cattle, even Xhosa-owned cattle, had firmly entered the 'formal' economic realm, the latter dominated by the interests of 'merchant capital' and the demands of distant markets. This gave rise to new social and economic forms of activity, value and meaning in respect of cattle ownership that would necessitate recurring negotiation and mediation by future generations of Xhosa-speaking people. With the heightened investment in the sector, particularly in terms of the increased utility of cattle, but also due to the considerable value of wool exports, official concerns were soon raised about the prevalence, aetiology and the combating of livestock diseases in the countryside.<sup>5</sup>



Redwater disease, which had been prevalent in the Colony and Transkei in the 1870s, reappeared in a virulent form around King William's Town and East London in 1882. Hutcheon, the Colonial Veterinary Surgeon at the time, was convinced that the disease 'was spread mostly by means of transport' (Beinart 1997:246). Notwithstanding the limited understanding of disease at this time, veterinary opinion held that any movement of stock was potentially problematic in spreading an epizootic.

Hutcheon attempted to impose the then recently promulgated Contagious Diseases Act No. 2 of 1881, which enabled the proclamation of a district or area as 'infected' and the prohibition of animal movement in and out of the zone. Hutcheon also argued that farmers should fence the perimeter of their farms to prevent access by passing animals that strayed from the main transport routes when they were outspanned, in their search for grazing. While these measures were designed to safeguard the interests of the livestock 'industry' as a whole by the deliberate spatial confinement of disease outbreaks, it is likely that they were resented by those inconvenienced by their implementation.<sup>6</sup> Livestock owners might well have recognised this intervention as representing the thin end of the wedge, portending ever greater government intervention in the livestock sector.<sup>7</sup>

When, in 1885, redwater spread from the coastal districts as far as Cathcart and Queenstown, livestock from the Transkei, which were among the most seriously affected, were denied entry to older colonial districts. Farmers along the main transport routes fenced their farms more quickly in order to protect their stock from passing transport teams (Beinart 1997:247). In 1891, a further epizootic spread as far as Aliwal North and Barkly East where redwater had not been reported before.

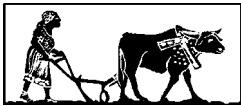
Now that the expanding veterinary department, and indeed the whole Department of Agriculture, had the authority to

act more decisively, greater control over cattle movements could be exercised in the event of emergencies, such as the outbreak of epidemics. Following the Scab Commission (1892–94), the dipping of sheep against scab, which had been compulsory in some districts since 1886, became compulsory throughout the Cape after 1894 (Beinart 1997:248).

Beinart (1997:249) argues that there is little evidence in this early work of the veterinarians of the 1870s and early 1880s that ever-present concerns about livestock diseases were feeding into segregationist demands. Rather, it appears that black-owned stock was usually viewed neutrally or with some favour. On the other hand, the ideas of vets concerning sanitation and animal health came to the fore in their call for spatial reorganisation and separation, particularly in attempts to keep sheep out of what were regarded as potentially disease-ridden kraals; and, as a corollary, the fencing of farms and of paddocks or camps within them (see next section).

Arguments about animal health were 'a significant although by no means the only factor in the tightening of the Cape's still fluid internal boundaries', through the increasing use of fencing (Beinart 1997:250). At a later stage, the issue of animal diseases would come into play centrally in defining boundaries between white and black (Beinart 1997:250). Indeed, at a recent, i.e. 1999 (largely 'white') farmers' conference in Queenstown, farmers 'expressed concern over the spreading of contagious abortion and scab from the old Ciskei and Transkei areas which was resulting in massive costs to farmers on adjoining farms. The spread of disease was exacerbated, they argued, by [African] farmers using communal grazing, non-compliance with dipping requirements and a lack of governmental funding to assist farmers in dipping their animals.' (Daily Dispatch 14/05/1999)

In 1896–97, there was a rinderpest epidemic in the Cape. Rumours circulated that rinderpest was spread by whites so as to induce poverty and to compel Africans



to seek work for very low wages (Van Onselen 1972:475; Bundy 1988:120). Africans called the disease 'zifozonke' meaning 'every disease' or 'masilangane' which means 'let us all be equal'. Rinderpest, and the campaign to eradicate it, destroyed 80 to 90% of the cattle in the Transkei – animals, which at that stage, still very much formed the real wealth of the rural people (see Van Onselen 1972:484) – and nearly as many in the Ciskei. Although provision was made for the payment of compensation to owners of infected cattle that had to be shot, in the early stages of the outbreak, no compensation was paid. This in spite of the policy of 'stamping out', i.e. culling, entire herds purportedly infected by the disease. With no compensation forthcoming, the response from cattle owners was a distinct lack of co-operation (Van Onselen 1972:474).

In the wake of the rinderpest epidemic, the transport system of the province was crippled by the loss of draught-oxen (Van Onselen 1972:484). Africans were forced into the cash economy to obtain funds for restocking their herds, despite the high ruling prices (Van Onselen 1972:486). The Chief Magistrate of the Transkei reported in 1899 that:

*It is surprising (notwithstanding the high price of cattle in the Colony) how many cattle, principally young animals, are being purchased from colonial farmers with money earned in the mines and public works, and brought into the territories.* (Blue Book 1899:71, quoted in Van Onselen 1972:486)

Rinderpest was successfully eradicated in South Africa in 1904 (*Farmer's Weekly* June 18, 1999), only to be followed a few years later by East Coast Fever. In fact, by 1904, East Coast Fever, which had been moving down the east coast of Africa for a decade, had reached the northern Transvaal. It was decided to introduce compulsory dipping against East Coast Fever in the Transkei through the Council system, so that the costs of the dipping could be

recovered locally by charging cattle owners directly (Bundy 1987:194–5). In 1910, the programme was only just getting underway, but it was too late to prevent the southward spread of East Coast Fever from Natal to the Transkei reserve areas in 1911.

In 1911, the Stock Diseases Act was passed and when it was extended to the Transkei in 1912, it introduced even more severe anti-fever regulations (Bundy 1987:195). These had particularly onerous consequences for cattle owners in the Transkei:

- dipping became compulsory and its avoidance punishable in court;
- dipping was to occur every seven days;
- it thus became more expensive for cattle owners;
- every and any case of illness among cattle had to be reported;
- transporting an animal from one location to another involved paddocking, taking its temperature and securing the required authorisation from a veterinary officer;
- this made it virtually impossible to move cattle;
- it was very difficult to sell stock and then only at very depressed prices; and
- transport-riding opportunities dried up with the restriction on movement.

The disease decimated herds and impoverished rural people. Because the disease tended to linger and to reinfect 'clean districts', it proved more troublesome than rinderpest and had a longer-term negative economic effect on rural people. The regulations imposed for the control of East Coast Fever made it impossible for rural people to sell their cattle to anyone but the local trader at very low prices (Bundy 1987:196; Bundy 1988:124).

These regulations remained in force for four years, in the face of considerable discontent from the local population (Bundy 1987:198). In 1914, troops were sent to East Griqualand when the long-standing popular opposition to the compulsory dipping of cattle, especially in the districts of Mount Frere and Fletcher and Matatiele,<sup>8</sup> threatened to break out in open



insurrection (Bundy 1987:191–2, 203). A number of dipping tanks and sheds were attacked and burned and armed bands of men traversed the countryside looting trading stores and threatening dipping officers.

People also resented the dipping programme because they reasoned that the dipping of cattle allowed the authorities to count the numbers of cattle in their locality, information they were not happy to divulge. Bundy (1987:218) notes that East Coast Fever lingered in the Transkei and only in 1930 were the restrictions on stock movements finally lifted. By 1931, Hunter (1936:67) noted that:

*the Government has introduced a system of compulsory dipping to combat disease in stock. Tanks have been built all through the country, and [African] dipping foremen, paid by the Government, appointed. All cattle must be dipped at regular intervals, varying from a week to a month with the district and the season. Sheep and goats are also dipped. The foremen are supervised by Europeans. Compulsory dipping, and the accompanying tax (cf. Hunter 1936: 141), and the regulations regarding the movement of stock are much resented.*

Mpondo people complained to Hunter that the frequent dipping made oxen less fit to race, and the restrictions on movement made large gatherings of cattle for racing impossible and further increased the difficulties of marketing (Hunter 1936:67; also see Bundy 1988:125).

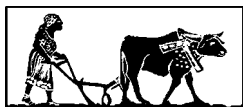
For the period 1950 to 1980, not much published literature is available regarding animal health programmes, although, given more time, it might be possible to track down 'grey' literature on the subject. Mager (1992, 1995) has documented the widespread opposition to government dipping in the African areas of Peddie and neighbouring districts that fed into other struggles being waged around the imposition of 'betterment' planning in the face of rising rural landlessness, drought, poverty

and deprivation. Anthrax, in particular, remains a constant threat and inoculations have been compulsory throughout the African areas, including the former Ciskei, where inoculations were done annually by the Veterinary Section (Steyn 1981:29).

The implementation of dipping and inoculation programmes remain dogged by difficulties: there are ongoing problems of veterinary staff shortages – for the former Transkei, Bembridge (1984:85) noted that there was one 'field veterinarian' for every 179 000 cattle, which allowed 'little attention to be given to individual stock owners' livestock disease problems', funding shortages,<sup>9</sup> misunderstandings and mistrust between cattle owners and veterinary staff, which undermines the co-operation which is essential if a state-managed and administered preventative animal health programme is to be successful. The recent uncertainty concerning long-term government policy, especially with regard to the provision and organisation of dipping in communal tenure areas, only contributes to the malaise. The ongoing shortage of veterinary surgeons in the province has begun to receive attention, with legislation passed to make the remuneration package of surgeons in the civil service more attractive.

The government-provided dipping programme, a senior official has suggested, is an unfortunate and expensive artefact from the past. 'It should be every man for himself when it comes to dipping.' The department, he felt, should only be responsible for controlling the zoonotic diseases that can be transferred from animals to humans, such as rabies, anthrax and bovine tuberculosis. Draft policy to this effect has already been drafted and was due to come into effect in 2000.<sup>10</sup>

The MALA Discussion Document (1998) notes that the Constitution of South Africa provides a framework for the government's livestock and animal health services. Animal health control and diseases are listed as a 'concurrent national and provincial competency'. The following are listed as provincial and local



competencies: veterinary services, facilities for the accommodation, care and burial of animals, the licensing and control of undertakings that sell food to the public, municipal abattoirs and pounds. For the many cash-strapped local councils around the province, meeting their responsibilities in terms of these provisions, where at all possible, is increasingly difficult.

While the Animal Diseases Act No. 35 of 1984 emphasises the threat posed by infectious animal diseases and parasites to the agricultural sector in South Africa, this Act needs revision to bring it in line with the new Constitution and to clarify provincial and national responsibilities. It is proposed that under the Animal Health Bill, the NDA be made responsible for the co-ordination of all aspects of animal disease control and eradication throughout the country. The legislation will authorise the government to:

- co-ordinate and maintain a competent epidemiological database and information system of notifiable disease surveillance, based upon disease-incidence reporting and supported by field and laboratory testing;
- develop programmes in consultation with provincial governments and private agricultural stakeholders to contain and eradicate diseases which may pose a threat to the national economy;
- set standards for routine control measures for those notifiable diseases and parasites which are the agreed responsibility of the provincial governments, and institute effective monitoring procedures to ensure compliance with those measures; and
- adopt quality control measures for the regular accreditation of all laboratories offering veterinary testing services.

### Land rehabilitation and stock limitation programmes

In a seminal article, Beinart (1984) provides a cogent analysis of the emergence of environmental 'conservationism' in South Africa. Conservationism, he argues,

was a set of ideas generated, at least in part, by the closing of the frontier and a conviction that settlers could not longer simply 'mine' the land and move on. The proponents of this new paradigm regarded rational planning, technical solutions and the use of new technologies as central to the future of capitalist agrarian development (Beinart 1984:59).

More importantly, in 'an approach which lent itself to unilateral action by the state, advocates of this approach thought that the process of decline had gone too far for farmers to look after the land themselves' (Beinart 1984:60). Of equal import, was that those within the state departments who advocated the compulsory enforcement of strategies of land management began to dominate those whose administrative concern was to maintain social order (Beinart 1984:75).

The imperative to control, administer, and to extract taxes from rural Africans, account for the attention that came to be focussed on the 'reserve' areas, in the form of much political rhetoric and misguided intervention over several decades (see Beinart & Bundy 1987; Switzer 1993; Beinart 1984:63). But such intervention was also guided by internationally (mostly USA) sourced concerns about the apparently rapid and deleterious spread of soil erosion as a result of incorrect farming methods (Beinart 1984:67ff).

Some of the early impetus for the emergence of this approach can be traced back to the 1922 Drought Commission's final report, which was to have a profound influence on the development of conservationist interventions in colonial territories far beyond the borders of South Africa (also see Bundy 1979:245-6). In the main, the report focussed on a detailed analysis of the nature and causes of soil erosion in pastoral farming areas, including soil compaction that increased run-off, and the perceived inadequacies of peasant farming in dealing with the 'dust bowl' scenario which the apparently increasing erosion promised (Beinart 1984:59,61).<sup>11</sup>

The Commission noted that it was not overstocking alone, but the practice of



*kraaling* sheep and cattle that destroyed the veld: kraaling created paths through the veld and depleted grazing resources near the farmstead. It also meant longer journeys for stock each day as they went further afield in search of grazing and water. Controlled use of pasturage, and thereby the protection of more palatable grasses, was clearly difficult in these circumstances. In the place of kraaling, the Commission recommended the use of paddocking or a system of camps (Beinart 1984:59; Moll 1988:6,22).

This level of state interest, that is, right down to the farm or reserve/location level was not entirely new: as Marquand and Standing (1939:103) observed, the Glen Grey Act (of 1894), which established a District Council for the whole of the Glen Grey district, listed among the duties of this Council the construction and control of dipping-tanks and agricultural improvement in the district generally. The Native Affairs Act of 1920 provided for the establishment of local councils in reserve areas (Ainslie 1998:96–7). Notably, Section 6 of the Act empowered these councils to fulfil functions that included:

1. the construction and maintenance of roads, dams and channels, and the prevention of soil erosion;
2. the provision of a suitable system of water supply;
3. the combating of livestock diseases;
4. the eradication of weeds;
5. an efficient system of sanitation;
6. the improvement of agricultural methods; and
7. afforestation.

A few years later, the Native Administration Act No. 38 of 1927 (and its later amendments) gave the Minister of Native Affairs considerable powers to make laws *by proclamation* for all (African) areas, including in such matters as irrigation, the combating of soil erosion, the dipping of stock and the reporting of stock diseases and the unauthorised presence of 'strange' stock, the impounding of stray stock, the application of the principle of collective responsibility for stock theft or damage to

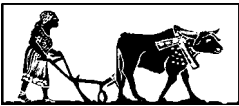
dipping tanks and the limitation of the number of donkeys that could be kept in (African) areas. Significantly, it also included aspects of 'social control', including the prohibition, in certain areas, of public meetings without the permission of the magistrate and the reporting of any unlawful presence of strangers and fugitive offenders (Marquand & Standing 1939:147; Moll 1988:20–1; Rogers 1933:13).

The regulations allowing for restrictions on the entry of cattle into African locations, which were passed in the 1920s, were considered inadequate in controlling the numbers of animals in rural areas. In 1930, the UTTGC ('Bhunga') Proceedings<sup>12</sup> noted that: 'unless the evils of overstocking are remedied, it will be impossible to cope with the soil erosion problem ... [African] customs and habits all tend to overstocking.'

Provision was thus made for the culling of livestock, although this usually meant enforced sale rather than simply culling (i.e. slaughter), in the Betterment Proclamation of 1939 (Beinart 1984:73). This was achieved by means of the unpopular Livestock Control and Improvement Proclamation No. 31 of 1939, which was the first legislation on overstocking in the Reserves and has essentially remained in force since this time (Moll 1988:23–25).<sup>13</sup>

Stock limitation<sup>14</sup> was to be enforced so as to match livestock numbers to a notional 'carrying capacity' of rangeland in different areas (Moll 1988:24). Within three months of the 'carrying capacity' having been determined, every extraneous animal was to be slaughtered or removed from the 'betterment' area. If owners did not comply throughout, they were liable to forfeit their stock, to be slapped with a fine of 20 pounds or three months imprisonment. These provisions were first applied in the Tanga Ward, a portion of Location 1 (Gcuwa A) in Butterworth district towards the end of 1939, which became a model for the rest of the Transkei (Moll 1988:24).

In 1942, the Young Commission on Overstocking in the Transkei found that a



'more overall and compulsory system of limiting stock numbers ... was inevitable' (Beinart 1984:73). Further, the Commission recommended that 'livestock improvement' should be applied to the whole Transkei, 'whether the local inhabitants liked it or not' and that arable, grazing and residential areas should be systematised and reallocated where necessary and fenced (Moll 1988:24).

The culling of cattle<sup>15</sup> was held up during the Second World War by financial constraints and staff shortages. As indicated above, stock limitation was seen as forming an integral part of the wider implementation of 'betterment' schemes. Not surprisingly, however, it invoked widespread discontent and persuaded many South African reserve dwellers to resist the whole range of agricultural policies (Beinart 1984:74–5; Moll 1988:25). As Mager (1995:770) points out, stock limitation was:

*the one single issue which provoked the greatest resentment ... To reduce a man's cattle was not only to strip him of his wealth ... but to destroy his social base in the community and the foundations of male supremacy. Reducing cattle numbers interfered drastically with African social and economic relationships ... While men held onto cattle they retained the symbolic power of the patriarchal order.*

Stock culling was, in short, 'the most hated element' of the rehabilitation programmes (Moll 1988:34).

Bundy (1979:227) notes that Proclamation 116 of 1949 instituted a new variant of 'Betterment or Closer Settlement Schemes' in the African reserves, although, as Moll (1988:26) points out, the ingredients of this 'new' policy were already being espoused in 1944. These 'Reclamation' schemes were aimed at stabilising and increasing crop production, at improving land use (including arresting soil erosion) and would follow on from 'betterment' efforts which sought to improve animal husbandry practices.

With the rise of the National Party in 1948, the concerns over African population growth, urban migration, modernisation and the maintenance of segregation, already a major preoccupation in the early 1940s, came very much to the fore in the efforts of the state to intervene in 'development' generally and agricultural production in particular, in the reserve areas (Beinart 1997). Moll (1988:27) shows how state expenditure increased dramatically in the period 1945–1953, as the state attempted to *purposefully* intervene in the reserves. Implementing the scheme encountered resistance, however, particularly with regard to the culling of livestock.

While it was opined by local officials that conditions in the 'planned' areas were improving, this was often at the expense of neighbouring locations to which stock destined to be culled had been removed by their owners (Moll 1988:29; Mager 1992). As pressure to speed up what was regarded by the authorities as an essentially technical-economic process mounted, local consultation was largely sacrificed and economy measures were introduced, both of which fed local opposition to the schemes. As Beinart (1984:74) notes: 'If the camp system was reluctantly accepted in some areas, it also helped, particularly because it was tied together with culling in the process of planning, to keep state intervention in the sphere of stock-keeping at the forefront of rural politics.'

One comprehensive solution to the 'problems' inherent in communal areas in South Africa, proposed by Tomlinson (1955),<sup>16</sup> was an assault on the perceived evils of communal tenure itself. This proposal, which built on policies and pronouncements that had emerged from the 1940s, advocated that to reverse the breakdown of institutional controls, it was necessary to consolidate land into 'economic units', to remove the superfluous, landless half of the rural population from the rural areas into cities, to address issues of land degradation and to promote greater commercialisation in livestock production, i.e. by increasing quality and off-take (see Beinart 1984:79).<sup>17</sup>



Although Tomlinson's model proposed a fundamental break with whatever remnants had remained of a pre-colonial tenure and economic system, the actual interventions, arising out of Nationalist policy from the early 1950s through to the 1980s, were largely subverted to fit the state's political agenda at the time (Moll 1988:38). This agenda was essentially the adoption of policies of 'grand apartheid', including the implementation of the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, which in the Eastern Cape occurred mostly in the late 1950s. This went hand in hand with the desire of the state to institute restrictions on the numbers of Africans in towns while maximising the number of people confined to the reserve areas (see Moll 1988:35-36).

Under new policy, introduced in 1954 by a rejuvenated NAD under its new minister, HF Verwoerd, it was envisaged that stock culling would take place within three to four years of the initial phase of 'stabilisation' starting in a particular location. If the people resisted, sanctions would be applied as necessary, such as reducing expenditure on education, transport or other services in the area (Moll 1988:40). Rural people resented the increased 'reach' of the state which was being extended over their lives with the collusion of most of those in the employ of the state: the chiefs, headmen, dipping foremen and police.<sup>18</sup>

Interventions by the state after this period included the implementation of 'betterment' schemes and the extension of livestock dipping and culling programmes. On the whole, these interventions continued to reap bitter harvests and few rewards (De Wet 1987; Yawitch 1981). After the control of aspects of stabilisation and reclamation were taken over by Bantu Authorities in the late 1950s and 1960s, the culling of stock slowed down and, with the introduction of limited self-government in the Transkei in 1963, was eventually abandoned, as the Bantustan governments were reluctant to entertain the high political costs that accompanied these schemes (Beinart 1984:83). The Ciskei was granted

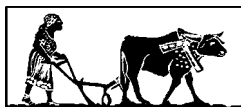
self-governing status in 1972, and in 1973 the culling of stock was abolished (Steyn 1981).<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the Transkeian government still sought to control stock numbers through the introduction of a livestock levy in 1977, which almost immediately hit resistance on the ground and was soon halved and then reduced further (Beinart 1977; Bundy 1988:228). It was only in 1988, however, that General Holomisa finally dropped the stock tax.<sup>20</sup>

### Cattle 'development' programmes<sup>21</sup>

#### Attempts to improve cattle quality

In the Transkei by the end of the 1920s, 100 African demonstrators had been trained and sent into reserve areas to 'show the benefit of new implements, rotation, fallowing and stock improvement through castrating scrub bulls' (Beinart 1984:68). During the 1930s, stock improvement policies implemented in the Transkei reserves were intended to supply local people with pedigree bulls and rams and to encourage the elimination of scrub males (Beinart 1984:72). The availability of improved breeds would mean, it was argued, higher yields and thus require fewer animals, thereby saving the grazing resources. As argued throughout this report, however, this line of reasoning is flawed in that the rationale of the livestock owner in a communal tenure setting is not based exclusively or even primarily on higher yields of beef (or even milk), but on a multiple function model of cattle ownership and utility. As a result, stock quality in terms of beef production is not the primary consideration for most cattle owners.

In the Ciskei, the Department of Agriculture launched a breeding scheme in 1949, allowing stock owners to purchase improved sires of specific breeds on a subsidised basis (Steyn 1981:24). In the 1960s and early 1970s, the Ciskei department favoured the Brown Swiss as sires for cattle herds in communal areas (Brown 1971:178). These were introduced through the Tribal Authorities, but as Steyn (1981:25) notes, they were not well-adapted to the area and most died soon





after introduction, usually from tick-borne diseases.

Between 1961 and 1970, the Department introduced a total of 901 bulls into Ciskei reserve areas. This programme was later adjudged not to be particularly successful, because people tended to sell the animals while they were still of serviceable age. They were not cared for properly when they were 'bought for the community'. Nevertheless, in 1979/80, the Animal Husbandry Section supplied a further 104 bulls to Ciskeian farmers (Dept. Agriculture and Forestry (Ciskei), Annual Report 1979/80).

Similarly, Beinart (1977:133–4) found that the Transkei Department of Agriculture was trying to improve herds through the subsidised sale of improved bulls and rams. Besides the Brown Swiss and Afrikaner introduced earlier, the Department was also promoting the use of 'disease-resistant' indigenous Mpondo cattle. Not surprisingly, the introduction of exotic breeds that were not adapted to conditions in communal areas was not successful (Beinart 1984:73).<sup>22</sup>

Many of these improvement schemes survived for decades, however, and were in evidence in many parts of the former Transkei and Ciskei as recently as the early 1990s, run by agricultural parastatals and the respective departments of agriculture. The Ciskei Agricultural Development Act of 1989, for instance, left the provisions for the approval of bulls for breeding purposes (Chapter 6 of the Act) unchanged from the earlier 1973 Act of the same name.

Other than annual reports of the two Departments of Agriculture and Forestry (Transkei and Ciskei), not much material is available on how much success was achieved with these schemes. Clearly, where pedigree bulls were running together with other 'scrub' bulls on communal rangeland, the impact of the former on the quality of local stock would be diluted (see Beinart 1977:134; Bembridge & Tapson 1993:368).

Certainly, it is now the stuff of legends that, whilst the state spent a great deal of time and resources castrating and culling 'scrub' Nguni/Nkone bulls in rural areas, those Nguni bulls which survived this regime, are now in the hands of commercial 'white' stud breeders and fetch up to R40 000 per head.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs announced recently that it had 'facilitated the ordering of 20 breed bulls which were sold to [African] stock farmers at low prices in order to improve the breed of cattle in the province' (*Daily Dispatch* 16/02/1999). It is not clear whether these animals were sold to farmers in communal areas or farmers with access to freehold land. Ironically, the fact that highly valued 'indigenous' bulls are now held and carefully bred by white farmers may alter their characteristic and highly desirable 'adaptation through natural selection', i.e. the very quality that made them (belatedly) sought-after in the first place.

#### Attempts to increase off-take

Livestock culling was not the only method introduced by the authorities in their attempts to limit the numbers of cattle on communally held rangeland. Beinart (1984:73) argues that the commercialisation of stock-keeping was seen by the authorities as an important means of breaking down the long-held African 'cattle complex', which represented a major threat to the soil. Indeed, this has been a recurring theme throughout sub-Saharan Africa for several decades.

In the Eastern Cape, ongoing attempts have been made to increase the turnover of cattle through (voluntary) sales. From the early 1930s, once East Coast fever had been largely eradicated, cattle owners and officials called for the organisation of government-controlled stock sales. Beinart (1984) notes that large numbers of animals were sold, mostly for slaughter in urban areas in these early sales. This may be partly explained by the high cattle numbers, which peaked at their highest ever number in the mid and late 1930s (see Chapter 3).



In later decades, the response was less enthusiastic, even though the increased prices offered indicated continued demand. On the one hand, given the onslaught by the state on cattle ownership in the reserves (and later Bantustans), it is understandable that people who were resisting the forced culling of their stock should also desist from selling this stock at government-sponsored sales. On the other hand, as several observers have pointed out, the period 1940–1970 was one of considerable economic hardship in the reserve areas, with one result being that people did not have excess cattle to sell regularly (Mager 1992).

Official cattle marketing schemes that were set up in the former Bantustans between the 1960s and 1990s, thus met with mixed, but generally disappointing results. By the late 1970s, Beinart (1977:132) contended that the number of stock sales in the Transkei had decreased and that the off-take of cattle was lower than in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He argued that the widespread losses of stock as a result of recent outbreaks of redwater disease had driven up prices, as those who still had some cattle were reluctant to sell them. This, in turn, meant that it was no longer profitable for outside buyers to buy stock in the Transkei for resale to butchers and meat processors outside the area. He also noted the depressed state of stock sales in Lusikisiki, a traditionally active district in terms of stock sales, at which only 25 head of cattle were changing hands, where previously 100 head would have been sold (Beinart 1977:132).

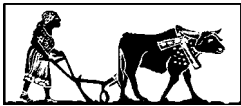
Bantustan governments entered into agreements with private concerns to offer auction sale and abattoir services (see Tapson 1982:6–8). In 1980/81, the company operating sales of cattle through auctions in the Transkei recorded a paltry 4 768 cattle sold, with only 8 of the 32 sales throughout the Transkei recording sales in excess of 100 head for the year (Tapson 1982:8). Tapson accounted for this poor performance by suggesting that sales were badly publicised and thus

poorly supported by both sellers and buyers. There was a lack of grading and weighing equipment and in some areas the infrastructure, such as sale yards, was in bad condition.

In 1939, Marquand and Standing (1939:91–2) noted that a ‘recent Government commission’ had recommended that a meat-canning factory be set up in the Transkei to encourage the African farmers to sell more stock and so reduce the load that the soil is expected to carry. It is not clear at what stage this recommendation was taken up, but as Tapson (see below) reports, by 1980 Transkei Meat Industries (TMI) was running a government-owned meat factory in Umtata.

In 1971, Brown could report that ‘numbers of [African]-owned cattle forwarded direct to the East London abattoir in recent years [i.e. late 1960s] have shown a fairly sharp upward trend’ (Brown 1971:178–9). This was despite the fact that 90% of the carcasses only achieved 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grades, meaning that the sellers would have received low prices for their stock.<sup>24</sup> Prices paid were ‘fair when the comparatively high incidence of cysticercosis is taken into account’ (Brown 1971:179). A total of 5 543 cattle were sold at local auction sales in the Ciskei in 1968. Considering that the former Ciskei areas held far fewer cattle than the Transkei, it is clear that cattle owners in the former Ciskei have historically sold relatively more of their livestock than their counterparts in the Transkei, which is perhaps a sign of their earlier and more thorough-going proletarianisation (see Moll 1988:42). But, as De Wet and McAllister (1983:69) point out, stock sales in the Ciskei in the mid-1970s amounted to only eight cattle-units per village per annum: hardly a noteworthy number.<sup>25</sup>

What is clear from the above discussion is that livestock owners in different areas of the former Bantustans sell animals in response to both their own immediate economic need and, to some extent, local and seasonal environmental conditions. The often unreliable opportunities for selling livestock through formal channels



that have existed at the local level means that many sellers have to resort to other options of selling their animals, such as 'out of hand' sales. Unfortunately, these two factors often reinforce each other in undermining the marketing of cattle: low numbers of stock presented for sale or auction at formal stock sales means higher economic costs that must be borne by the organisers, who then typically schedule fewer sales in that area. This, in turn, means that those wishing to make emergency sales at short notice cannot wait until the next formal sale, with the result that the numbers presented at formal sales stays low (see Tapson (1982:13–14) for other, confounding factors).

More detailed research needs to be conducted – and this study starts that process – into whether regional patterns in respect of these responses exist and what influence reliable, properly organised sales (where these exist, such as in Peddie district) have over cattle owners' decisions about when and how to sell their stock in the medium- and long-term (see Tapson 1982:29). Tapson's own illuminating analysis of marketing in the Transkei, for instance, is based on a single year's off-take data, that of 1980/81.

However, it is not only the regularity and reliability of sales that influence the numbers offered: the perception on the part of sellers of the even-handedness of the organisers and the buyers is also an important factor. Trust between seller and buyer is an important element in these transactions, especially given the fluctuating prices of 'dressed' beef that directly affects the prices realised in the auction ring. If sellers feel that they are consistently being short-changed at these sales, they will not support them. In situations where small numbers of cattle are offered at stock sales, with a correspondingly small number of buyers, the potential for especially desperate sellers to be exploited through low prices is real (Tapson 1982:19).

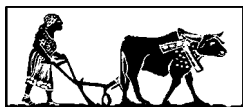
One of the biggest obstacles to greater off-take has always been the combination

of stringent regulations (albeit with shaky enforcement) around the slaughter of animals and the lack of adequate abattoir facilities close to cattle producing areas.<sup>26</sup> Even a bigger centre like Umtata has a dismal record in this regard (Director of Veterinary Services Annual Report 1981; Tapson 1982:27). The first-mentioned (1981) report suggested that only the abattoirs at Cala, Cofimvaba, Idutywa and Butterworth were in a satisfactory condition. In 1981, the Transkei's Director of Veterinary Services noted that the Transkei was 'at [that] stage without an outlet for its livestock industry and ... that priority should be given to the erection of an export abattoir in Umtata and to the improvement of the smaller regional abattoirs' (Tapson 1982:2). By 1981, the government of Transkei had a contract with Transkei Meat Industries (TMI), the latter responsible for the management of the government-owned abattoir and meat-works in Umtata and certain holding grounds. In 1980/81, this abattoir, the only functioning one in the then Transkei, slaughtered 4 805 head of cattle (Tapson 1982:7).

Given this situation, Tapson (1982:9) was able to record that 28 out of 53 rural and urban butchers that he surveyed in the Transkei were slaughtering cattle themselves in order to sell beef, rather than buying carcasses exclusively from registered abattoirs. This indicated, Tapson suggested unsurprisingly, 'a lack of a controlled slaughter and distribution network within Transkei'. Nevertheless, his respondents overwhelmingly felt that they could always get as much beef as they required and at the quality that they required (Tapson 1982:10). The rural butcheries, Tapson argued, operated in a very informal and ad hoc fashion, with the mean monthly turnover in beef in his sample of 326kg or just over one beast per month, while in urban butcheries the turnover was, as might be expected, considerably higher. Tapson argued that it was difficult to see how this ingenious and enterprising system could be improved



upon (Tapson 1982:10–11). Nor did this situation improve through the 1980s: the 1987/88 annual report of the Transkei Veterinary Services noted that, 'of the 32 abattoirs in Transkei only three are operating with a valid certificate of approval. Most of the abattoirs are operating under unhygienic conditions ... The abattoir situation in this country is a matter that requires urgent attention from our directorate.' By all accounts, carrying out the provisions laid out in the Animal Slaughter, Meat and Animal Products Hygiene Act No. 18 of 1981, which were supposed to provide for 'the maintenance of proper standards of hygiene in the slaughtering of animals (including the prevention of cruelty to animals), handling of meat and animal products as well as the prevention or transmission of diseases to humans and other animals through infected meat or animal products', was beyond the capacity of the Meat Hygiene Unit of the Transkei's Veterinary Services directorate. 'Personnel shortages and the lack of a reliable duty vehicle' were reported to be the major constraints of the Meat Hygiene section (Transkei Veterinary Services Annual Report 1990/91). The unit operated on a 'nationwide basis' with only three officers.



In 1991/92, the Annual Report noted that 11 districts in the Transkei had no slaughter facility whatsoever. Among these districts were those such as Maluti and Umzimkulu, which have large numbers of cattle (1991/92:46).

Much more recently, Cousins (1997:29) has noted that most people's meat consumption needs are met by buying from local and informal slaughtering of stock bought purposefully from local herds and flocks.

In 1999, the provincial Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs announced that it had approved the establishment by Abakor, a parastatal (with a national remit) which controlled abattoirs in the province, of 'two giant meat markets in Mdantsane and Port Elizabeth where small farmers can sell their meat' (*Daily Dispatch* 11/02/1999).<sup>27</sup> This would, the Department's

spokesman claimed, prevent 'small farmers being cheated when they sold their livestock to unscrupulous buyers who enriched themselves by selling the meat to the market'. While the same article quoted the MEC for Agriculture and Land Affairs as saying that 'the shortage of approved abattoirs producing safe meat in the eastern part of the province was of concern', it is not clear what plans are afoot to address this situation.

According to the MALA Discussion Document (1998), the state is responsible for all food and food-related safety. The hygienic production of food of animal origin is a Veterinary Public Health (VPH) concern. Meat hygiene legislation is currently controlled under the Abattoir Hygiene Act No. 121 of 1992, while the new Meat Safety Bill will cover all animal slaughter facilities of a commercial nature. The proposed National Food Safety Act, once enacted, will co-ordinate all food safety by:

- empowering the Department of Agriculture, in consultation with the Department of Health, the provinces, the private sector and NGOs, to set minimum SPS standards for food safety and trade-related requirements;
- providing for a Food and Agricultural Commodities Inspection Agency (FACIA) which will monitor uniform compliance with sanitary control measures;
- recognising the responsibility of the provinces to legislate and provide for the required Veterinary Public Health services, in accordance with the nationally established minimum norms and standards; and
- ensuring that standards for abattoirs are not unduly stringent, as long as they do not compromise public health.

## Conclusions

What emerges most clearly, firstly, from this review of cattle ownership is that cattle fulfilled several key social and economic roles among Xhosa-speaking peoples in the pre-colonial era. After colonial contact,

government intervention in the livestock sector increased steadily over some 100 years, so that it has had direct, far-reaching and often severe effects on the rural economy. Government policies, looked at within the changing political parameters in which they evolved over the decades, have sought variously to control movement, limit supposed ecological damage and increase the off-take of African-owned cattle from areas under communal tenure. For a number of reasons, these policies and programmes have enjoyed limited success and have often succeeded only in alienating cattle owners and the rural population in general. This chapter has reviewed a number of these interventions and found most of them wanting in various ways.

So how much is likely to change in the medium-term, even with the best intentions of new legislation introduced by a government that enjoys overwhelming popular support? What does not seem likely to change is the limited capacity of the provincial government to 'transform' or even adequately regulate the cattle production sector in the former Bantustan areas. There are several factors that contribute to this limited capacity, principally a lack of funds and trained staff. What this seems to indicate is that, in the absence of widespread, damaging natural disasters, such as outbreaks of disease epidemics, like the recent outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, the future scenario for the sector seems to be one of business as usual. It is to counter this scenario that livestock owners' organisations such as ECERPO, operating at the level of the province, need to establish a coherent and *inclusive* set of objectives, to mobilise a *much broader membership* and begin to play a more active role in lobbying government for changes in the sector. Lower-level associations are urgently needed to far more clearly articulate the many concerns of cattle owners in the villages and locations/wards of the province.

For its part, government needs to carefully assess, given its severely limited

resources, where it must unequivocally take the lead in the sector, such as the combating of serious livestock diseases and maintaining accurate cattle census data, and where it should create both an 'enabling' policy and law-enforcement environment in which local actors can make a positive impact on the sector.

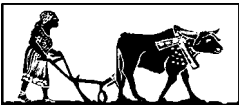
## Endnotes

1. It is of course quite probable that more recent conflicts loom larger in both the oral and (subsequent) recorded history.
2. Bundy notes that 'the institution of "eating up" operated against the ostentatious accumulation of wealth by an individual and against political ambitions which might accompany such enrichment: "eating up" involved the confiscation and redistribution of the beasts of a stockowner deemed to be too wealthy after legal-religious ceremonies' (1979:21–22).
3. This section, which takes up the narrative in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, relies on a small number of secondary sources – notably the incisive and stimulating contributions of William Beinart – for the bulk of the data presented.
4. It was only in the mid-1880s that railways made a significant impact in displacing long-distance wagon carriage.
5. In 1877, the Report of the Commission appointed to 'inquire into and report upon Diseases in Cattle and Sheep in this Colony' was published as G.3-1877. This followed closely on the appointment of the first Colonial Veterinary Surgeon at the Cape in 1876 (Beinart 1997:231).
6. Hutcheon had ordered the slaughter of 6 000 lung sickness-infected angora goats in 1881, which did not endear him to their owners (Beinart 1997:237).
7. See Beinart (1997:227–239) for an illuminating discussion of earlier proposals and interventions by veterinarians in shaping livestock management and land use policy in the Cape hinterland. These included meas-



ures that had sought to isolate infected cattle during the rinderpest outbreak of 1865 and to deal with the lung sickness epidemic at the Cape in the 1860s, and saw the promulgation of the Scab Act of 1874, aimed at combating scab in sheep.

8. Bundy (1987:203) offers a useful analysis as to why resistance in these three districts was particularly vehement.
9. Fully 96% of the ECDALA budget for 1999–2000 for veterinary services was earmarked for personnel expenditure (*Daily Dispatch* 13/03/1999).
10. Interview with Mr Dave Fourie, Provincial Control Animal Health Technician (Bisho, 17/09/1999). By February 2002, this had not yet happened.
11. Marquand and Standing (1939:91) referred to ‘... perhaps the worst feature of the Reserves, overstocking. Overstocking and the absence of fencing are responsible for the impoverishment of the soil and for erosion. In many parts of the Reserves desert conditions are being created. This kind of primitive subsistence economy is very wasteful.’
12. Quoted in Moll (1988:22).
13. Moll (1988) outlines four distinct phases of state intervention in the Transkei: an initial period (1925–1935), a Betterment phase (1936–1944), a post-war Reclamation phase (1945–1954), which were similar to those outlined by Tomlinson (1955) and a post-1954 phase, which saw apartheid policies coming to the fore.
14. Also dealing with the issue of livestock culling, were Proclamation No. 116/1949 and NAD Report 1945–7, as well as U.G. 14/1948 and the Native Affairs Department (NAD) ‘Report on Stock Reduction in Native Areas’, unpublished but dated 1951 (see Beinart 1984:73, footnote 70).
15. Moll (1988:31–33) notes that, overall, sheep were culled more heavily than cattle. Further, although the culling of cattle was only implemented in a handful of locations in the 1940s, it was the



real threat that potential culling held that deeply antagonised different strata of rural people.

16. The Tomlinson Commission was actually set up in 1949. The Summary Report of the Commission For the Socio-Economic Development of the Bantu Areas within the Union of South Africa (Tomlinson Commission) appeared as U.G. 61/55 in 1955.
17. The Report of the Departmental Committee on Stock Reduction in the Native Areas (De Wet Nel Committee), 1954, quoted in Moll 1988. This unpublished report apparently includes much useful data on the culling of stock, stock sales, economic farming units and local resistance to culling.
18. It would be incorrect to suggest that opposition to ‘betterment’ and the imposition of Bantu Authorities was uniform across the former Transkei and Ciskei reserve areas. Several sources argue, in fact, that the extent of opposition was rather variable. Overall, however, it is probably fair to say that attempts to cull livestock were universally unpopular, even where compensation was paid.
19. Ciskeian Proclamation 187 of 1972 ushered in self-government.
20. Personal communication, Mr Gwababa, Control Animal Technician, Central Region, ECDALA (Umtata, 21/04/1999).
21. This report does not deal with the development of dairy schemes in the former Bantustan areas, or with dairy farming in general.
22. Cloete (1989:40) lists these exotic breeds for the Transkei: Brown Swiss, Drakensberger, Bonsmara, Simmentaler, Sussex, Brahman and Hereford; for the Ciskei: Bonsmara, Brahman, and Simmentaler.
23. Cloete (1989:42) appears to anticipate this turn-around. He notes that ‘after more than 24 centuries, the survival of the Nguni may be attributed to adaptation through natural selection to tick-borne diseases, sub-optimal nutrition,

harshness of climate and the unique management system practiced [sic] by Nguni tribes which induced high fertility. Performance testing results indicated the Nguni to be the most fertile beef breed in South Africa (calving percentage 97) ... *These important, but often ignored, production traits of the Nguni places new perspective on its potential under good feeding and management conditions.*' (emphasis added)

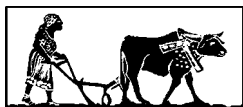
24. In 1996, Cousins found that most stock offered for sale at auctions in the Transkei were older beasts falling within the lower grades (1997:27).
25. They were quoting figures from the Ciskei (Dept. Agriculture) Annual Report of 1976.
26. Interestingly, Tapson (1982:20) claims that the marketing system in the Transkei functioned in the complete absence of permits, slaughter control, price-setting, subsidy and bureaucracy.
27. There are 69 registered and 16 unregistered abattoirs in the province, the majority of these in the western half of the province (*Daily Dispatch* 18/07/1998).

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**Newspaper and popular magazine articles**

- Daily Dispatch* 18/07/1998, 11/02/1999, 16/02/1999, 13/03/1999, 14/05/1999
- Farmer's Weekly* 18/06/1999

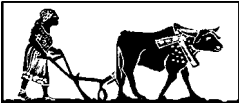


# Chapter 3: Cattle numbers

Andrew Ainslie

## Questions of accuracy

Serious questions have been posed about the accuracy of official census figures of cattle numbers in the former Transkei and Ciskei areas. At least in this regard, they are certainly not unique: Cloete (1989:16) notes that 'the reliability of data on livestock populations, production, consumption and marketing statistics in Africa is in many cases open to question and may ... be notoriously inaccurate'.



As we have seen, the state has been interested in counting the gross numbers of cattle on communal rangeland for most of the previous century. From the perspective of African cattle owners, the state has by no means always used this data in the best interests of rural cattle owners. A key response on the part of cattle owners has been to resist these efforts to count their stock in whatever ways they could: since the dipping tank proved to be the most obvious place to count animal numbers, many people declined to dip their stock (see Beinart & Bundy 1987).<sup>1</sup> Owners of large numbers of stock loaned out their stock to kinsmen in other areas in order to evade official efforts to count their numbers. Brown (1971:177) remarked on 'the probability of under-counts having been made due to illegal livestock movements in each location prior to the annual enumeration'. Another strategy adopted by cattle owners, although it is not clear how widespread it was, was to maintain 'ghost herds', in which 50% of a herd would be driven to the dipping tank on one occasion and the balance of the herd would be driven to the next dipping episode (see Bundy 1987:200 for similar exploits at their most brazen – and most desperate –

during the opposition to anti-East Coast Fever dipping).<sup>2</sup>

Apart from these efforts at evasion, the counting of cattle was made difficult through the unplanned, sporadic and localised nature of cattle sales and the fact that people could claim to have slaughtered cattle for rituals and/or home consumption (see Tapson 1982).

There is some reason to suspect that census records were more accurate for the Transkei areas when compared to those of the former Ciskei (see Kepe's chapter in this report). On the whole, data for even aggregate cattle numbers in the former Ciskei 'reserve' areas are harder to come by than those for the Transkei, where officials claim more rigorously enforced dipping and stringent measures on cattle movements meant that the administration had a much better grasp of cattle numbers overall.<sup>3</sup> Beinart for one feels that the records of stock numbers in the Transkei were 'relatively well kept' (1984:74). Hendricks (1991:221) concurred with this:

*Notwithstanding these difficulties (see below), it seems as if the Dipping Foremen possess the most reliable information on stock ownership. This is particularly so since the dipping*

*of livestock against diseases became institutionalised ... In order to administer and control this exercise, Dipping Foremen keep a record of the number of owners together with the size of their herds.*

Hendricks did concede, however, that 'the only possible irregularities in this source may occur when certain people do not register their newborn stock or do not report stock deaths' (Hendricks 1991:221) and also that 'caution should be exercised in generalising from [his figures on cattle-holding families in Libode] since the customary practice of cattle-lending and borrowing conceals the exact nature of cattle-holding as well as the extent of stocklessness' (Hendricks 1991:204).

One reason for less accurate cattle census records in the former Ciskei might be the more 'chequerboard' effect in this area, with blocks of white-owned farms interspersed with reserve areas under communal tenure. It seems that the earlier stock records do not always differentiate satisfactorily between the cattle of the white farmer, his employees and neighbouring rural people in adjacent reserve areas, which were frequently all dipped at the closest functional dipping tank.

Overall, there are other reasons for concern about the reliability of the census data. These include bureaucratic changes: Moll (1988:11) cites cattle figures for Transkei (for the period 1918–1952) that are from dipping returns on 1 January each year. By 1974, the census records list cattle numbers on 1 April of each year. It is not clear when the 'change-over' occurred or exactly how it was handled at the time. More worrying, however, is the evidence of apparent bureaucratic bumbling: both the 1981 and the 1991 Annual Reports for the Ciskei Department of Agriculture and Forestry have no stock census data, although presumably this data was collected (at least in 1991) and is available.

A related problem is that when the Ciskei Department of Agriculture moved its offices from Zwelitsha to Bisho, the Veterinary Section stayed on in Zwelitsha.

At some stage, however, some of their staff and offices were also moved to Bisho. With both staff turnovers and the moving of offices, it is not a simple exercise to locate historical records for areas of the former Ciskei. In contrast, the equivalent officials, including some knowledgeable long-serving staff, in the former Transkei have long been housed in the Botha Sigcau building in Umtata and have a more 'user-friendly' retrieval system.

A further problem in connection with census records is that during the periods, albeit sporadic, in which dip has not been available (and in which dipping staff have kept a low profile for obvious reasons), it is not clear how accurately the dipping foremen actually managed to record changes in cattle numbers (see below for future concerns in this regard).

### Is there a need for precise cattle numbers?

If the former Bantustan areas under communal tenure are essentially about people owning multi-purpose herds of cattle, rather than about the production of beef, then a valid question might be: *Should the state spend considerable resources (both human and financial) in trying to secure accurate census data for these 'subsistence' activities?*

The answer to this question must be, I would argue, an unequivocal and resounding 'yes'. A central theme of this report is the chronic lack of data about the ownership and management of cattle in communal areas. The adoption of any coherent policy of intervention (*including that of non-intervention* – see Tapson 1982 and Shackleton 1993) in this sector must be based on detailed analysis of far more comprehensive data-sets of how the sector 'works' than are available at present. Clearly, the state would experience great difficulty in fulfilling any of its statutory responsibilities with respect to agriculture in the absence of accurate livestock numbers with which to predict and anticipate future needs and developments in the sector. Consequently, I would argue that it



is essential for the key role-players in the livestock sector<sup>4</sup> to know as accurately as possible:

- how many cattle are held in rural areas under communal tenure;
- what proportions of these cattle are oxen, bulls, cows, etc.;
- what their age classes are;
- to what extent cattle holdings are concentrated, i.e. how cattle are distributed across households within rural communities and across the province as a whole;
- what people are doing with them: what uses cattle are serving, how people are managing, moving, selling, slaughtering, exchanging, etc. their cattle; and
- what range of factors influence people to invest in cattle or to liquidate their bovine assets.

From an animal health perspective, without accurate census data, it would be impossible for the Directorate of Animal Health to budget properly for the provision of inoculations and other preventative measures for dealing with serious zoonotic diseases, such as anthrax or bovine TB.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps for this reason, it has historically been a key and statutory responsibility of the veterinary section (animal health) of the Department of Agriculture to gather up-to-date information on cattle numbers. This task was performed at the most logical and frequent point of contact with cattle owners, i.e. at the dipping tank. Now, however, if changes are being contemplated regarding the way in which dipping services are provided by the state in the future, i.e. the promotion of local livestock associations that will take over some of the functions of supplying dipping materials and the actual dipping of animals, then it is not clear who will perform the task of recording cattle numbers or how successful the province-wide co-ordination of this activity is likely to be.

## Historical trends in cattle numbers

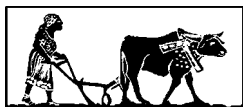
Despite the reservations expressed above, it is the case that these official cattle census

records are the only long-term data that are available on cattle ownership in communal areas.<sup>6</sup> Census data was collected sporadically during the 19<sup>th</sup> century for locations and districts, but it seems that the first reasonably comprehensive census of African-owned cattle was conducted in 1904. The African 'reserve' areas seem only to have been included on a regular basis in the agricultural section of the Cape census from 1922 (see Muller & Mpela 1987:3).

As with most archival material, the data tend to throw up many more questions than the answers they provide. They do, however, provide a starting-point for an analysis, and it is from these data that we must attempt to discern trends in ownership patterns and shape our future questions about the often very localised trajectories of economic development and social change, as seen through the (rather) partial index of cattle ownership (see Scoones 1993).

Taking a long perspective, it is clear from the census data that cattle numbers in the former reserve areas grew rapidly after the East Coast Fever epidemic of 1911–13 to reach their highest numbers in the 1930s (Hunter 1936:67; Muller & Mpela 1987). Moll (1988:9) notes that 'reserve livestock numbers were probably at an all-time peak in about 1931 or 1932, though stock censuses were not taken in these years'. This increase was probably due to the widespread impact of the government dipping programme on overall herd productivity. Few magisterial districts have matched these high numbers again (see charts below for selected districts in the former Transkei and Ciskei).<sup>7</sup>

For the Transkei (except Glen Grey and Herschel) as a whole, Beinart (1977:127) argued that 'in the last century, nearly every family in Transkei owned or possessed stock. Whereas about thirty years ago [i.e. the late 1940s] perhaps 30 per cent of families were *without* cattle, a few small surveys indicate that the number may now be over 50 per cent.' Furthermore, the little statistical evidence avail-



able suggests that only around 10–15% of families in the Transkei have ten or more head of cattle. The remaining 35–40% of the population, or 70–80% of the cattle owners may be classified as smaller stock owners, with less than ten animals (Beinart 1977:130).

Moll (1988:9), relying on data from the Tomlinson Commission report of 1954, argues that there was a radical drop in cattle numbers as a result of the 1933 drought and that over the following 15 years to 1948, total Transkei cattle numbers fell slightly, with an overall net fall of 250 000 cattle in the 12 years after 1940. Total Transkei stock numbers continued falling in the 1950s and 1960s, according to Rutman (1972:144, quoted in Moll). Moll (1988:12) also argues that, after 1934, an increasing percentage of animals were dying in the spring (September – October), rather than in January (after the spring calving) as before. He also refers to Rutman's (1972:147) assertion that by the 1950s, cattle in Transkei 'were down to an average weight of only 400 pounds from an optimum weight of around 600 pounds which had often been achieved in the 1920s'. This, Moll argues, implied a negligible milk yield and an inability to plough deeply and efficiently. Moll concedes, however, that investment in stock was still taking place and that stock numbers 'would rise considerably in good years, e.g. 1938–39, 1947–48, but such [increases constituted] "temporary overstocking of poor veld" that would soon be eliminated via stock deaths the following winter and spring, or the next drought period'.

Hendricks' (1991) study of Nyandeni administrative area, Libode district in Western Pondoland, is interesting, for it reveals a remarkable constancy in the numbers of livestock over a period of 38 years (1946–1984). In 1946, when rehabilitation was first introduced, there were 3 146 cattle in Nyandeni (and a total of 4 603 large stock units, when goats, sheep and donkeys were included). In 1984, when the area was replanned, there were

2 973 head of cattle (and a total of 4 213 large stock units). The human population had almost doubled in the same period (Hendricks 1991:203). In 1984, 52% of the total population of 839 'families' in Nyandeni owned cattle. Almost 80% of these cattle-holding families had herds of between one and ten head of cattle. Only 3% of the cattle holders had between 21 and 50 head of cattle.

For the former Ciskei 'reserve' areas, processes of proletarianisation were said to be in advance of those in the Transkei areas (Mager 1992, 1995; Lewis 1985). Bundy (1979:224) notes that by 1946, 60% of households in these areas owned five or fewer cattle, while 29% owned no cattle at all. Ainslie (1999) observed that for Tyefu Location, Peddie district, numbers of cattle have remained remarkably constant overall (although, no doubt, subject to the usual drought-induced fluctuations) over a period of 143 years, in which time the human population of the location had increased over nine times and the number of goats by more than 14 times.<sup>8</sup>



Table 3.1: Livestock population in Tyefu Location, Peddie district

Population Categories	1854	1946	1997
Cattle	2 989	2 938	3 548
Sheep	46	5 388	5 120
Goats	514	18 464	14 488

Sources: Ainslie (1998); Dept. Agriculture, Peddie

What exactly can we deduce from these data? First, we do not know whether the three census years in question coincided with a 'wet' or 'dry' period in terms of rainfall, or were recorded just as a drought was ending, etc. and as a result, we cannot extrapolate very much from these figures. In this sense, the data is synchronic, with each data set (for example, that of 1946) representing a fuzzy snapshot of the situation that prevailed on the day of the census. This situation would not improve if

we had gross census data at five-year intervals – or even every year – from 1846, unless we had accurate rainfall figures and some indication of sales and other exchanges, home-slaughter, births and deaths, for the same intervals.

Second, such gross data do not tell us anything about the structure of the overall herd in the location, much less the structure (male/female and ages) of individually owned herds. We are thus none the wiser about whether the number of heifers in the individual herds was such that an increase, given good rains, could be expected in due course or what the proportion of oxen were in each case.

Third, we learn nothing of the *actual* distribution of cattle ownership among the population, notwithstanding that the latter remains problematic in terms of definition, whether it is taken as adult (usually male) individuals or ‘households’, which have themselves changed considerably over this period.

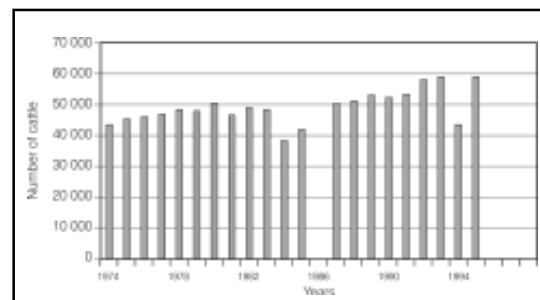
Fourth, we are none the wiser about what factors might underpin any observed changes in cattle numbers. The possible range of constraints and opportunities in the local economy and the larger, political economy that may have been impacting on patterns of cattle ownership remain unknown.

Fifth, as the data in the table suggests, it is dangerous to consider trends in cattle numbers in isolation to changes in the numbers of goats and sheep in the same area. So, what can we learn from a cursory examination of aggregate cattle numbers at the magisterial district level per annum? Given the many obstacles in the way of the accurate recording of such numbers (see above and Kepe, this report), and the problems highlighted above, I would suggest that the reply is: ‘not a great deal’.

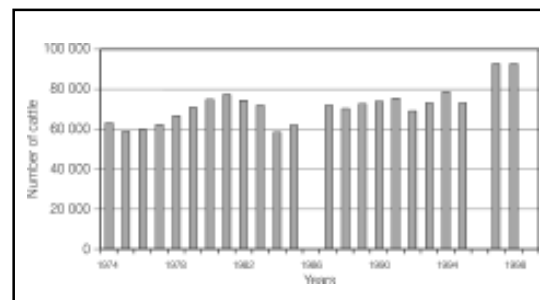
It is for this multiplicity of reasons that I have not included cattle census data for the *entire* 28 districts in the former Transkei and the eight districts of the former Ciskei. Such data that does exist is alluded to in the case-study chapters that follow. Conducting detailed and historically informed analyses of cattle numbers within the local

context of each magisterial district in the province remains an important task for the future.

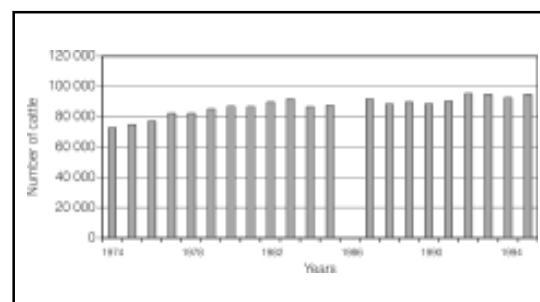
### Cattle census data for selected districts



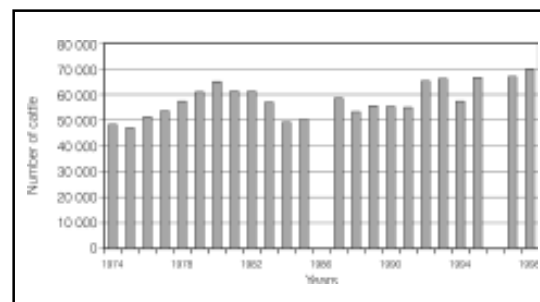
**Figure 3.1: Centane – Cattle numbers 1974–1995**



**Figure 3.2: Engcobo – Cattle numbers 1974–1998**

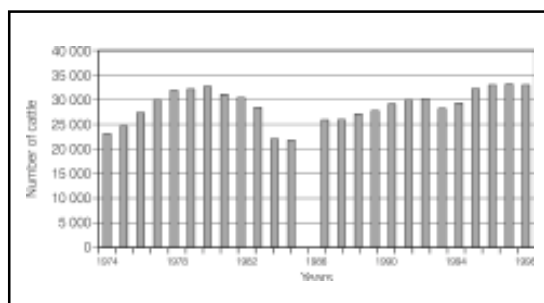


**Figure 3.3: Umzimkulu – Cattle numbers 1974–1995**

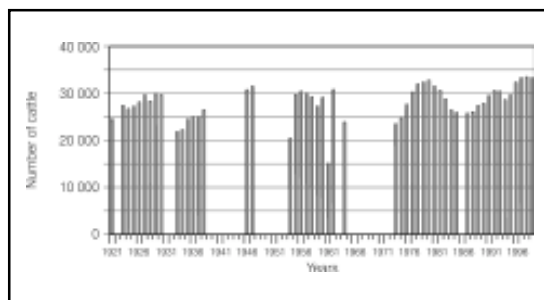


**Figure 3.4: Umtata – Cattle numbers 1974–1998**





**Figure 3.5: Xhalanga – Cattle numbers 1974–1999**



**Figure 3.6: Xhalanga – Cattle numbers 1921–1999**

## Discussion

This chapter has argued that cattle census data, collected as they are at the dipping tank, are notoriously unreliable for a number of reasons. The fact that the state has used these data for intervening in a number of ways that were perceived negatively by rural cattle owners, is just one of these reasons.

Despite the experiences of the past in this regard, it is still of considerable interest to policy-makers, provincial officials and informed observers seeking to document and analyse changes in the sector, to have access to reliable census data. For this reason, it is important to continue striving to overcome the problems inherent in capturing these data in as much detail as possible, so that it will be possible to identify longer-term trends in cattle ownership. There is a sense that the national statistics do not provide enough information at the desired level of detail with which to analyse trends at the local level. Every effort must be made, first, to capture as much of the richness of the local census data as possible and, second, to make all these data available to provincial and

national offices, where the statistics are compiled.

In the final analysis, it appears that in most districts and municipalities across the province, the numbers of cattle have been remarkably stable for nearly five decades, except for drought-related decreases. In some areas, longer-term upward or downward trends in cattle ownership are discernible. In some cases, this trend appears to have a correlation with the numbers of goats and sheep owned. Given this scenario, it seems essential that local agricultural staff receive the necessary training and are given the responsibility to make a greater contribution to the overall collection and collation of cattle census data for the province.

## Endnotes

1. Even now, some people in the former Transkei are opposed to dipping and they resent their animals being counted (Mr Gwababa, the Control Animal Technician, Central Region, Umtata, personal communication, 21/04/1999). It is fair to say, however, that in many areas people seemed resigned to the fact that the number of cattle they owned was, for the most part, public knowledge. They were not as open about their numbers of small stock.
2. The fact that stock was generally driven to the dip by young boys could not have helped with co-ordinating the exercise.
3. This view was also expressed by Mr Gwababa, Umtata 11/08/1999. Transkei apparently had a system of 'closed control', while the Ciskei operated an 'open control' system, which was far more porous and difficult to regulate.
4. It would appear that the first three of these criteria have been met by authorities in the Transkei in the past, but as Kepe (this report) suggests, with social and political costs.
5. Mr Dave Fourie, (provincial) animal health technician, felt that overall 'the stock census is inaccurate [and that] we



don't have exact numbers – people don't bring their cattle to dip, and they move their cattle around and so on. There is a critical need to have perfect [sic] figures: what if an anthrax outbreak occurs?' Interview, Bisho, 17/09/1999.

6. Other data can be gleaned from contemporary sources and more recent surveys which at times deal specifically with magisterial districts, thus facilitating comparison with census data.
7. It was not possible to find equivalent longitudinal census data for the former Ciskei districts as is available for the Transkei.
8. Human population totals for the three periods were 1 509, 4 889 and 14 000 respectively.

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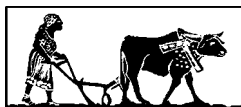
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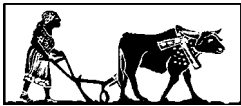


# Chapter 4: Cattle production in Xhalanga district<sup>1</sup>

Lungisile Ntsebeza

## Introduction

A study of livestock production and its future in the former Bantustans, especially the rural areas, must take into account the changing nature of these areas. Colonial conquest, dispossession, capitalist development, 'Western' education, Christianity and apartheid have greatly altered and transformed the character and nature of rural life in South Africa.



The restriction of the majority of Africans to the former Bantustans led to overcrowding in these areas. By the 1930s, there was growing evidence of poverty and soil erosion in the former Bantustans, which could not be neglected by the state (Chaskalson 1987). Mainly, but not exclusively, as a result of these developments, many Africans were forced to be less dependent on subsistence production and to sell their labour in the mines, farms and cities for an income.<sup>2</sup> Vicious apartheid policies of influx control and urban removals could not prevent the growth in numbers of urban Africans, some of whom became permanent urban dwellers, but many of whom were migrant workers (Hindson 1987).

Migrant workers have played a critical role in rural transformation (Delius 1996; Drew 1996; Mbeki 1984). This transformation has been brought about by the manner in which urban areas have influenced migrant workers. Initially rejected by urban born and bred youth, and also encapsulating themselves from the influence of urban life, migrant workers were often compelled to change and adapt to urban conditions. For example, some ended up becoming members of urban

youth gangs (Ntsebeza 1993). In the 1970s and 1980s, when the labour movement re-emerged, some of its leaders, for example Moses Mayekiso and Enoch Godongwana, were migrant workers. Upon returning to their rural backgrounds, migrant workers brought back with them some of the urban and trade union influences, thereby changing the character and nature of rural life. Further, the advent of electricity and electronic media, including radio and television in rural areas has enormously accelerated the urban influence and consumerism.

Despite this urbanisation trend, about 40% of South Africans still reside in rural areas. Census reports over the years show a growth of the number of people living in rural areas. At the same time, land that was allocated for African occupation was officially restricted to 13% of South Africa's land. The rise in population was not met with an increase in the amount of land. Instead, the increasing rural population was allocated land on the commonage. By so doing, the size of grazing land was reduced. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a number of informal settlements mushroomed on commonages in rural areas. This followed a similar trend in urban

areas.<sup>3</sup> In most rural areas, people unilaterally returned to land that they were removed from when the 'betterment' conservation and rehabilitation plan was introduced and implemented in the 1930s and 1940s. Most of the land from which people were removed was converted into commonages that were used for grazing purposes. Their return to their old land, while retaining the new land acquired as a result of 'betterment', meant that the size of grazing land was further reduced.

The purchase of historically white farms by the Development Trust<sup>4</sup> for transfer to the Transkei as part of Bantustan consolidation in the mid to late 1970s did not alleviate land shortage in rural areas. In the case of Xhalanga<sup>5</sup> district, farms known as *Beestekraal* were purchased by the South African state and transferred to the Transkeian administration. These farms were earmarked for use, and not purchase, by Xhalanga farmers. Most were leased, essentially to people who were in the good books of KD Matanzima. Some of the farmers are not even residents of Xhalanga. A widely held view is that these farmers, or some of them, did not even pay rent. One of the farms was converted into a 'communal' area.

Despite the post-1994 land reform programme one of whose aims is 'to provide the disadvantaged and the poor with access to land for residential and productive purposes' (Department of Land Affairs 1997:9), the position with regard to land shortage in the rural areas of the former Bantustans, including Xhalanga, remains largely the same as in pre-1994. Apart from decrease in the size of grazing land, land administration, in the form of managing grazing land, has almost collapsed. For example, in the town of Cala, no dipping of cattle is currently taking place. According to the animal health technicians, the dipping site was damaged by people from Ndondo Square, an informal settlement that was established in Cala in the early 1990s.<sup>6</sup> Recalling this episode, one animal health inspector remarked:

*Here in town there is no dipping. We find it difficult to deal with this*

*matter. We tell Cala people that the dipping tanks was [sic] destroyed right in front of them and material was used by people at the squatter camp. They don't know what to do now. It is difficult for them even to inoculate.<sup>7</sup>*

In the rural areas, rotational grazing is not possible, given that fences have been cut and Tribal Authorities and rangers no longer find it possible to enforce rules and regulations. Finally, as this case-study shows, there is very little support for livestock production coming from government.

These developments, the influences of urbanisation and Western education in changing the nature of rural society and economy, the decreasing size of the commonage, and poor land administration and government support, raise a number of questions about livestock (specifically cattle) production in the small towns and rural areas of the former Bantustans that this study will attempt to address. Some of the key questions are:

- What is the current number of cattle in the Xhalanga district? How does this number compare with previous years? How are these numbers arrived at? How reliable are these figures? If there have been changes in the number of cattle over time, how do people explain the differences?
- Who keeps cattle? Why do people keep cattle? What do they do with cattle?
- What problems do cattle owners encounter regarding cattle?
- What is the future of cattle production?
- What is the role of government in cattle production in the Xhalanga district?

This study will attempt to address these questions.

## Methodology

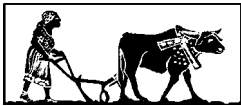
Secondary literature was reviewed for the socio-economic background and description of the Xhalanga magisterial district. Livestock figures for the period 1904–1975 were drawn from a report entitled,



'Statistical Time Series No 2', published in August 1987 by the Bureau for African Research and Documentation (BARD), University of Transkei. For the period 1976–1999, assistance was received from the animal health technicians based in Cala. Special mention should be made of Mr M Mkabile, who went out of his way to compile the figures.

In-depth interviews were conducted with animal health inspectors in Cala on a range of issues, including how they arrive at the number of livestock in Xhalanga, how reliable these figures are, whether there have been any major shifts in numbers, if so, how they would account for them, problems the cattle owners confront, the role of government, and the future of cattle production in Xhalanga.

Most of these questions were posed to 25 informants from two rural areas, Cala Reserve and Lumphaphasi.<sup>8</sup> One part-time farmer, who resides in Cala, was also interviewed in depth. Cala Reserve is a 'peri-urban' area, located about 5km from Cala. Lumphaphasi is a remote rural area that is difficult to access, largely due to the state of the roads.



It must be categorically stated that no attempt is made in this study to generalise on the basis of the above interviews. The idea was to establish possible trends with regard to cattle production in Xhalanga. More time and a bigger sample would be required to take the bold step of generalising.

## The Xhalanga magisterial district

The magisterial district of Xhalanga, which has an estimated population of 100 000 people (Kodua-Agyekum 1997; Kayter 1994) was established after the annexation of the Transkeian Territories in 1878. In 1884, Cala was established as its administrative town. As with most districts in the former Bantustans, merchants, missionaries, magistrates and labour recruiters shaped and transformed the people of Xhalanga. The phenomenon of migrant labour is visible. A survey conducted in

1995 shows that more than 50.6% of the population was made up of people under the age of 19 years, of which 52.1% were the children of migrant workers. These children lived with their grandparents and guardians (Kodua-Agyekum 1997:83). People of 60 years and above, according to this study, made up 7.4%.

Most of the active people from rural areas are in urban areas as migrant workers. The majority of migrant workers are men. The 1995 survey that has already been cited shows that 42% of the population was made up of people in the age group 20–59 years, the age group of the active labour force.<sup>9</sup> Of these, 54.2% were women. The unemployed constitute 23%; just over 50% are in the 20–59 years age group. The unemployed are made up of people who have been retrenched from neighbouring commercial farms, retrenched mine workers and school leavers (Kodua-Agyekum 1997:90). Of those who are employed, the majority, 12.5%, work for the government as teachers, nurses and civil servants. The rest are employed by private business and transport, or are domestic workers.

Given the above figures, the conclusion drawn by the survey that the female/male ratio is 'low' and that this ratio 'further reduces potential labour supply, especially farm labour' (Kodua-Agyekum 1997:71), should be challenged. Although women in the age group of 20–59 are in the majority (54.2%), the margin is not vast. Men make up 45.8% of this age group, which is certainly not an insignificant figure. In viewing the female/male ratio, it is important to note the impact of retrenchments, especially from the late 1980s onwards, forcing some men to (temporarily?) return to rural areas, on the one hand, and the increasing movement of women between urban and rural areas, on the other.

Pensions, according to the survey, are a major source of income, and account for 35.5% of the respondents. The survey found 'a relatively low reliance on migrant remittances in Xhalanga: only 20.5% of the sample'.<sup>10</sup> Only 5.5% of the sample identi-

fied themselves as full-time farmers (Kodua-Agyekum 1997:92–3).

In terms of formal education, the 1995 survey shows that 21.5% of the respondents had no formal education at all. About 51% of the respondents had primary school education (Grade 1 to Grade 8). Only 6% had post-matric education. Women, according to the survey, were 'slightly better educated than men', and 'the migrants are better educated than those who remain behind' (Kodua-Agyekum 1997:88).

The survey suggests that the low literacy rate among the male population 'is the consequence of the socio-economic demands made on the time of the young boys to herd livestock' (Kodua-Agyekum 1997:88). The present study, though, has established from respondents that young people do not show interest in livestock.

Elders in the district recall that Xhalanga was once prosperous. It was renowned for its fruit production, especially peaches and apricots. One informant in her 90s narrated, with excitement, how they used to load ox wagons of peaches in search of markets in neighbouring Elliot and Dordrecht.<sup>11</sup> However, various factors, including periodic droughts, land shortage, changing socio-economic conditions which impacted on how people viewed agriculture, and so on, have altered conditions in the district. The people of Xhalanga now import fruit and vegetables (Kodua-Agyekum 1997:98; Keyter 1994:4).

Xhalanga is currently classified as one of the poorest districts in the old Transkei. Some researchers attribute this state of affairs to neglect by the Bantustan authorities (Kodua-Agyekum 1997:67; Keyter 1994). Keyter (1994:3) dramatically depicts the Xhalanga situation in these terms:

*Within a neglected Transkei sub-region, lies a neglected Xhalanga district, which has been left as a forgotten pocket of the sub-region for more than three decades even as the*

*Transkeian post-independent focus on development shifted to areas such as Qamata, Ncora Butterworth, and Umtata.*

This neglect is not surprising given the opposition put up by the people of Xhalanga when the Bantu Authorities system was introduced in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In particular, it was opposition to the imposition of KD Matanzima as a paramount chief of Emigrant Tembuland, which included the Xhalanga district. This imposition divided the community of Xhalanga, leading to a long-drawn struggle between 1958 and 1963, commonly known as *tshisa-tshisa* (put fire-put fire), in one of the administrative areas, Mnxe.<sup>12</sup> When the apartheid state conferred almost unfettered powers on KD Matanzima, Xhalanga was one of the districts that he isolated for especially harsh treatment. Matanzima's hostility towards Xhalanga people is widely accepted as one of the main reasons for the neglect. What is indeed surprising is that very little has been written about Xhalanga. People in the district have a long history of struggle, which goes back to their opposition to the Glen Grey Act of 1894 to the 1980s and early 1990s.

While it is important to consider the political neglect of Xhalanga in understanding cattle production in the area, and problems encountered by cattle owners, equally important to bear in mind is the physical background and climatic conditions.<sup>13</sup> The landscape is characterised by high mountains and deeply incised valleys. A large part of the area, about 75%, is mountainous and hilly. The town of Cala stands at 1 628m above sea level, while the administrative areas stand at between 1 400m and 1 700m above sea level.

The district is a high altitude, low rainfall area of the Transkei region, Eastern Cape. The annual average rainfall seldom exceeds 400mm. Most of the rain falls in summer. Summer is generally hot, especially in January and February. Recurrent droughts are a common feature. The



winters are extremely cold and windy. Snow occasionally falls in winter.

These climatic conditions, coupled with the heavy clay soils, with sandy patches, do not make the district conducive to agricultural production. However, the natural vegetation consists mainly of grassy veld which is nutritious. The area is consequently renowned for its *sweetveld* grazing, which is good for sheep. In a good year, when there are good rains, the condition of cattle improves vastly (Keyter 1994:4,18).

The advantages of *sweetveld* grazing are offset by overgrazing. The grass is relatively short, with the result that erosion occurs on the foothills of the mountains. In addition, overgrazing has encouraged the encroachment of bush on the grassy veld (Kodua-Agyekum 1997:78).

As has been stated above, one of the contributing factors to overgrazing is land shortage and population growth, which have meant that portions of the grazing commonage are converted into residential sites. At the same time, the number of stock has remained largely the same. Land shortage is the direct result of the 1913 Natives Land Act and the 1936 Native and Trust Land Act. These laws restricted the amount of land for African occupation to not more than 13%.

Against this brief background, let us consider cattle in the Xhalanga district.

## Livestock population in the Xhalanga district with specific reference to cattle<sup>14</sup>

### Number of cattle and how to arrive at these numbers

As can be seen from the data on cattle numbers in Xhalanga (see previous chapter), there are gaps in the period 1904 to 1975. In addition, some of the figures, for example, 1919, 1920, 1967–8 and 1970 are highly suspicious, if not inaccurate. The figures for the 1904–1975 period were drawn from the 'Statistical Time Series No 2' referred to above. It was not possible to establish how they arrived at these

figures, and how they would explain the gaps and discrepancies. Those from 1976 to 1999 were compiled by animal health technicians (*Oonobhula*) in Cala.<sup>15</sup>

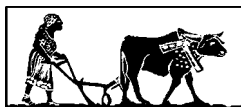
With regard to how these numbers of cattle<sup>16</sup> are arrived at, animal health technicians in Cala explained that they rely exclusively on counting that takes place at the dipping sites. Each cattle owner has a stock card in which the total number of cattle and their classification are recorded. On the dipping day, the stock card is presented to the dipping foreman (*Unodiphu*) who counts the cattle and compares them with what is recorded in the stock book. Each stock card has columns for date, total number of cattle, increases (as in the case of birth or acquisition of additional cattle), decreases (as in the case of deaths or sale of cattle) and the signature of the dipping foreman. Discrepancies are taken up with the owner of the cattle. It is only after this process of checking and counting has been satisfied that cattle are dipped (in summer) and the foreman signs the stock card.

Dipping takes place every fortnight in summer and on a fixed day of the week. In summer, cattle actually dive into the dipping tank. In winter 'dry checking' is conducted once a month, also on a fixed day.<sup>17</sup> Towards the end of the year, a stock census is made at the dipping site.

The procedure with respect to farmers in *Beestekraal*<sup>18</sup> is different. Most of these farmers conduct their own dipping. However, farmers must arrange with animal health technicians for supervision of the dipping. Animal health technicians pay compulsory, regular (at least once a month) visits to these farms. It is during these visits, and when dipping takes place, that they count the cattle. They also use the visits to help farmers with inoculation.

### How reliable are these figures?

When asked about the reliability of the numbers of cattle, the Cala animal health technicians were adamant that the figures are indeed reliable. They argued that there



is a cost on the part of the cattle owner, in not dipping one's cattle. Cattle that are not dipped are not registered. If cattle are not registered, the owner cannot:

- report them when they are lost;
- claim them when impounded; or
- get a permit in the event of transporting them to another area.

In addition, animal health technicians argue that local people often report 'suspicious' cattle to the police. In a nutshell, the view of these officials was that there are very few people, if any, who do not register their stock.

Farmers who dip their own cattle are also compelled to register their stock and submit to agricultural officers the number of stock they hold. The Cala officers stated that although they do not have as much control over farmers as they do with ordinary rural people, farmers who do not register their stock are as constrained as rural people when it comes to applying for permits, reporting stolen stock, and so on.

As indicated, in Cala no dipping has taken place from the mid-1990s. Despite the fact that no dipping takes place in town, counting, according to the animal health technicians, does take place. They claim that when dipping could not take place, Cala cattle owners came to the Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs offices and complained. The animal health technicians subsequently arranged to have a headcount of cattle once a month. This occasion is also used, as with farmers, to help cattle owners with inoculation. The same disadvantages on not registering stock that have been highlighted above, affect Cala cattle owners too.

Of the 26 cattle owners who were interviewed, 21 firmly held that cattle owners dip their cattle. The remaining five informants were not absolutely sure. They thought that there might be a few who do not dip, and therefore do not register, their cattle. One suggested that the dipping foremen are no longer rigorous when counting stock.

### Distribution of cattle ownership

The table below shows that about 85% of those interviewed owned between one and ten cattle, with 50% of the respondents owning between one and five cattle.

**Table 4.1: Distribution of cattle**

Number of cattle	Respondents
1–5	13
6–10	9
11–15	2
16–20	1
21–30	1
TOTAL	26

A cursory look at the figures of the Department of Agriculture in Cala seemed to confirm that the bulk of cattle owners in Xhalanga own less than 30 cattle. In Cala Reserve, for example, one owner, who is also a ranger, has 83 cattle. The rest of the cattle owners in the area own between one and 22. The figures on the *Beestekraal* farms are also not impressive, as the following table shows.



**Table 4.2: Cattle distribution at *Beestekraal***

Number of cattle	Owners
1–10	1
11–20	4
21–30	2
31–40	7
41–50	4
51–60	-
61–70	-
71–80	-
81–90	1
91–100	2
141–150	1
Above 150 ( $\pm 200$ )	1
TOTAL	23

At least two of these farmers, one owning 143 and the other 89 cattle, are not from the Xhalanga district. They are known to be relatives of KD Matanzima, which may explain why they were given farms. The biggest cattle owner, though, is from the district. He is highly regarded amongst cattle owners. Word has it that he sells an average of 26 beasts when there is a *stokvel*. One animal health technician stated that it takes more than 30 minutes to dip his cattle.

Although it may be dangerous to generalise on the basis of a very small sample and a cursory look at records, the suggestion is that the Xhalanga district does not have big (wealthy) cattle owners. The question of who is perceived as wealthy in terms of ownership of cattle was posed to animal health inspectors and the 26 cattle owners who were interviewed. According to Cala animal health technicians, they regard a wealthy cattle owner (*indoda emiyo*) as one who owns 40 head and above. On the other hand, about 70% of those interviewed thought that a person with 20 or more cattle would be regarded as wealthy. Significantly, most stressed that this figure is in terms of 'today's conditions' (*imeko zanamhlanje*).<sup>19</sup> In the past, they submitted, wealthy stock owners would own 50 or more cattle, measured in terms of the number of spans of cattle one could assemble.

### Who owns cattle?

The gender breakdown of the respondents reflects that 18 of the 26 respondents are male, with only eight female. All the cattle owners in *Beestekraal* are male. Once again, without generalising, the pattern seems to be that cattle ownership is still dominated by men. This is not surprising given the legacy of associating cattle with men.

In terms of the educational level of the cattle owners interviewed, only three, about 12% of the respondents, had gone beyond Standard 6 (Grade 8). About 35% claimed to be illiterate.

Responses from the interviews suggest that cattle are owned by middle-aged to

elderly people, most probably people who have retired from work in the cities. In the table below, the majority of cattle owners, about 77% of the respondents, are above the age of 50 years.

Table 4.3: Ages of respondents

Age	Number of respondents
31–40	2
41–50	4
51–60	10
61–70	4
71–	5
No response	1
TOTAL	26

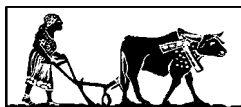
There is a growing fear among the interviewees that the youth are not interested in livestock production. Over 60% of the respondents expressed this fear. The same concern was shown by Cala animal health technicians.

### Uses of cattle

Almost all of the respondents agreed that they use their cattle for milk and manure. About 65% indicated that they use their cattle for ritual purposes (*ukugugisa*). Only five respondents, about 20%, use their cattle for meat consumption other than ritual purposes.

Half the respondents claimed that they use cattle for *lobola*. There is wide acceptance of money for purposes of paying *lobola*. Although *lobola* is still announced in terms of the number of cattle, the price per beast, when converting cattle to cash, is much lower than the price one would pay at the market place. Some informants claimed that the *lobola* price could be less than half the market price of the beast. Given the low number of cattle owned by the majority of cattle owners, as was shown above, it is not surprising why money/cash is an accepted form of paying *lobola*.

Reliance on tractors is shown by the fact that only 39% of cattle owners use





their cattle for ploughing. They claim that, due to drought conditions, their cattle cannot cope.

Almost all respondents indicated that they see their cattle as a source of wealth in cases of emergency. The type of emergency that was often mentioned was the need to raise money to pay fees towards the education of children. This response emphasises the importance that rural people are now attaching to education. This trend to educate children, even if it meant selling cattle, according to informants, became prominent in the 1970s. KD Matanzima, the feared leader of Bantustan Transkei up to 1985, is often credited for compelling rural people to send their children to school.

## Problems encountered by cattle owners

A number of problems facing cattle owners in Xhalanga were cited by the animal health technicians and respondents. The main problems highlighted were:

- land shortage;
- land administration;
- drought;
- lack of government support;
- diseases;
- water;
- accidents; and
- theft.

Shortage of land for grazing purposes was cited by the animal health technicians as one of the main problems faced by cattle owners. According to the technicians, this problem of land is aggravated by lack of grazing control and proper land administration. They recalled that before the advent of democracy, there was rigorous control of grazing by Tribal Authorities, who worked closely with agricultural officers and a ranger. The ranger was a local resident.

Things fell apart, according to the technicians, with the advent of democracy in 1994. They claimed that informal settlements, mainly for residential purposes, were established on the grazing land (commonage) and fences that divided

grazing camps were cut and removed. This, according to the officers, resulted in 'a free flow of cattle', and limited land for grazing.

The suggestion by the Cala animal health technicians that problems around land administration only started after 1994 is not entirely true. The phenomenon of establishing informal settlements in Xhalanga started in earnest in the early 1990s.<sup>20</sup> Already in 1991 there were complaints to the Cala magistrate and Qamata Regional Office of the Transkei Department of Agriculture that there were people who were 'invading' land in the Lumphasi administrative area.<sup>21</sup> Records in the Lands Division of the Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs in Cala show that in 1993 and 1994 there were 'applications for residential and arable land on grazing camps' from the Qolombeni Tribal Authority (Upper Cala) and KwaGcina (Nyalasa).

The issue of shortage of land for grazing as a result of the mushrooming of informal settlements for residential purposes on the commonage is widely acknowledged. All the interviewees raised this as a key problem. The problem crops up almost spontaneously in any conversation that focuses on livestock.

Closely tied to the issue of land shortage are periodic droughts that hit the area. Although elderly people often create an impression that drought is a new phenomenon in Xhalanga, some even suggesting that it started when 'whites' left the area in the late 1960s, what seems reasonable to say is that shortage of land aggravates things.<sup>22</sup> For example, informants point out that in the past they used to practice rotational grazing, where some camps were rested in anticipation of, and preparation for, leaner periods, including winter and drought. Since the early 1990s and the establishment of residential sites on grazing camps, it is no longer possible to reserve camps.

In addition, almost all respondents pointed out that there is very limited government support when it comes to



chemicals for dipping and inoculation. This limited support from government was confirmed by the Cala animal health technicians. According to the technicians, government is responsible for preventing and addressing what they term 'notifiable/scheduled diseases'. Government is supposed to provide for anthrax, black quarter and dipping.

The technicians recall that during the Matanzima era, a stock rate tax was levied on cattle owners to finance the above services by the government. However, the payment of the stock rate tax was terminated during the period of the military dictatorship of General Bantu Holomisa in Transkei. But the service of preventing and addressing diseases continued to be provided by the military dictatorship. This meant that these services were provided free of charge.

When democracy was introduced in 1994, the free service was continued. However, by 1996, according to the technicians, there were shortages of chemicals and other medicines. In 1999, the technicians claimed that they could not inoculate because of a shortage of drugs. As indicated, the technicians confirmed what was pointed out by respondents.

This means that, despite the legal requirements that government is responsible for preventing and addressing 'notifiable/scheduled diseases', this responsibility is not met. It is not clear what government policy with regard to cattle is. Rumour has it in government circles that formerly government-supplied services will gradually be privatised. Already, there are, according to Cala animal health technicians, private veterinarians who are offering services that government is either no longer rendering or is poorly providing.

The other problem cited by animal health technicians and cattle owners is diseases. They cited the following common diseases:

- redwater (*amanz' abomvu*);
- gall sickness (*inyongo*);
- tuberculosis;
- *umbendeni*;

- lamp skin;
- ticks (*amakhalane*); and
- heart water.

Animal health technicians in Cala submitted that most of the above diseases would not be prevalent had there been dipping and had government fulfilled its legal obligation to address and prevent notifiable diseases.

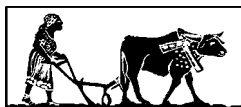
Although stock theft was cited as a problem in interviews, it is not a major problem in Xhalanga. Only eight respondents stated that they lost cattle through theft.<sup>23</sup> The police in Cala reported that there are few cases of stock theft that are reported to them. The following table shows the number of cases that were recorded by the police in the period between January and October 1999.

**Table 4.4: Cases of stock theft, Cala Police Station**

January	14
February	-
March	6
April	-
May	3
June	2
July	6
August	6
September	-
October	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39<sup>24</sup></b>

As can be seen, the highest figure, about 35% of the cases, was reported in January, and there are months when no cases are reported. Figures for corresponding months in 1997 and 1998 were even lower.

The above figures refer to reported cases. It was not possible to establish how many cases were brought to court and finalised. According to the police, some stock owners leave their stock on the commonage and mountains in winter. This



makes it difficult for the owner to know when exactly their cattle went missing. Often it is only when cattle are supposed to be taken to the dipping tank, which is once a month in winter, that cattle owners notice that there are missing cattle. Even then, they may not report the cattle immediately, as they may want to make a thorough search, including asking people.

The police commented that the figures would be even lower had grazing camps been fenced. They complained that camps were not fenced and cattle roam around. They also complained that the brand marks used to identify cattle were 'old-fashioned' and easily changed by professional thieves.

Other seemingly important problems confronting cattle owners that were mentioned in interviews were water shortage, especially during droughts, and accidents as a result of cattle slipping and falling while grazing on the mountains.

## The future scenario with regard to ownership and numbers

The current position is that cattle ownership in Xhalanga, especially in the rural areas, is spread across the population. Respondents stated that over half of rural households own cattle. However, in terms of future possibilities, there seems to be less optimism about the spread of ownership. About 54% of the respondents were of the view that cattle ownership will be more concentrated than is the case now. This means that fewer people, 'those who can afford to buy medicine', as one informant put it, will own a greater proportion of cattle.

With regard to the future number of cattle in Xhalanga, well over half, about 62%, of the respondents were not optimistic about the future of cattle in the district. They were of the opinion that the number of cattle will, over time, decrease in rural areas. The shrinking size of the grazing commonage and drought were cited as the main reasons for the decrease in the number of stock. Respondents argued that the expense involved in maintaining cattle,

especially now that there is no regular dipping taking place, coupled with increasing unemployment, will force many cattle owners to sell their stock. They also showed concern at the lack of interest in stock that is displayed by the youth. As one elderly man put it: *Abantwana abakhoyo abazifuni iinkomo* (Today's children don't want cattle). One informant stated that the youth are interested in vehicles.

Barely 20% of respondents thought that the numbers will not decrease. This included a 75-year-old man who was adamant that 'people like cattle and care about them'. Cattle are 'our lifeblood' (*Ngundoqo wobomi bethu*). The rest of the respondents were not sure.

About half of the respondents were of the view that more and more people are keeping goats instead of cattle. They argued that goats are more resistant to drought and are cheaper to maintain. On the other hand, the other half of the respondents argued that people still prefer to keep cattle. The main reason given was that it is not as easy to steal cattle as it is with goats.

Animal health technicians, on their side, predicted that cattle production will continue in Cala. In the words of one of the agricultural officers: 'It is difficult for people to stop' (*Kunzima ukuba abantu bayeke*).<sup>25</sup> According to him, rural people use cattle for draught power to plough, *lobola* payments, rituals, milk, manure and selling in cases of emergencies such as educating children. He, however, conceded that periodic droughts in the Xhalanga magisterial district are causing people to lose interest in keeping stock. This is particularly the case with the youth. 'The youth', he remarked, 'is not interested.' (*Ulutsha alufuni ukulandela.*)

Despite the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the youth, the animal health technicians observed that over the last three years or so, there has been a steady increase in the total number of cattle in the Xhalanga district. They attributed this to the concentration of cattle in the hands of a



few cattle owners. This increase, according to them, coincided with the allocation of the former *Beestekraal* farms to residents of the Xhalanga district who are taking farming seriously. They mentioned, as an example, the Xhalanga farmer who owns the highest number of stock, as shown above.

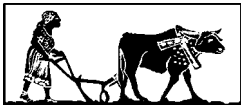
### The role government can play, as seen by the respondents

One of the questions that respondents were asked was what role they saw government playing in promoting livestock (cattle) production in Xhalanga. All the respondents were unanimous that government should provide them with:

- more land for grazing, fenced and with water; and
- dipping and inoculation.

The question of provision of land was probed in interviews, in particular, whether any land was available that government could provide for grazing. In the case of Luphaphasi, respondents pointed out that there are adjacent, historically white farms that can be bought for them. Cattle owners would not have to move as these farms are close to the area. Some even suggested that these farms could be leased for them. They pointed out that there are already individuals from Luphaphasi, those who can afford to pay, who lease some farms in winter. It has not been possible to establish whether these farms are available for purchase or lease, and if so, how many.

The situation in Cala Reserve is different. This administrative area is surrounded by other administrative areas and the town. If new land were to be acquired for them, it would be far away from their existing homes. The case of Cala Reserve is typical of many rural areas in the former Bantustans. When this problem was raised with cattle owners in this area, they pointed out that they want additional land, even if it is far away. Some even suggested that a farm could be bought for them in Elliot. What was not clear is the form of settlement in the new area.



Apart from the issues of additional grazing land, dipping and inoculation, various respondents suggested that government could play a role in the following:

- provision of grants and loans at a low rate of interest;
- relief aid in the form of feed in winter and drought;
- bulls;
- more support from agricultural officers; and
- training to cattle owners.

### Conclusion

The question that confronts us is the future of cattle production in the former Bantustans, including Xhalanga. This study has attempted to trace the changing socio-economic conditions in the rural areas of the former Bantustans, in particular, and how they impact on livestock production. The study has shown that despite urbanisation trends, in the form of people moving from rural to urban areas, the size of population in rural areas is increasing. Retrenchments in the urban areas that have been prevalent since the 1980s are forcing more and more migrant workers to return, albeit for temporary moments to rural areas. It is against this background that this study attempted to look at cattle production in Xhalanga.

Some of the findings of this study, based on a small sample of 26 respondents and four animal health technicians, are that cattle production is still dominated by men over the age of 50 years and who are semi-literate. The study has found that the future of cattle production, spread across the rural population, is bleak, largely due to a growing perception that the youth are not interested in cattle. This view predicts a concentration of cattle with a few cattle owners, rather than the current spread.

Despite this pessimism about the future of cattle in rural areas, it has been established that cattle serve a multi-purpose function for rural people, including milk, manure, *lobola* and conversion into cash in cases of emergency. In the current, post-1994 situation, where people lose jobs

instead of more people getting employment, the role that cattle play in rural households seems significant.

One of the main problems faced by cattle owners, this study has established from respondents, is the shrinking size of the grazing commonage, and the limited support that cattle owners get from government. Land shortage and limited support, especially in a drought-stricken area such as Xhalanga, make cattle production unattractive, especially to young people, who are often tempted to explore other avenues, especially the urban job market. What is difficult to predict is what difference more land and support would make in changing current perceptions held by youth, in particular, about the viability of cattle production.

No clear policy seems to be emerging from central, provincial and local government with regard to cattle production. This is manifested by the animal health technicians in Cala who conceded that they are not aware of policy developments in the post-1994 period. They claimed that, to the extent that they follow policies, it is the old policies and legislation that they are using. What is clear, however, is that government support to cattle owners is diminishing. Talk about the possibility of privatising most, if not all, of the services that government used to render has the implication that only those cattle owners who are wealthy will be able to afford these services.

## Endnotes

1. Since the demarcation of municipal boundaries and the second democratic local government election in 2000, 14 of the 20 administrative areas of Xhalanga, and the village town of Cala, have been amalgamated with the neighbouring Elliot district to form one big, new municipality: Sakhisizwe. However, in this paper, the term Xhalanga will be used, given that research was conducted in 1999.
2. The migrant labour system was an essential part of government policy to

secure cheap labour to build the South African capitalist economy.

3. For the case of Cala, see Bank 1992.
4. The Development Trust was established to buy additional land to meet government's target to make available 13% of land to Africans. The purchase of these farms was thus not an addition to the promised 13%.
5. Xhalanga is often written as Xalanga, without the 'h'. The author prefers to insert the 'h', in keeping with how the word is pronounced, and should thus be written.
6. For details of the establishment of this settlement, see Bank 1992.
7. Interview with Mr Mkabile, 6 September 1999.
8. Most of these interviews were conducted with the assistance of some employees from Calusa, a Cala-based NGO that is involved in rural development programmes. I am particularly grateful to this NGO for the support they gave me.
9. An earlier study showed that unemployment in Xhalanga in 1994 was 45.3% (Kayter 1994:11).
10. Kayter's 1994 study showed that 10.1% of his sample relied on migrant remittances.
11. Interview with Mrs Mguli, 11 January 2000.
12. The author is currently undertaking research on Rural Local Government and the role of traditional authorities. This area, Mnxe, is going to be the case-study. Opposition to Bantu Authorities by the people of Xhalanga is one of the issues that will be explored in this study.
13. Most of this section draws from Kodua-Agyekum (1997).
14. Due to time constraints and funding limitations, this study focuses on cattle.
15. I am particularly grateful to Mr M Mkabile for his readiness to assist in compiling these figures and in helping with other information on livestock in Xhalanga.
16. As indicated, this study focuses on



- cattle. The decision to choose cattle was mainly influenced by time constraints.
17. Officials in Cala indicated that regular dipping takes place in areas along the coast throughout the year. These areas do not conduct 'dry checking'.
  18. See introduction for reference to *Beestekraal*.
  19. These conditions relate to changing values of people with regard to live-stock production and the fact that cattle are no longer the sole measure of wealth.
  20. For an account of the establishment of informal settlements in Cala, see Bank (1992).
  21. Letter written by an agricultural officer, Lumphashi file in the Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs, Cala.
  22. Correspondence by magistrates abound with statements of drought conditions in Xhalanga from the time the district was established towards the end of the nineteenth century.
  23. It seems as if more sheep and goats are stolen than cattle.
  24. Records shown to the author at Cala police station, 17 November 1999.
  25. Interview with Mr Mkabile, 6 September 1999.



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# Chapter 5: The dynamics of cattle production and government intervention in communal areas of Lusikisiki district<sup>1</sup>

Thembele Kepe

## Introduction

The importance of livestock to the African people has been well-documented for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Cattle in particular have been seen to occupy a special place in the social and economic life of African rural people.

It can be argued that this is due to the multi-purpose role of cattle in the livelihoods of these people, including their value in consumption (e.g. milk and meat), draught power, the provision of raw materials (e.g. hides, bones, manure), savings, source of cash, rituals and social status. While all this was arguably true for the large part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, social and bio-physical changes in many parts of the continent encouraged a review of these earlier perceptions.

Thus, during the 1980s and 1990s several studies attempted to situate the role of cattle and other livestock in the wider livelihood context of the rural poor. The focus of many of these studies was to highlight the complex and diverse nature of rural livelihoods. In other words, livestock was not viewed in isolation to other livelihood sources, but as a part of numerous pieces that people bring together to make a living. Seen in this way, and considering gradual transformation in the rural economy over many decades, it is therefore tempting to want to reconsider the earlier views on the importance of livestock in rural livelihoods. In South Africa, some authors have observed a gradual process of de-agrarianisation taking place in rural areas. In response to

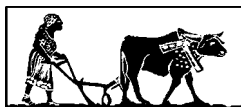
industrialisation, urbanisation and population growth, Manona (1998) argues, there is a re-orientation of economic activities away from the agrarian patterns of the past, to a largely non-agricultural resource dependency. This alone puts into question the role played by livestock in rural livelihoods.

However, while these new patterns within the African rural economy are acknowledged, it would be misleading to dismiss the role of livestock as unimportant in today's rural South Africa for at least two main reasons. Firstly, livestock, even if it is kept in small numbers, continues to have a very significant role in rural and to some extent urban livelihoods of Africans, due to the enduring cultural practices among these people. Secondly, the degree of transformation of the rural economy differs from one rural area to another. There are still numerous areas in South Africa where de-agrarianisation has been relatively slow to occur and where livestock continues to fulfil more than just their social role in rural livelihoods.<sup>2</sup> For these reasons, there is a need to understand the nature of this importance and its relationship with the wider social, economic and political forces of change over time within the country. It needs to be under-



stood whether livestock-related programmes or efforts by the state are worth their while in areas where there are still claims concerning a major contribution of livestock to livelihoods. In the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, especially in the former Transkei Bantustan, such areas exist.

This paper aims, firstly, to examine an array of government interventions regarding cattle in this district over the last 100 years or so. Secondly, it aims to explore the dynamics of access to and control over cattle by rural people in Lusikisiki district. Following this introduction, the methodology used in this study is discussed, followed by the general background on Lusikisiki district. A historical overview of patterns of access to and control over cattle, as well as the impact of state regulations by successive governments is examined in the ensuing section. Case-studies from villages in Lusikisiki follow this section, and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the main issues.



## Methodology

This study has made use of material and insights from a 1996 to 1997 study on Environmental Entitlements,<sup>3</sup> which used the district of Lusikisiki as one of the case-study areas. More insights and material were gained during subsequent monthly research visits by the author from 1997 to 1999. In both periods, a variety of methods were used to collect information. This included interviews with relevant informants, focus groups, participant observation and a range of Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques, as well as the review and analysis of secondary material. The annual reports of the Livestock and Veterinary Services Department were particularly useful for the understanding of cattle populations.

Extensive interviews were conducted with the staff of the Livestock and Veterinary Services Department of the Eastern Cape Province, based in Lusikisiki, Umtata and Bisho. Three villages were visited on a regular basis to interview cattle farmers. The author spent an initial nine months

living in Ngwenyeni village in Khanyayo Administrative Area (April-December 1996), and subsequently visited almost monthly until December 1999. In Lambasi Administrative Area, the villages of Ntlavukazi and Ndengane were visited on a regular basis, mostly late in 1999.

## Background to the case-study: Lusikisiki district

### Bio-physical environment

Lusikisiki district is situated on the Wild Coast, on South Africa's eastern seaboard. It is the largest coastal district in the former Transkei, covering an area of approximately 208 926ha (Cawe 1999). Lusikisiki town is the administrative centre of the district. In general, this area experiences a warm, temperate and humid climate, with minimal temperature fluctuations. Compared to the rest of the Eastern Cape Province, this coastal district experiences a relatively high rainfall with mean annual rainfall exceeding 1 000mm. Soils closest to the coast, especially in the north-eastern section of Lusikisiki district, are underlain by Natal Group sandstone. Consequently, they are sandy, highly leached and relatively shallow. In general, these soils are not suitable for intensive agriculture (Nicolson 1993). Further from the coastline, patches of rich clay soils of Dwyka origin are common (Feely 1987).

The vegetation of Lusikisiki district is largely grassland, with limited tree patches found along gorges or ravines or along dune systems by the coast (Kepe & Scoones 1999).<sup>4</sup> Some commentators consider these grasslands to be secondary, with the forest patches being relics of a former extensive forest (Acocks 1953; Tainton 1981). However, such a view has been disputed by extensive archaeological information (Feely 1987; McKenzie 1984; Ellery & Mentis 1992), which shows that the grasslands have been in existence for several thousand years. According to Van Wyk (1994), grasslands falling within this district are considered the most dense in southern Africa and are particularly vigorous. While patches of different grass species, with different significance to



different people and livestock are present, the unpalatable *Aristida junciformis* has become dominant in most communal areas of Lusikisiki (Beinart 1982; Van Wyk 1994; Kepe 1997).

### People and politics

Lusikisiki District is one of four magisterial districts in Eastern Pondoland, under the headship of Paramount Chief Mpondombini Sigcawu and has been part of the Wild Coast District Council following the political changes of 1994<sup>5</sup>. It is inhabited by Xhosa-speaking people (amaMpondo), who gain their livelihoods through a mixture of arable and livestock farming, the collection of a range of natural resources, and off-farm sources of livelihood, including remittances and pensions (Kepe 1997). There are 49 Administrative Areas; each headed by a government-appointed headman. Following the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, the 49 Administrative Areas were clustered into groups to make up several Tribal Authorities, which are headed by (hereditary) chiefs, who are employed by the government. All the chiefs are in turn responsible to the paramount chief of Eastern Pondoland. Each Administrative area is further divided into several villages (*izigodi* or *amabandla*).

Sub-headmen are appointed from the dominant lineage group within the village, but are not paid a salary. There are, however, several opportunities for them to be rewarded for their services through 'in kind' means. Larger villages are further divided into several neighbourhood groupings which are organised in a well-defined geographical cluster, often centring around a dominant lineage, and with their own leader. The name given to such groupings is *izithebe* (singular – *isithebe*), or mat associations, after the grass mat on which food is prepared for the group during feasts (Hammond-Tooke 1963; Hunter 1979). Leaders of these groupings are consequently called *oonozithetyana*.

The 1960s saw a substantial number of administrative areas in the Lusikisiki district subjected to 'Betterment Planning', which was introduced by the state as a measure for combating the deterioration of

the rural environment. This was done by dividing land in a locality into residential, arable and grazing sections. This policy was forcibly implemented throughout the country, but was met with resistance in most areas (see De Wet 1995; Mbeki 1964). Reasons for rejecting 'betterment' ranged from the alleged restrictions it imposed on the movement of livestock, to reduction of grazing areas and cropping land. In areas where the size was not perceived as a problem (e.g. in Lambasi Administrative Area in Lusikisiki), people complained that betterment re-arranged environments which were previously suitable for specific land-uses. For instance, areas which were good for grazing ended up as residential areas or as crop fields.<sup>6</sup> Coastal districts of Lusikisiki and Bizana, however, offered most resistance against 'betterment' (Mbeki 1964; Copelyn 1974), something which led to violent revolts, which were, in turn, viciously crushed by the government. But the resistance was enough to result in numerous coastal villages escaping 'betterment'.

Spiegel (1992) cites chiefs and headmen (who were respectively introduced and strengthened by the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951), the magistrates and the civil service, together with police and informers as three layers of control by the state on villagers in the former Transkei. As McAllister (1992) suggests, however, 'betterment' was another layer of control by the state, because villagers lost local autonomy and the established territorial and organisational structures were broken down, in a way that enhanced regulation and control of rural people's lives by the state. How exactly these four layers of control affected dynamics of livestock farming in Lusikisiki district, will be discussed later in this chapter.



### Cattle in Lusikisiki: Historical background

Eastern Pondoland, within which Lusikisiki district falls, has received much recognition over the last century and earlier for its relative suitability for cattle production within the former Transkei

(formerly Transkeian Territories). In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century for instance, Sampson (1882:105) wrote of the area during one of his visits to Lusikisiki:

*I had seen the natives of Mount Frere almost frantic at the sight of two or three thousand head of captured cattle, but here, in light and shade of the green hills, was to be appreciated the true beauty of the many herds. No wonder with their pleasant land, luxuriant crops, and multitudinous cattle, the Pondos are content to abide in the paths of peace ...*

Later, Caesar Henkel (1903:46), when he wrote of Mpondo cattle, made a similar observation:

*Pondoland, of all parts of the territories, is 'par excellence' the cattle breeders' paradise. Before the advent of the 'Rinderpest plague' enormous herds of fine large and healthy cattle could have been seen in East and West Pondoland.*

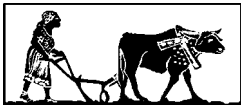
During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, access to and control over cattle played a prominent role in the wars between the Mpondo and other nations in their vicinity (Stapleton 1998; Beinart 1982), an indication of the relatively large numbers of cattle and their importance to people's livelihoods.

According to Beinart (1982), livestock loaning was the most common way in which cattle were redistributed in Pondoland, at least for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The royal household served as a nucleus from which cattle were drawn by commoners' households, usually as a reward for their loyalty or for labour services they provided to the chief. Late in the 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century, migrants who went to work in the mines were given a beast, taken on credit from a local trader, for each six month contract, as an advance. While the state and some people within Pondoland later saw this system of advances as exploitative, leading to its abolition in 1910, Beinart (1979) contends that it had some notable advantages to the locals. Firstly, migrants were encouraged to return home after their contracts ex-

pired, because they would not have cash to remain in the towns. Secondly, while waiting for the return of the migrant, other members of the household could make use of the beast for milk and draught purposes. Thirdly, cattle could be exchanged with traders for higher prices to purchase other commodities, after the migrant had returned home. In other words, this system also played a role in hastening commercialisation of cattle exchanges in the area. Trading was, however, strictly controlled by the government. For instance, livestock speculators had to be licensed, and at one stage were not allowed to purchase directly from the rural people. Government-organised sales served as a middle point.<sup>7</sup> Fourthly, rights to cattle were clearly defined within the household compared to cash. This potentially reduced household conflicts that could result from differences in spending behaviour. Lastly, following major livestock diseases like rinderpest, cattle advances were a good way of replenishing cattle herds.

Rinderpest, a devastating cattle disease, killed many herds throughout southern Africa from about 1897 onwards. Despite attempts to isolate their herds, Mpondo people were also hit very hard by cattle deaths, especially towards the end of 1897 (Henkel 1903; Beinart 1982). As much as 80% losses of cattle were experienced (Beinart 1980). The outbreak of another disease, a tick-borne East Coast Fever in 1912 was a huge blow to the recovering post-rinderpest herds of Pondoland. It appears that the districts of Flagstaff and Lusikisiki were hardest hit by East Coast Fever related cattle deaths, having lost almost 80% between 1911 and 1914 (Beinart 1982).

According to Beinart (1982), the cattle disease outbreaks saw the rise in the importance of small-stock keeping in Pondoland. Another effect of the diseases on cattle keeping was the imposition by government of restrictions on livestock movements within and into the districts of Pondoland. While Mpondos might have appreciated the benefits of keeping poten-



tially infected livestock away from Pondoland, restrictions of internal movements were not very welcome, as they reduced the use of coastal areas for winter grazing (Beinart 1982).

Cattle numbers within the district of Lusikisiki rose gradually during the 1920s, after the outbreak of East Coast Fever, reaching the highest levels in the 1930s. This observation is in line with that of Beinart (1992) for the rest of the former Transkei. Since the 1930s, the cattle population has remained above 80 000 within the district of Lusikisiki, with declines resulting from drought impacts in the early 1980s and early 1990s (Kepe & Scoones 1999).

Beinart (1992) cites four reasons that may have contributed to a general rise in the cattle numbers in the 'Transkei' after the East Coast Fever. The first one was the good condition of the grazing areas in the years that followed the outbreak of the disease. Secondly, the break-up of large homesteads meant that more cattle had to be used for draught purposes. Thirdly, cattle prices were relatively cheaper than the wages of migrant workers, allowing individuals to purchase more. Fourthly, government-introduced dipping helped keep more animals alive.

Besides enforcing the dipping of cattle, the government imposed control on livestock production in many other ways. As mentioned earlier, following the rinderpest and East Coast Fever, movement of stock was severely restricted, and inoculation was made compulsory for most of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Grazing management was also affected. In 1955, for instance, a headman had to seek permission from the Native Commissioner to burn grass in his village.<sup>8</sup> By the 1960s, cattle owners from the district were being restricted even in their trading activities. African cattle owners were only allowed to buy one heifer for every two cattle sold at a government-organised stock sale.<sup>9</sup> This was effectively a measure to impose control on cattle numbers, as it was known that cows (*iinkomo ezalayo*) are worth

more to a Mpondo for keeping purposes than an ox or a bull.

The Transkeian government, both before and after independence in 1976, continued to enforce the previous government's legislation on livestock. Dipping of cattle and the permit to remove animals were two particular pieces of legislation that were fully embraced by the Transkei Bantustan government. Dipping remained compulsory until the new government took over in 1994. In terms of the Animal Diseases and Parasites Act 13 of 1956, as amended, animals moved from one locality to another had to be accompanied by a permit signed by a state veterinarian. The headmen, magistrates and the police had the responsibility of ensuring that these regulations were observed. But if the headmen did not report cases to the police or the magistrate (as was often the case in Lusikisiki area), offences remained unprosecuted.<sup>10</sup>

Over the last 100 years there has been persistent resistance to government control over livestock production in the area. Resistance took different forms, including both peaceful defiance and violence. In most cases, people simply defied a government regulation, claiming that they were not interfering with government property, but their own (Kepe 1997). While boycotting and picketing were common forms of indicating displeasure with enforced dipping, violence was occasionally used by villagers on dipping attendants (Beinart & Bundy 1987). But as the example of resistance against 'betterment' shows, any intense resistance from the rural people was met with intense power from the state. The government's response to reactions against livestock regulations was legitimised and supported by the provisions of apartheid legislation. Therefore, the end of apartheid (on paper) in 1994 raised hopes, among some, of a harmonious and optimistic future in rural areas of the former Bantustans. The next section will examine dynamics of cattle production in the former Transkei, with special reference to Lusikisiki. It will focus briefly on present



and proposed legislation regarding cattle and how farmers respond to it.

### **The post-apartheid government's intervention in livestock production<sup>11</sup>**

The new government did not introduce any dramatic changes regarding livestock in the Eastern Cape Province, including Lusikisiki district. More than five years after the Transkei, Ciskei and the East Cape region amalgamated as the new Eastern Cape Province, however, government's intervention in livestock production could hardly be described as consistent. Instead, each of the three areas still maintain more or less similar regions of operation, staff, abundance or limited resources and some legislation, as the case was before 1994.

#### **Livestock statistics and reporting**

In general, the former Bantustan areas have been known for poor administrative abilities, which also affected the quality of records kept over time. In the Transkei, however, regular compulsory dipping of cattle, which was introduced in the 1910s to combat East Coast Fever, has kept cattle statistics somewhat realistic, compared to other agricultural produce (Beinart 1992). A good indicator is how trends in the livestock populations coincide with known major events over certain periods (e.g. major disease outbreaks and drought). Using mostly figures gained from dipping records in the whole of the former Transkei, Muller and Mpela (1987) provided a useful time series for livestock numbers, from 1910 to 1975. While their report has a few questionable figures, it is probably the most comprehensive report of its nature in the former Bantustans of the Eastern Cape. Livestock figures provided by Muller and Mpela (1987) for Lusikisiki district, combined with updates received from the department of Livestock and Veterinary Services in the Eastern Cape, provide a historical picture of populations for the district (see Figure 1). Having made this point, several questions about the



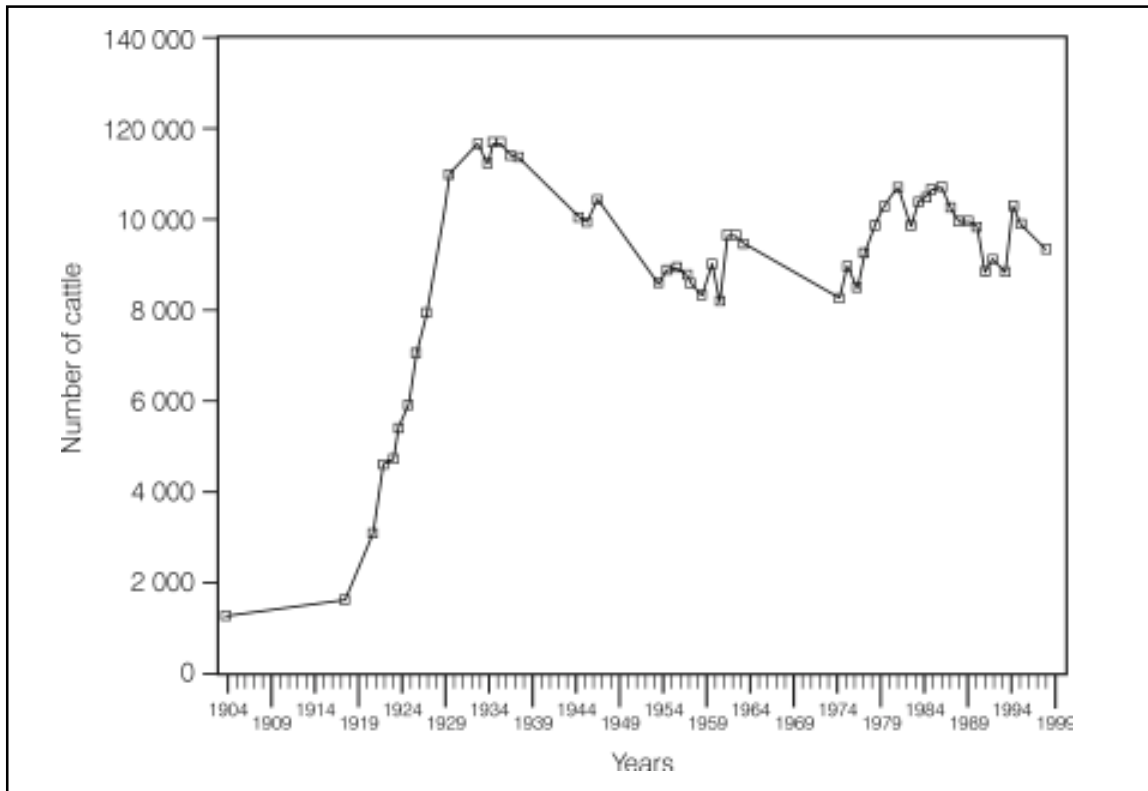
usefulness of such a picture need to be answered.

The first question that needs to be answered is whether dipping records are a reliable source of information about the livestock populations in communal areas. At this stage, one would have to respond negatively for several reasons. Firstly, in just about every village in Lusikisiki district there are livestock keepers who never dip their cattle in government facilities, because of the distance from the dipping tank, informed or uninformed opposition to using government dipping tanks, and using forms of treatment other than a dip.

Secondly, even those farmers who do send their cattle to a government dipping tank are rarely forthright about what they own. Declarations of deaths, theft and births provide opportunities for twisting numbers, as the cattle being declared would not be at the dipping tank to be counted. The word of the farmer is all that matters.

Thirdly, small-stock figures are even more suspect as they are based on quarterly inspections for contagious diseases that are supposed to take place in villages. In coastal areas of Lusikisiki district, these inspections are very rare, probably due to the shortage of qualified staff. In all these cases, detailed village studies still provide the most reliable source of livestock statistics.

The second question that needs to be answered is whether the Department of Livestock and Veterinary Services could still improve the way statistics are collected and kept. In this regard, the department's annual report is seen as the ultimate record of what happened during each year. Several points need to be noted here. Firstly, up to 1998, all livestock figures reported in the annual report were given by district, not by specific administrative areas. In other words, while the dipping foremen collected figures per administrative area, once they reached the office, the information was fed into district figures. This does not make things easy for research, by both



**Figure 5.1: Cattle populations in Lusikisiki district, 1904–1999**

(Source: Muller & Mpela 1987; Livestock and Veterinary Department, Lusikisiki and Umtata)

government and other interested parties alike. For the first time, the annual report for 1999 will report livestock figures by administrative area.

Secondly, while those who collect the figures during dipping might provide an idea of how many people hold what number of livestock, this information is not recorded in the annual report, making it an inadequate source to serve as a full picture of livestock dynamics in communal areas.

Thirdly, the reports do contain discrepancies from time to time.<sup>12</sup> A good example is the livestock figures for cattle, sheep and goats from Lusikisiki in 1998, which are exactly the same as those recorded for 1995. While this is not absolutely impossible, it is highly unlikely that these figures are correct. In other words, it would appear that care is not taken to check the information entered in the report, especially before it goes for printing. It also appears that very few officials care to read this section of the report, as this discrepancy was only noted by some key people during interviews conducted for this case-study.

The other information contained in the annual report is about cattle deaths, births and slaughter, and problem diseases for each district. This information is equally useful, but also inconsistent and at times suspect. Take data relating to animal health for example. Where there is a shortage of personnel to visit individual livestock keepers in villages, as is the case in Lusikisiki district, and where people rarely go to town to seek professional help, it is doubtful if any reliable information about diseases can be recorded.

In concluding this section, it is argued that if the annual report is to be regarded as a useful resource by a wider audience interested in livestock issues, including in future years, then an effort must be made to collect reliable data. With government-assisted dipping in communal areas of the province in doubt for the future, the government would have to devise other means of keeping track of livestock production in these areas. In fact, this might mean strengthening human resources within the department, in such a way that contact



with farmers is improved. Only then can there be chances of producing relatively reliable livestock data.

### Animal health care

In the former Transkei, skilled health professionals from other African countries, who were brought in by the Bantustan government, continue to play a vital role in an otherwise gloomy livestock health situation. These professionals, mostly veterinary surgeons, are currently over-worked and enjoy minimal support in terms of facilities and other requirements for a successful animal health care regime. Other problems that they currently encounter include, firstly, not commanding the same level of respect from farmers in villages compared to their white colleagues who once worked in these areas. Secondly, their support staff, which includes Dipping Foremen and General Assistants, have very little education. The Dipping Foremen are not trained in animal healthcare and are thus limited to tasks such as mixing dip and collecting cattle statistics during dipping sessions. The General Assistants are even worse, as they are mostly women who cannot read or write, and whose tasks are limited to carrying water from the source to the tanks, and to doing some maintenance of the dipping area. The state veterinarian based in Lusikisiki is currently responsible for the three districts of Bizana, Flagstaff and Lusikisiki and some 220 000 cattle. Sheep, goats, horses, donkeys and mules are also his responsibility.

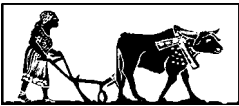
According to the veterinarian in Lusikisiki, one of the main problems concerning the health of animals in the district – beside the inadequacy of health care facilities and personnel – is the importation of cattle from other centres. Local farmers purchase cattle from other districts and nearby farms, but do not bother to ensure that these animals are healthy. There are reported cases of white farmers selling cattle whose teeth are non-existent or badly damaged. When these animals have to graze the tough *Aristida*

*junciformis* (*iNkonkoni*) and the *Sporobulus africanus* (*uMsuka*) in the communal areas, they cannot cope for long. The veterinarian argues that this is not a major problem if the animal is to be slaughtered soon after purchase. But most of the animals purchased in this manner are usually meant for long-term keeping.

The second health problem in the district is that of tick-borne diseases such as Babesiosis, Anaplasmosis and Heartwater, all of which can cause death. These diseases are most prevalent during the summer months when rainfall is high. Worm infestation tends to be a problem in young animals. While Tuberculosis is not a major problem in the district, cases are reported from time to time. With only one qualified veterinarian serving such a large area, villagers end up not consulting anyone, or visiting a local pharmacist. With villagers coming without any prescription or advice from the veterinarian, and the pharmacist not being qualified in treating cattle as such, unsuitable treatment is usually purchased. Sometimes the treatment is near its expiry date, but the farmer may be illiterate and continue to use it even after it has expired.

Another increasing problem in the district is surgery performed on animals by unqualified people. Two of the most common surgeries performed on cattle are castration (*ukuthena*) and the removal of the clitoris (*impene*). While castration in itself is not necessarily a life-threatening operation, and is performed by non-professional people throughout South Africa, conditions seem to be worse in Lusikisiki. First of all, blunt knives are used to perform the surgery. Secondly, the wound is usually not properly treated. The most common post-surgery treatment is putting soil, ash or dung on the wound, leading to severe infection and even death.

The removal of the clitoris is equally serious. When cattle heifers delay in conceiving or when cows conceive and then show no signs of pregnancy later, villagers usually blame this on the *impene*. Any sharp instrument, ranging from a



knife, to a razor or a piece of glass is used to remove the clitoris. The claim by villagers is that once this is removed, the cow always conceives. But the farmers who were interviewed in the Lambasi and Khanyayo Administrative Areas claim that in most cases cows which have had their *impene* removed, have difficulty during the calving process. More often than not, they die during the process of giving birth.

Dr Kasule has an explanation for both the disappearance of pregnancy and the difficulty in giving birth. His clinical research has shown that almost all the reported *impene* cases are related to Brucellosis or Contagious Abortion. Cows suffering from this disease are often undiagnosed by the farmer, resulting in the 'magical' disappearance of the pregnancy. His explanation of the difficulty during calving is that the unprofessional surgery performed in the birth canal during the removal of *impene* causes so much scarring, resulting in loss of elasticity of the vagina. So great is the problem that those animals do not survive without assistance.

The surgeries are never discussed with the veterinarian or other staff before they happen. When asked why they do not seek advice about castration or *impene*, one farmer from Lambasi remarked 'we don't take from their (professionals) kraals, we take from ours'.<sup>13</sup> In Dr Kasule's perception, only a very well-organised extension programme, combined with adequate support from government can make a positive contribution to combating life-threatening animal diseases.

### Old and new legislation

A range of provincial and national legislation affects cattle production in the district. Probably the two most relevant pieces of legislation worth discussing in this paper are the Animal Diseases and Parasites Act 13 of 1956 and the Animal Diseases Act 35 of 1984. According to the Animal Diseases and Parasites Act, the state was to provide facilities and other material for the control of ticks and tick-borne diseases. In the former Transkei, this Act, which enforced dipping, made it possible for the

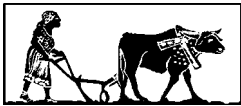
state to monitor cattle in communal areas for census purposes and to carry out surveillance on other potentially dangerous diseases (Government of the Eastern Cape, 1999). Together with this in the former Transkei was a 'Permit to Remove Animals' which had to accompany all animals that were moved from one locality to another. Conditions of the permit were that animals to be transferred should not be infected or suspected of being infected with particular diseases or infested with certain parasites. Upon incorporation into the new Eastern Cape Province, the 'Transkei' was no longer bound by this Act. In other words, the permit system was done away with. Yet in the year 2000, offices of the Veterinary Services all over the former Transkei are still often packed with people seeking permits to transfer livestock. Senior personnel of the department are fully aware that the permit system was abolished in 1994, but argue that this is still one of the best ways to monitor movements of livestock within communal areas. Livestock keepers on the other hand are not aware that the permit system is no longer law. They clearly detest having to visit the offices for the purpose of getting the permit, and would not voluntarily continue with the system.

Another nuisance for farmers in Lusikisiki is having to submit the spleens of all slaughtered cattle to the dipping foreman. The spleen was used to test for contagious tick-borne diseases, particularly East Coast Fever. While this exercise was declared unnecessary many years ago, at the time of writing of this paper, dipping foremen were still collecting spleens from farmers. Senior officials have admitted that the spleen collection is no longer necessary and enforcing it is in fact illegal. But they have also argued that the submission of the spleen assists with tracking down cattle thieves. Whether this goal is ever achieved remains unclear. Like the permit system, farmers resent having to keep the spleen for the foreman. They have argued that they would rather eat the spleen instead of wasting it for a small sample to be taken from it.



The Animal Diseases Act has replaced the Animal Diseases and Parasites Act in the province. Provisions of this Act no longer require the state to provide dipping facilities for cattle. But up to now, the state has continued to provide for dipping free of charge to the communities. Budgetary constraints in the province have, however, resulted in a rethink in so far as free dipping is concerned. A draft document, proposing a gradual withdrawal of this assistance, was circulated to 'relevant stakeholders' late in 1999. Included in the recommendations are the following:

- that people who keep cattle pay a sum of R15 per head per annum to the Revenue Services or magistrates;
- that a uniform stock card be kept by all farmers in the communal areas of the province, and these be stamped upon payment of the fee;
- general dipping assistants would be phased out; and
- dipping foremen would receive training in animal health, to assist livestock keepers in diagnosing and treating minor ailments.



Problems with these proposals are expected throughout the province. Already mixed messages are reaching the villagers. Some livestock keepers allege government has told them that they have to buy their own dip. Some have heard about the proposed R15 and see this as a money making venture by government. This confusion may have arisen from the fact that the document has not been properly circulated to the relevant people. According to senior officials of the department, the document has gone to associations of established commercial and emerging commercial farmers for comments. The officials admit that it is much easier to consult these people, even though the proposals are not about commercial farms, but about livestock in communal areas. It remains to be seen whether the consulting effort will be worth its while and what the implications of the whole process will be in communal areas.

## Cattle in villages

### Access to and control over cattle

It was mentioned in an earlier section that cattle statistics collected during dipping in rural areas were likely to paint an incomplete picture of how many cattle are in these areas. But it was also argued that they do provide a useful indicator of population trends over time. What remains elusive, however, is a sense of how cattle are distributed between households within a particular locality. In his analysis of mostly published information, Beinart (1992) reviews different scenarios for different areas of the former Transkei over the last few decades. From this review there appears to be a consensus among the authors of the studies that, using per capita estimations, in any one locality about 50% of households own cattle, with about 15% of them owning more than ten head. Inconsistencies in the way that these studies were conducted make it difficult to get a complete picture of the situation, rather than a pieced-together one. Surveys conducted in some rural areas over short periods of time are also exposed to a lot of unreliability, as people – especially those who have a considerable number of animals – remain suspicious of people and studies seeking details of cattle ownership by person or household.

My sense for the Lusikisiki district – based on over four years of detailed qualitative research – is that patterns of cattle holdings in these coastal villages are not much different to that which has been observed in other districts. What I have found is that while there are about 50% of households with cattle, it is becoming a trend that most cattle are concentrated in very few households. In Khanyayo Administrative Area for instance, there were about 3 101 cattle for about 800 households, giving a holding of four head per household. Yet only about 20 households have cattle holdings of between 30 and 150, with the majority of the households having far less cattle.

What has become very clear from this study, though, is that small numbers or



non-ownership of cattle within a household is no indication of cattle's importance to a household. In general, individuals within households aspire to own cattle or continue to reap benefits from them in many ways (Kepe & Cousins 1998). One way of seeking an understanding of this behaviour is to go beyond individual cattle holdings, to examine briefly the existence of social institutions which ameliorate the unequal and skewed distribution currently experienced. Sharing of benefits from cattle is key to these social relationships. But how widespread are these sharing relationships in contemporary, rural South Africa? We argue that in the coastal district of Lusikisiki, with its favourable climate and vegetation, combined with high levels of poverty, remoteness from larger centres, as well as the history of cattle ownership in the area, these incidences are likely to be higher than in many areas of South Africa. These institutions range from those that mediate access to and control over actual cattle, to those that mediate access to and control over benefits deriving from cattle. A selection of these is discussed below.

#### Kin livestock sharing (*Ukufuyisa*<sup>14</sup>)

A person who owns a reasonable number of livestock often gives some to his or her kin with no conditions attached and this is known as *ukufuyisa*. The name for this informal institution comes from the word '*mfuyo*' which means livestock. *Ukufuyisa* is literally translated as 'to make someone to keep livestock', from the verb '*fuya*' which means, 'keep livestock'. The most common beneficiaries of this institution include sons, nephews and brothers of the livestock owner, although there are a few cases where women become beneficiaries as well. For the son, this may start with giving him a chicken at an early age, to giving him a goat, sheep or a cow when he gets married and starts his own household. While there is no material benefit to the person who gives livestock at the time of the process, looking after the livestock whilst a child is the most common motivation for this type of sharing. On the other

hand, an older brother who has inherited livestock from his parents would normally give one or more to his younger brothers, although he is not obliged to do so.

Clearly, the combination of the two institutions (kinship and *ukufuyisa*) is key to this form of arrangement. It is very rare that people can gain entitlement to livestock through *ukufuyisa* without being kin. Kinship is also important as an institution that interacts with other institutions to provide entitlement to people under different situations.

#### Inheritance (*Ilifa*)

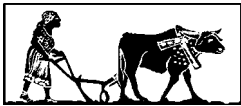
Beside purchasing, the most common way of gaining effective control over cattle is through inheritance. Unlike with *ukufuyisa*, inheritance only happens when the owner dies or is presumed dead. The most common beneficiaries are the oldest males in the household. But if the son was able to accumulate his own cattle while his father was still alive, the son's eldest son would inherit the cattle from his grandfather (Hunter 1979). Women whose husbands have died and have male children become *de facto* owners of the cattle while the *de jure* beneficiaries are still young. If there are no male children, a male relative of the man who has died (e.g. the brother) becomes the *de jure* beneficiary while the wife remains *de facto* owner. In cases where the man who died had himself inherited the livestock from his father, his next younger brother can – according to local laws – legally remove the cattle to his own homestead even if the deceased man's widow is still alive, often arguing that he is simply taking what naturally belongs to him from his father, since his brother has died. This often causes a lot of conflict with the dead man's wife and male children, especially if the cattle being taken away are no longer the same (e.g. through purchases, exchanges and offspring) as those left by the father. In cases where women are *de facto* owners of the cattle, they still have to consult male relatives of the husband before they can slaughter, sell, exchange or loan an animal.



### Livestock loaning (*Ukusisa*<sup>15</sup>)

Livestock loaning is a characteristic of many pastoral communities around the world. Evidence shows that during much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, livestock loaning was one of the ways in which poor households could access livestock from those who kept many (Beinart 1982). In those days, it was usually the chiefs who gave livestock away, as a strategy to spread labour responsibilities involved in looking after livestock. It thus served the two parties involved reasonably well, in that the person who received livestock could use them as if they belong to them (e.g. for milking, ploughing, manure, etc.) as well as getting a share of some offspring. Other social benefits for the person who loans out livestock include recognition and somewhat higher status in the community (Kuckertz 1990; Duvel & Afful 1996; Hunter 1979; Sneesby 1933).

Livestock loaning in Pondoland has evolved over the many years it has been practiced. Firstly, contrary to the many studies in South Africa that closely link loaning to cattle, goats, sheep and chickens are increasingly being loaned as well. While these small stock do not benefit the person who receives the loan the same way as cattle do (e.g. draught power), their reproductive turnover is relatively higher than that of cattle. In other words, more offspring are usually shared on a regular basis. Secondly, while certain rituals and expectations based on tradition still exist around these loaning arrangements, there is a tendency among rural people to relax these patterns. For instance, it used to be the offspring of the same loaned animal that would be shared after some time, but these days money can replace livestock, thus eliminating feasts that went along with the time of sharing. In many situations, the only benefits gained by the people who receive loans are access to milk, draught power, manure or eggs, in case of chickens. In other words, no offspring or money changes hands in those cases. Thirdly, there are situations where relatives from another village (e.g. 20km away) simply ask relatives who live in areas which have



better grazing to keep their cattle on a very temporary basis. This could be for only a few weeks or months during a particular time of the year. More often than not, the only benefit to the people who keep the livestock may be an addition to their store of manure. In this case, the strengthening of kinship networks is the major benefit.

### *Lobola* (bridewealth)

Payment of bridewealth takes place in different forms in many parts of the world. In South Africa, this institution is commonly referred to as *lobola*. While the incidence of using cattle for this social exchange has somewhat declined in South Africa, gaining livestock through *lobola* is still common. Cattle are most often given to the family of the bride by the groom's family. These cattle can range in number from five to 15, and are sometimes accompanied by goats, sheep or a horse. Where the groom gives cash instead of cattle, the bride's family usually express their expected *lobola* in terms of cattle or can buy them from somebody else. Consequently, it is not uncommon that many of the households which have large numbers of cattle, are also those that have a good number of married daughters.

### The market

The market is a key institution through which villagers can gain access and control over cattle, both from within or outside the village, through three different ways. Firstly, people who need to acquire cattle can use money to purchase them. Beside cattle that are purchased from commercial farms (usually by migrant workers) near the towns of Lusikisiki and Flagstaff, most of the selling and buying takes place within the villages. Local wisdom is that one should wait for desperate moments to be able to negotiate for the best price for selling or buying cattle. If there is a person who needs to have access to cash urgently for some reason, they usually take the first person that offers to buy the animal they are seeking to sell. The buyer could have been waiting for some months for such moments during which they have an upper hand in price negotiation. On the other

hand, a desperate potential buyer who needs cattle, say for a funeral or other ritual, will be forced to pay a slightly higher price, as the seller is aware of the desperation and, therefore, has an upper hand in price negotiation. This all means that people do not normally sell cattle outside these desperate situations.

Secondly, people can gain access to and control over cattle of their choice through exchange with their available resources. The resources that people make available for exchange may include their labour for building a house, a vehicle, a gun, a horse and so forth. Again, cattle are involved in most of these exchanges compared to small stock. In cases where the resource exchange does not balance, cash may be used to supplement either way.

The third way in which people can gain access to and control over cattle through the market is when they keep them temporarily or permanently after they had been given as collateral for a cash loan. People who have cattle that they do not wish to sell, but are in desperate need for cash can give them to be kept as collateral by the person who is prepared to loan them the money. More often than not, people who take these loans are from poorer households who only have a few head of cattle, hence their reluctance to sell. However, due to their inability to pay the money back within the agreed time frame, their cattle rarely come back to them.

#### Ploughing companies (*Inkampani*)

In areas that have favourable conditions for rain-fed cropping, such as the coastal parts of the former Transkei, co-operative labour continues to be a social norm, albeit at probably much reduced levels. While labour as a factor of production is often the resource that is shared during ploughing, weeding and sometimes harvesting, where the use of draught power is still prevalent, cattle are an important factor in co-operative labour. During ploughing, several households usually contribute different resources required for ploughing, including cattle, the plough, labour, seeds and so forth, and this is referred to as *inkampani*.

More often than not, wealthier households contribute livestock, while poorer households contribute labour. While it is the possession of draught animals that increases the bargaining power of a particular household (Heron 1991), even the poorest member of the *inkampani* has equal entitlement to services provided by draught animals.

Although the sharing of cattle for draught purposes emphasises the aspect of benefits accruing to the poorer households, it should be made clear that costs to the ploughing company members also exist. First, beside investing labour and resources other than cattle, each member of the *inkampani* would have had to establish strong social links with other members prior to taking part in this contract. These investments may include having helped in weeding, harvesting, putting out fires, or a kin member (e.g. a child) having looked after the draught animals for free. Secondly, during the time that the animals are on duty, any cost that is incurred (e.g. for a new yoke) is shared by the members. But these costs still do not compare to the benefits provided by access to draught animals to the households with few or no cattle.

#### *Isithebe* (neighbourhood grouping)

The sharing of benefits from livestock is not confined to live animals and their services (e.g. draught power), but people of a particular *isithebe* share slaughtered cattle during feasts on a regular basis. With the exception of pork, locally slaughtered meat is never sold in the district. Whenever a beast is slaughtered, either during a particular ritual (e.g. a coming of age ceremony for girls) or when it is old or injured beyond recovery, people in the village are entitled to varying shares of the meat.

Since a village may have several *izithebe*, each of the groupings has a share of particular portions from the beast, with the people of the *isithebe* where the animal comes from getting the largest share. It is argued that the people of the local *isithebe* deserve to benefit more than others,

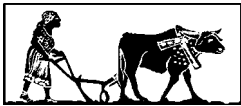


because they are usually the first ones to lend a helping hand in times of need.

Indeed, when a beast slips and falls into a gorge for instance, men of the *isithebe* never wait to be invited to go and help to pull it out, while women often bring water and wood for preparing the meat. Even during the day that the beast is slaughtered, only the local *isithebe* residents and relatives are expected to partake. When other villagers belonging to different *isithebe* arrive, they have to sit a good distance away from the kraal to await their share.

Depending on the type of feast, visiting *isithebe* are either given the meat raw to cook or roast it themselves or after it has been cooked, but would have to divide it into pieces themselves. For each *isithebe* there is a leader (often the sub-headman or *unozitetyana*) who looks after the interests of his people. The meat is served on a grass mat (*isithebe*).

While adults are entitled to slaughtered meat from a different *isithebe* within the village, only children (often boys) from the hosting *isithebe* can get a share from the meat. The argument is that these boys were responsible for looking after the animal when it was still alive. Men and women



who attend the feasts often take some cooked pieces of meat to their children.

### Challenges to the tradition of cattle raising in Lusikisiki district

'Our sons care about bicycles and girls these days'

Talking to elderly men in the district, it soon becomes clear that the use of cattle as advances for migrant labour early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century had a profound effect on perceptions about migrancy. Even after the advances system was abolished, Mpondo migrants continued to measure their success at the sugar-cane plantations or gold and coal mines by the number of cattle they were able to bring home. Those men who worked as migrants for most of their lives, until retirement 20 years or so ago, cannot help but show disappointment at how the priorities of migrant labourers have changed over the last two decades. The prevalence of households with very few or no cattle is blamed on *ubulokishi* (adoption of urban lifestyle). Hence an eighty-something year old former migrant remarked that '*oonyana bethu bakhathalele iibayisekile namantombazana kule mihla*' ('our sons care about bicycles and girls these days').

### Life history of Nyawuza (68 years)

Nyawuza was born in Ntlavukazi, Lambasi. His parents only had two children (both sons). He never went to a formal school. His father was a known womaniser with many *amadikazi*. Because of this, his father never could accumulate enough money to buy cattle. Most of his money was spent on women. But Nyawuza still grew up like other boys looking after his uncle's cattle. When the time came, he went for a six month contract in a sugar cane area in Umzinto. After his next contract, he was not to return home for many years (*ukutshipha*). When he finally came back, he married a woman from the same village in 1965. The two were in love before they married each other. They have four children, three of whom are daughters. He has now been receiving a government old age pension for the last ten years. Nyawuza cultivates maize and *madumbe* for home consumption. He has ten sheep, but no cattle. He argues that he really wants to keep cattle and he won't rest until he has some. He believes that as a man he has to leave something (cattle) for his son. But cattle are expensive. It would cost him seven sheep to get one cow. He now is only forced to buy cattle when he has a ceremony that requires slaughtering. He argues that his situation is different from his father's. While he was also a womaniser, he wants cattle. He does not think that he spent his money on women only.

He strongly believes that a yearning for urban pleasures and other modern conveniences is replacing the tradition of raising cattle. Instead of coming home with cattle, young men either spend the money with women or buy modern gadgets such as bicycles and televisions instead of cattle.

The link between non-ownership of cattle and urban pleasures is, however, not confined to recent times. Interviews with elderly men who were migrant workers during the 1960s, for instance, show how this perception has a long history in this area. The interview with Nyawuza in the box above serves to illustrate the point.

The life history of Nyawuza highlights another point about the desire or non-desire to own cattle. While both Nyawuza and his father spent their money with women in urban areas and both did not own any cattle, Nyawuza sees himself as better off because he always had and still has a desire to own cattle. So it appears that there are two categories of those who do not have cattle. There are those with the desire, who attempt to have cattle, and there are those who could not care less. The youth who work as migrants are leaning more towards the latter, hence fears of a dying Mpondo tradition.

#### 'Boys go to school now'

People interviewed in Khanyayo and Lambasi Administrative Areas also fear that the increasing number of boys attending school is negatively affecting cattle farming in rural areas. It used to be that boys from each homestead or relatives would be responsible for looking after livestock, with small-stock and graduating to cattle. Now, by the age of seven, most boys are in school, leaving their families to hire unemployed men to look after their cattle. It has become clear that many families without access to the labour provided by boys, are feeling the burden of having to either pay for herding services or the costs of impoundment when their cattle get into people's fields. Some families are, therefore, deciding that paying an adult man for looking after two or three cattle is not worth it.

On the other hand, teachers at primary schools are complaining that if there are two or three boys from the same homestead, they take turns looking after cattle and attending school. In other words, in any one week of schooling, such boys may attend a maximum of three days each, if there are two of them. Inevitably, much learning is lost.

Homesteads with many cattle often do not struggle as much in accessing labour. More often than not, these homesteads can either afford to pay for a full-time herdsman or have a number of kin children living with them who can fulfil this task. These children might be there for years, either because their parents cannot afford to raise them or they have been orphaned. The orphans usually never get an opportunity to go to school for the rest of their lives. Another strategy for those with many cattle is to loan them to other villagers, thus sharing labour costs. It would appear, however, that those who will survive the crisis of labour shortage are those with many livestock already. In other words, the patterns could remain the same far into the future.

#### Cattle theft: Who are the villains and who are the victims?<sup>16</sup>

The last few years have seen many rural areas of the former Transkei ravaged by very high levels of violence, leading to death and/or to people abandoning their homes. In many of these areas it has been necessary to call in the South African National Defence Force to control the situation. While there is a range of reasons given for these tensions between neighbouring communities – including boundary disputes, the harvesting of natural resources and issues of the legitimacy of particular traditional authorities – cattle theft is one of the key reasons given. Indeed, in the case of Lusikisiki, the police records confirm this problem.

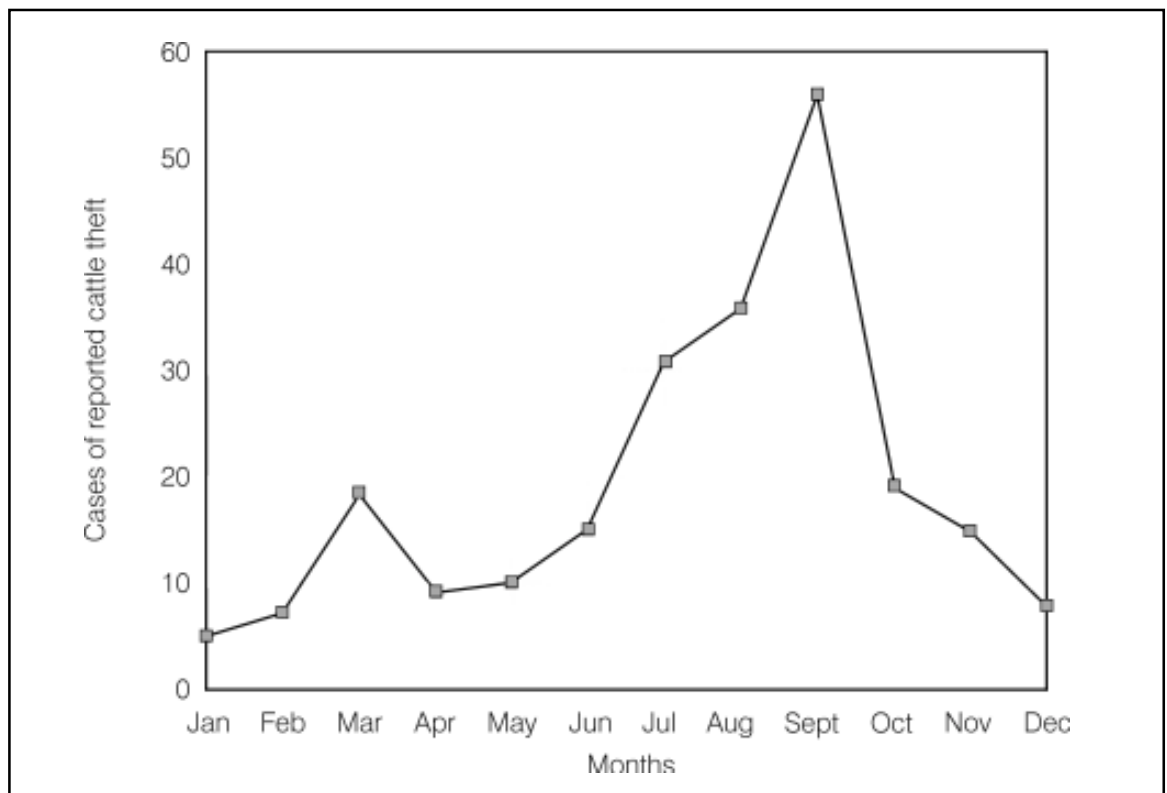
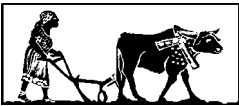
In the winter months, after the harvest, the incidence of cattle theft is very high (see Figure 5.2). This is the time when cattle are left to graze unguarded in people's fields or in the mountains. The police



say that sometimes owners can remain for three months without knowing or caring where their cattle are. In many cases, by the time the owner reports to the police, the cattle would have changed hands several times already. Another reason for the delay in reporting stolen cattle to the police is the traditional authority system in the villages. When a person suspects his or her livestock to be stolen, they must first let their family members know before the case goes to the sub-headman's (*unozithetyana*) court. If the headman and the neighbourhood people cannot solve the problem, the case goes to the headman of the administrative area. It is only after the headmen have attempted and failed to solve the problem that the police are notified. At each stage of the traditional justice system, possible suspects are brought, evidence is collected and the case can go on for weeks or months until the headmen admit that it is beyond them and recommend that the police should be notified.

The police argue that it is difficult to talk of a typical profile of a stock thief, as there are many potential villains. There are younger people who steal cattle and quickly sell them to business people in other localities. Licensed speculators who operate near the towns of Lusikisiki and Flagstaff have been suspected of accepting, for exchange, cattle without proper documentation from the people who bring them. The police contend that these speculators are aware that cattle which are not accompanied by documentation are likely to be stolen. There are also people who fit the profile of a respectable village elder who steal cattle and drive them many kilometres to other districts to friends or relatives, mainly for the purposes of exchanging them for other cattle. The police argue that this second group is very difficult to prosecute, as the livestock is rarely found to serve as evidence.

However, probably the most complicating thing of all is the emergence of vigilante groups acting against cattle theft. In



**Figure 5.2: Cases of stolen cattle reported to the police in 1999**

(Source: police records in Flagstaff, Stock Theft Division)

other areas, these groups are multi-purpose, serving as a burial association and so forth, for migrants in the urban areas. Back in the rural areas, these people support each other when one of them has a stock theft problem. In the district of Lusikisiki, one such group was established in 1999. This group calls itself Masifunisane Development Project. *Masifunisane* is a Xhosa word for 'let us help each other to look for it'. This particular group introduced itself to the police in Lusikisiki and Flagstaff by giving them their constitution and claiming to have been given the go-ahead by the Provincial Government in Bisho. It is not clear which department gave them this go-ahead, and the police remain unconvinced that Masifunisane is legitimate.

According to interviews conducted with villagers and police, Masifunisane is feared in all areas in which they operate. In their constitution it is stipulated that all South Africans of 18 years and older can become members. So if a member reports stolen cattle, the other members would go out at night looking for the suspects. The majority of members of Masifunisane carry guns and other dangerous weapons during these raids. Once the suspects are captured, they are tortured until they confess to their alleged crime. There are claims that the torture methods used by Masifunisane always yield a 100% confession rate. These methods range from roasting the feet of the suspect on a big fire to hanging the person in deep gorges with chains. Police in Lusikisiki and Flagstaff say they have recently received complaints from victims of torture. Claims are that the majority of these victims are innocent, while many members of Masifunisane are 'reformed' stock thieves.

Most of the cases that are investigated by the members of Masifunisane are never reported to the police. The organisation has its own ways of conducting the trial and passing judgement. It is alleged that if a person confesses to stealing one cow for instance, they must return a cow to replace the one they stole, plus three more head of cattle. Two of these cattle will go to the

person who reported a stolen cow; the third extra beast will be slaughtered and eaten by the members of Masifunisane. According to the police, there are endless feasts by the members, as there are guaranteed successes in their investigations.

Police now admit to not knowing who the real stock thieves are. They also claim that budget cuts from the province have made it difficult to conduct their own raids. But they are certain that Masifunisane has become one of the ugliest faces of rural Pondoland, and has complicated their work in dealing with cattle theft.

#### **Government development projects**

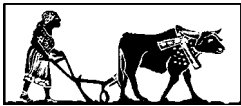
The Wild Coast area, including the district of Lusikisiki has and continues to experience a range of government-supported 'development' projects that are in conflict with cattle-raising activities. During the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many forests near certain villages were reserved, limiting the areas in which cattle could go and graze. The demarcation of Mkambati as a leper reserve in 1920, and in 1977 as a nature reserve and state farm, resulted in the loss of almost 18 000ha of land by the people of Khanyayo. During the 1960s, some areas were affected by 'betterment' planning, which again restricting freedom that people had about where their cattle could graze. More recently, it has been the introduction of the Spatial Development Initiatives (SDIs) throughout the Wild Coast (see Kepe 2000) that has unsettled cattle farmers. As part of the SDI, villagers are being encouraged by government to give land to investors for a range of projects including forestry, nature-based tourism and so forth, in return for rents, jobs and co-ownership. Subsistence farming including cattle farming is seen as a backward alternative. Indeed, with the majority of people in this area without jobs and not owning cattle, the future of cattle could be threatened for the few who still have them.

#### **Death in the gorges**

Livestock speculators in Lusikisiki and Flagstaff have booming businesses selling



cattle to residents of the Lusikisiki district. But a large number of these cattle are not destined for long-term keeping in the villages. They are to be slaughtered for traditional ceremonies related to death rituals. For any deceased person, a minimum of two beasts is slaughtered within a year of their death. One beast is slaughtered on the day of the funeral and the other a year later, when the period of mourning has come to an end. Households who only have two or three beasts when they face this death in the family are effectively depleted of their herds and often discouraged to replenish them. While no survey has been made, interviews and observations in the case-study areas reveal that no age group is spared when it comes to death, but younger people die the most. Some blame witchcraft, while others blame HIV/AIDS. So high is the rate of death in some communities there are at least three deaths every week for a community of no more than 250 households. Here cattle have become both very important and very threatened.



## Discussion

This paper began by acknowledging the historical, social and economic importance of cattle to the livelihoods of African people in South Africa. But it was also acknowledged that gradual shifts within rural society from a largely agrarian economy to a more industrialised economy are said to be taking place. National and international political and economic changes have also played a role in this de-agrarianisation of rural areas. What is argued, however, is that in the midst of all these global dynamics, the social role of livestock is still very important to many rural people. Hence the need by the state to define or re-define its role in the raising of cattle in communal areas of South Africa. In support of this is the case of the Lusikisiki district, which has about 100 000 cattle, 60 000 sheep, 80 000 goats and over 14 000 horses, donkeys and mules.

The analysis of the history of livestock keeping in rural Transkei shows that the

state has throughout the last 100 years or so played a major role in determining the dynamics of cattle farming in communal areas. As part of colonial and apartheid oppression, the state restricted movement, numbers and trading of cattle in communal areas. Much of this was done in the name of development or for the good of the nation. For instance, only certain people were given licenses to trade, while others (mostly Africans) were told how much they could sell and to whom. Dipping, while an understandable measure to combat certain diseases, soon became one of the many ways of keeping an unwelcome surveillance on African-owned livestock. Statistics collected from dipping tanks were useful in supporting the introduction of 'betterment' in certain areas.

The homeland administration did not bring relief to the tension experienced by cattle farmers in rural Transkei. Instead, most colonial or apartheid measures regarding livestock were maintained. Dipping and the permit system have continued to this day. The new government is, however, attempting to remedy the situation, by giving back the responsibility to farmers. While this notion is desirable, taxing of livestock is unlikely to be accepted without resistance by farmers. The poor communication strategy by government with regard to new livestock policies is likely to prove costly.

Meanwhile people raising cattle are faced with numerous challenges, which include poor animal healthcare, stock theft, cattle-costly death rituals that are AIDS-related, and urbanisation in general. In government's view, commercialising cattle in communal areas will solve many problems. But research and lessons from elsewhere have shown that this is not so simple. What buffers cattle raising today in rural areas is an array of factors, including state reforms (e.g. tenure reform), increasing violence, education, urbanisation and so forth. It appears that treating livestock, in particular cattle, in communal areas as an isolated challenge, may prove to be both costly and ineffective.



## Endnotes

1. This research was completed before the new demarcation of district and municipality boundaries in 2000. References to Lusikisiki district have been retained, because it does not refer to the new district council and municipality boundaries, but to a magisterial district, which has been in use for over 100 years.
2. In Lusikisiki district alone, there are about 100 000 cattle, 60 000 sheep, 80 000 goats and over 14 000 horses, donkeys and mules.
3. See Leach et al. 1997 and Kepe 1997.
4. The district has 38 demarcated forests (Cawe 1999) and numerous smaller patches, classed as headmen's forests.
5. Other districts of eastern Pondoland are Flagstaff, Bizana and Ntabankulu.
6. Interview with Nyawuza, Ntlavukazi village, 05/01/00.
7. Cape Archives – CMT 3/1249 (16/09/12).
8. Umtata Archives – File 104.
9. Cape Archives – CMT 3/1544 (29/09/01).
10. Umtata Archives – File 104.
11. The author would like to thank Mr Gwababa of the Livestock Office in Umtata; Dr Kasule and Mr D Fodo of the Lusikisiki office and Dr Lwanga-Iga in Bisho.
12. This could perhaps explain why the provincial Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs Mr Max Mamase, in his address to Red Meat Producers on September 17, 1998, quoted 1996 statistics of cattle as the latest available.
13. Interview with livestock farmers in Ndengane village, Lambasi area, Lusikisiki – 09/11/1999.
14. *Ukufuyisa* is used in Pondoland, while *ukuphawulela* (to put your own mark) is used in the rest of the Xhosa-speaking areas.
15. This is also referred to as *ukubusa* or *inqoma*.
16. Most of the information here is based on interviews conducted in Lusikisiki with Captains Matha and Mdidi of the South African Police Services, and with Inspector Govuzela in Flagstaff, on

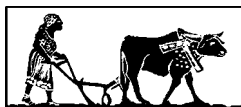
06/01/00. Inspector Govuzela was also helpful in making statistics used in Figure 5.2 available.

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# Chapter 6:

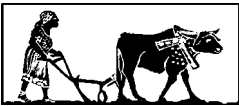
## The social and economic structure of livestock production systems in Maluti district

Zolile Ntshona and Stephen Turner<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

#### Livestock in communal areas

It is not easy to identify clear South African policy for rural and agricultural development in the communal areas or former 'homelands'. However, by their words, actions and omissions, policy-makers and civil servants at national, provincial and local levels show perceptions of livestock production in such areas that have been common in Africa's 'development' experience.



They tend to assume that Africans in areas like the former Transkei are economically irrational, putting sheer numbers of livestock owned ahead of any other motives such as production or income maximisation. Consequently, they often believe that livestock owners in the communal areas have no market orientation, and are not interested in selling their animals. They suppose that these owners, therefore, have little interest in optimising the condition of their stock through supplementary feeding or veterinary care. All these perceptions lead many in South Africa to distinguish between a 'commercial' livestock sector on the largely white-owned private farms, and a 'communal' sector where commercial motives and behaviour do not apply and where livestock care and services are consequently of little interest. This paper tests these arguments with reference to data from fieldwork undertaken in a communal area of the Eastern Cape.

People in communal areas invest in livestock for a variety of reasons. Because of low market off-take of livestock from communal areas (Tapson 1990), and because outsiders tend to measure livestock productivity only in terms of meat output (Scoones 1990), the important and multiple roles that livestock play in these areas are often overlooked (Hatch 1996).

Hatch found that the livestock sector in KwaZulu-Natal, and the role of livestock in household livelihoods, were poorly understood. He argued that the outside perception of:

*cattle ownership under communal tenure ranges from the concept of a 'cattle complex' (Schneider, 1957) or private unreason, which suggests that cattle owners act irrationally and attach importance to simply holding stock, to the 'tragedy of the commons' notion (Hardin, 1968) or social unreason, which holds that resource degradation is the invari-*

*able outcome of a communal land tenure. These perceptions are due in part to fundamental differences in objectives of holding stock. Livestock in the commercial sector are regarded primarily as a source of income, while their role in communal areas incorporates both an income and a wealth function. (Hatch 1996:77)*

As Tapson (1990) shows, livestock make many valuable contributions to communal area livelihoods. He argues that cattle in KwaZulu-Natal comprise an array of high-value goods in the household economy, and that this explains the behaviour of livestock owners. Livestock in most rural areas are kept for numerous reasons including milk, sales, investment, savings, feasts and ceremonies, bridewealth, meat and draught power. Studies have also revealed that, per unit area, livestock in communal areas generate more benefits than those on commercial farms (Hatch 1996, citing Abel, De Ridder & Wagenaar 1986; Barrett 1992; Scoones 1992; Abel 1993). Communal graziers are seen as acting rationally, though not necessarily in the sense of profit maximisation (Vink & Van Zyl 1991, cited in Hatch 1996).

This paper seeks to unravel some of these dynamics, with special reference to the multiplicity of benefits derived from livestock in a communal area of the Eastern Cape. The focus is mainly on cattle, but reference is made also to sheep and goats.

### Maluti district

The fieldwork on which this paper is based was done in Maluti district. Maluti district is located in the former Transkei area of the Eastern Cape, bordering Lesotho and KwaZulu-Natal (see Map 3). It is 2 219km<sup>2</sup> in extent, and in 1991 had a reported population of 160 777 (LAPC 1995). This made it one of the most populous districts in the former Transkei, and suggests a population density of 72 people per km<sup>2</sup>. The average annual rainfall in the district is 500mm. The district receives most of its rain between January and April, and during spring

A variety of land uses takes place in the district, as is shown by the estimates from the 1980s that are reproduced in the tables below.

**Table 6.1: Land use types in Maluti district, 1985**

Land use type	Hectares
Arable land	80 640
Grazing	89 318
Community gardens	4 076
Home gardens	217
Forestry	835
Woodlots	14 000
Nature conservation	183
Non-agricultural land	32 622

Source: LAPC (1995).

**Table 6.2: Land use patterns in Maluti district, 1989/90**

Land use patterns	%
Arable land	18.0
Grazing	75.2
Forestry	0.4
Other	6.4

Source: LAPC (1995).



**Table 6.3: Estimated land use potential in Maluti district, 1985**

Estimated potential land use type	Hectares
Arable land	40 000
Forestry	1 000
Woodlots	2 000
Grazing	175 601
Conservation	
Non-agricultural	
Private commercial farming	3 290

Source: LAPC (1995).

A limited amount of infrastructure for the livestock sector was built in the district by the apartheid administration. There were stock sale pens at Tsitsong, Queen's Mercy, Ongeluksnek, Nyaniso and Mzongwana. Like much other infrastructure, livestock facilities have deteriorated during the 1990s. There were four shearing sheds in the district in 1987, but only two in 1991 and 1994. This is symptomatic of the decline in services to communal area livestock producers that has taken place during the 1990s.

Like most people in the communal areas of South Africa, the population of the former Transkei build their livelihoods from a variety of activities. Sources of income include salaries, remittances and pensions. In the past, remittances have been the largest source of income, but this may be changing as migrant labour opportunities dwindle.

#### Field research areas

Fieldwork was carried out in three administrative areas of Maluti district. Within these, three villages were selected. These were pilot communities for the Community-Based Land Management (CBLM) programme carried out from 1997 to 2000 by the Environmental and Development Agency Trust (EDA), a non-governmental organisation that was active in the Eastern Cape, Gauteng and Northern Province. This research was carried out in collaboration with EDA, which aimed to promote sustainable livelihoods and to enhance natural resource management in the district. The three CBLM pilot areas were Madlangala, Mvenyane and Mkemane. As can be seen from Table 6.4, Mkemane uses a larger proportion of its area for grazing



than the other two villages. It also has a much larger territory than the others.

Maluti district comprises a total of 25 administrative areas. Mvenyane is situated in the Kaka administrative area. Mvenyane is about 17 km south-west of Cedarville. It contains 12 wards. With the help of EDA, a survey was conducted in Magxeni ward.

Madlangala has four wards, of which two contain about 100 households and the other two about 50 households. This area is very close to the southern border of Lesotho. Like most parts of the district, Madlangala has no electricity or telecommunications.

Mkemane is where the most detailed fieldwork was done (see below). It is located about 70km from Matatiele and a similar distance from Mount Frere. It is named after the Mkemane river, which passes certain villages that constitute the Ludidi administrative area. Initial scoping work for the CBLM programme showed that, unlike the people of Mvenyane and Madlangala, Mkemane residents ranked livestock sales as their most important source of income. That, and the extent of its grazing areas, led to the choice of Mkemane as the site of detailed investigations.

#### Methods used

Data for this study were collected from four sources:

- The office of the provincial Department of Agriculture in Umtata provided livestock data for the former Transkei.
- An auctioneer in Cedarville, a commercial farming area close to Mkemane and Mvenyane, was interviewed. The information provided by this branch of

Table 6.4: Land uses in CBLM pilot areas (hectares)

Land use	Madlangala	Mvenyane	Mkemane
Grazing	1 221	2 109	12 270
Residential	233	864	629
Arable	184	542	2 194

Source: Maluti District Agricultural Office.

Stock Owners' Co-operative Ltd. was most helpful in understanding marketing off-take of livestock in Maluti district.

- A survey of livestock owners in the three CBLM pilot areas was carried out. A total of 25 households were interviewed, using a short, structured questionnaire on cattle numbers, health and production.
- This information is supplemented by detailed research data gathered in the course of an M.Phil study in the Mkemane area (Ntshona forthcoming). A variety of research methods were used in Mkemane. These included the

use of various participatory rural appraisal (PRA) tools as well as a structured questionnaire. Using PRA methods, people in Mkemane ranked all the households in the village according to perceived household poverty levels. Some of the data below are categorised according to these poverty rankings.

## Livestock numbers

### Recent data

As is so often the case, the available data on livestock numbers in Maluti district are incomplete and apparently erratic. All the numbers presented here must, therefore, be treated with caution.

Table 6.5: Numbers of cattle in Maluti district, 1904–1998/99

Year	Cattle	Year	Cattle
1904	45 904	1956/57	67 242
1905–1910	No data	1957/58	66 333
1911	70 252	1958/59	68 702
1912–1921	No data	1959/60	59 505
1922/23	44 920	1960/61	66 513
1923/24	54 667	1961/62	69 385
1924/25	57 141	1962/63	70 862
1925/26	59 190	1964–1977	No data
1926/27	59 570	1978	75 168
1927/28	60 160	1979	78 766
1928/29	65 768	1980	78 884
1929/30	62 890	1981	79 290
1931/32	No data	1982	76 914
1933/34	47 294	1983	78 037
1934/35	48 309	1984	67 460
1935/36	50 138	1985/86	No data
1936/37	56 860	1987	76 768
1937/38	57 477	1988	75 771
1938/39	61 155	1989	81 663
1940–1944	No data	1990	79 685
1945/46	66 469	1991/92	No data
1946/47	61 845	1993	79 123
1947/48	72 940	1994	79 628
1949–1953	No data	1995/96	84 008
1954/55	58 092	1997/98	84 502
1955/56	66 288	1998/99	84 008

Source: Department of Agriculture, Umtata; Muller & Mpela 1987.



Data collated by the Land and Agriculture Policy Centre (LAPC) in the mid-1990s suggest that there were 106 294 large stock units (LSUs) in Maluti district, representing 0.84ha of grazing land per LSU. The LAPC report (1995) stated that the appropriate number of livestock for the district, given the calculated carrying capacity, was 66 819, or 63% of the actual number. However, the report does not explain how this carrying capacity was calculated, and the concept of carrying capacity has come under increasingly critical scrutiny in recent years. It is at least clear that there is a big gap between scientific calculations of what is appropriate and what is actually practised by local stock owners.

#### Trends during the 20<sup>th</sup> century

The Department of Agriculture office in Umtata was able to supply an incomplete set of estimated livestock numbers for Maluti district, dating from 1904. These figures included the categories 'Natives in European farms', 'Europeans', 'Natives in total' and 'Natives in location'. We have assumed that the 'Natives in location' data

are the ones to use for communal areas like Maluti district. A second source of data, covering the period 1910–1975, is Muller & Mpela (1987).

Table 6.5 and Figure 6.1 clearly show the erratic character of the data across the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Overall, they indicate a substantial rise in cattle numbers. This can in part be attributed to the increasing human population and its dependence on cattle; to breeding improvements during the period of 'betterment'; and to the opportunities for livestock acquisition that were afforded by migrant labour remittances. These remittances are now declining, which may be one reason why many commentators believe that cattle numbers are now growing more slowly or will actually start to decline. Other problems that may contribute to slower growth or a decline in the district cattle herd are outbreaks of redwater disease (due to a deterioration in dipping programmes); the higher cost of school fees, causing owners to sell stock; unemployment, which also prompts sales; and increasing stock theft, which discourages people from investing in cattle.

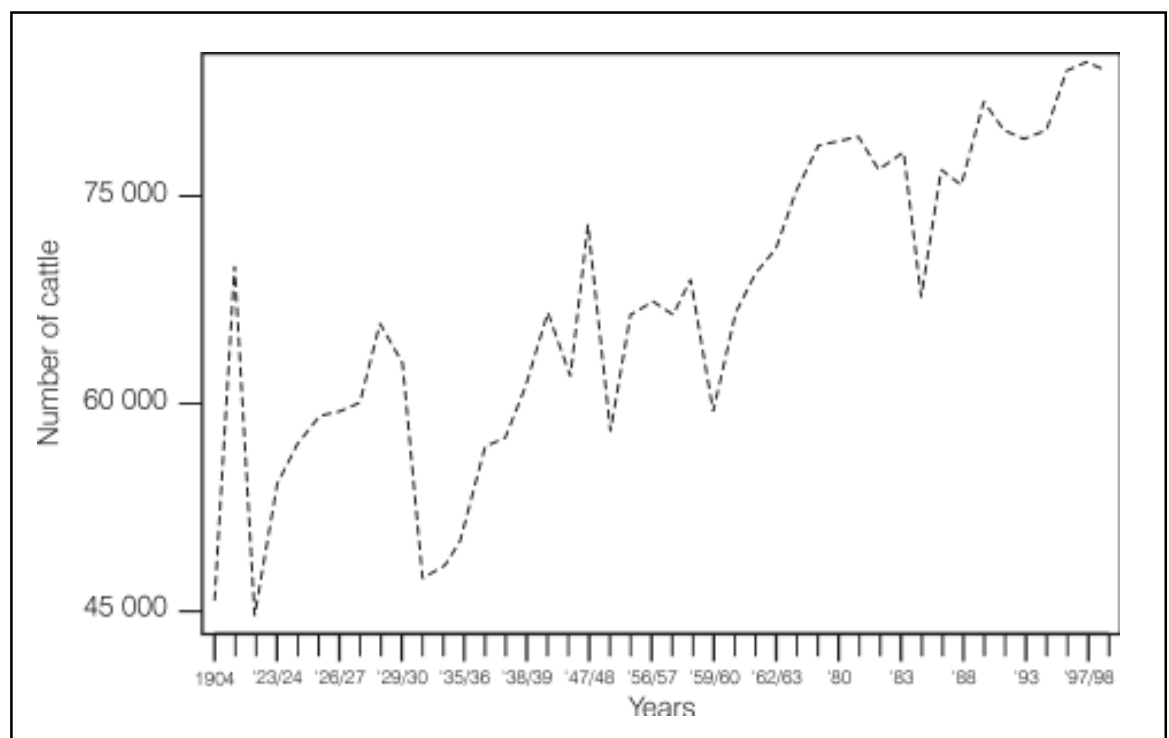
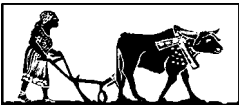


Figure 6.1: Numbers of cattle in Maluti district, 1904–1998/99



## The livestock sector in Maluti district

### The importance of livestock

In a 1997 study of Maluti district, Cousins discovered a range of reasons for livestock keeping. 63% of the sample interviewed said that they used them for ploughing. 25% referred to slaughtering livestock for meat. 63% mentioned milk production. All respondents mentioned the possibility of selling livestock, while 25% referred to the savings and investment function of the animals. The reasons for selling livestock that people in Maluti district mentioned included generating cash for household consumption purposes (53%); the fact that livestock keeping is a business (47%); the disposal of old stock and the purchase of young animals (30%); meeting urgent cash needs (12%); and other reasons such as averting loss to stock theft (30%) (Cousins 1997:40).

The importance of livestock keeping varies from person to person. Some people's enthusiasm for livestock production is inspired by what they see being done on commercial farms. The number and condition of the cattle on these private farms motivates many people in the communal areas to try to emulate this mode of production. Agricultural extension officers and the Eastern Cape Emerging Redmeat Producers' Organisation also encourage people to farm 'commercially', although the existing livestock production systems of communal area residents incorporate many commercial elements. Many people feel that these commercial motives were more strongly supported under the 'betterment' programme of agricultural planning and extension that was imposed by the apartheid authorities, and are keen to see such services provided to them again.

Overall, cattle make many contributions to communal area livelihoods. People use them for milk, draught power, meat, sales, investment and savings, cultural and aesthetic purposes. Interviews in the three CBLM pilot areas ranked the reasons for cattle keeping as follows:

**Table 6.6: Reasons for keeping cattle in CBLM pilot areas, Maluti district**

Reasons people keep cattle	%
Slaughter for feasts and ceremonies	92
Savings	92
Draught power	92
Meat ( <i>ukugugisa</i> )	80
Ritual slaughter	76
Milk	76
Bridewealth/ <i>lobola</i>	72
Sales	56
Aesthetic value <sup>2</sup>	40

n=25

### Home consumption

Home consumption of livestock in Maluti district includes slaughtering for feasts and ceremonies, some of which combine social, cultural and economic functions.

*Ukugugisa* (literally, 'to cause ageing') is the slaughter of old cattle, and is one form of home consumption. The various types of home consumption are most common in December, when migrant labourers are home from work and the schools are closed.

Slaughter of cattle for home consumption is not common. About 80% of respondents in the three CBLM pilot villages said that they mainly do so when the animals are old (*ukugugisa*). This is largely because cattle perform so many important economic functions while they are alive, even if they are not marketed.

### Marketing

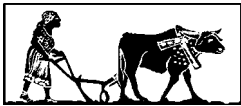
The Cedarville auctioneers sold about 400 cattle from neighbouring communal areas in 1999. The animals came from Maluti and nearby Mount Fletcher districts. Our informant said that they used to sell thousands of cattle from these areas. Speculators used to play a major role, but are no longer so prominent because there is much less stock on offer. The auctioneer told us that the size of the livestock offered for sale has declined. Prices vary with condi-



tion and market demand. The sellers include both large herd owners and people with only one or two head. Sales through the auctioneers seem to be mainly prompted by urgent cash needs, and are not seasonal.

In Mvenyane, cattle numbers are low and people are unwilling to sell unless they badly need money. Some sell when their animals are old and have less value for other economic functions in the household. In Madlangala, increasing stock theft has encouraged many people to sell their animals, although some people are trying to hold on to their small herds because of their important role in their livelihoods. In Mkemane, there is competition for milk sales between local cow owners and nearby commercial farmers. The latter, who sell milk along the road to Mkemane that passes through their area, offer lower prices than village milk producers.

A common transaction in Mkemane is the exchange of cattle without payment, or with only small amounts of money changing hands. It is common for people to exchange cows for beasts that can be used for feasts and ceremonies.



### Cultural uses

People ascribe great value to the cultural uses of their livestock. Ancestor worship and other activities perceived necessary by local clans are taken very seriously. A case-study from Mkemane village shows how important cattle are for the process of initiation. Large numbers of cattle, sheep and goats are consumed in December and January when the schools are closed and initiates go for circumcision.

Hlubi and Sotho people are dominant in the CBLM pilot areas. Hlubis and Xhosas are based mostly in Mvenyane and Mkemane, while the Sotho are mainly dominant in Madlangala. Ethnic differences are reflected in the ways these groups value livestock. Unlike the Xhosas, the Hlubis and Sothos go to the initiation school in large numbers (usually several dozen at a time). The parents of each initiate contribute the equivalent of almost half a cow in goats towards the food

supplies that will be consumed during the initiation period. Each of the initiates wears a tanned cowhide at the initiation school. For the 28 initiates that went for initiation in December 1999, for example, that meant that 28 cowhides had to be procured. When the boys return from the initiation school, they accompany one another to their respective homes, where their fathers usually welcome them with a cow. If no cow is available for the welcome, a sheep or goat is used. The father shows the cow to the young man while uttering a few words of welcome. These feasts happen mainly during December and January and are attended by many village residents.

### Herd and range management

In Mkemane, it is very rare to kraal cattle. The only cattle that are kraaled are those that have recently given birth. People let their cattle graze in the mountains, but it is the duty of the owner to check whether his/her animals are still within the area. This happens mainly when a dipping day is imminent or when the owner needs to make some productive use of the animals.

People believe that there are benefits from not herding livestock. They say that the condition of both the animals and the pasture improve in this way. When an animal that has been lost for a couple of days is recovered, they say, its condition will have improved significantly. From the environmental perspective, not kraaling prevents stock from creating trails towards the kraal that can lead to soil erosion.

Nevertheless, people in the area are nostalgic for the 'betterment' scheme, whose fencing of the rangeland into camps collapsed long ago. They claim that if the scheme or something like it could be reintroduced, the management and condition of the rangelands would improve, thus enhancing their livelihoods. They see proper range management as an opportunity for more investment in livestock production. While some people are sceptical about livestock production because of the many problems that can arise, many continue to harvest benefits from the sector

despite these difficulties. Although people do not approve of culling, they are concerned about the condition of the rangelands and the condition of their animals.

### Problems in the sector

#### Disease

Disease has always been a problem for livestock producers in Maluti district. In the 1950s, prominent diseases were East Coast Fever and anthrax. In the 1970s, redwater and gall sickness (*inyongo*) caused problems for cattle owners. In the 1990s, redwater was exacerbated by the lack of dipping chemicals from government, due to budgetary constraints. Rabies was also a problem, although veterinarians believe that it is only people's ignorance and resistance that prevent them from overcoming it (Maluti District Veterinary Office, pers. comm. 1999).

In Mvenyane, 70% of respondents reported that redwater disease was a

problem. This disease, known locally as *umbendeni*, is tick-related. There have been several outbreaks in recent years because the government does not provide dipping chemicals as it did before 1994.

#### Theft

As in many other parts of South Africa, stock theft is rife in Maluti district. It is a growing disincentive to livestock production. In Madlangala (close to the Lesotho border, where the problem is worst), there were 1 300 head of cattle in 1997. In 1999 there were only 500, including calves.

### The benefits and costs of livestock production: Two case-studies

The matters dealt with above suggest the many contributions that livestock make to livelihoods in Maluti district, but also hint at some of the costs and problems that afflict livestock owners. The case-study below sums up the situation for one household in the district. This is a household that is heavily involved in livestock production.

#### Case-study one

This household head has 32 cattle, 15 goats and 80 sheep. The number of his cattle has decreased. His goat holdings have increased, on the other hand, and he has had mixed experience with sheep.

This household keeps cattle for meat, hides, draught power, cultural purposes and income generation through sales. They keep goats for meat, hides, milk, cultural purposes and sales. Sheep are kept for meat, wool and sales. In the past, he tried to improve his livestock by introducing commercial bulls to his cows.

Stock	Year				
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
<b>Cattle</b>	3 stolen	2 died	1 died, 1 stolen	1 died	4 sold
<b>Goats</b>		4 gave birth	4 gave birth 1 died	6 gave birth, 3 died	8 gave birth,
<b>Sheep</b>	35 gave birth, 15 lambs died	40 gave birth, 25 lambs died	40 gave birth, 35 lambs died	35 gave birth, 32 lambs died	37 gave birth, 7 lambs died, 10 sheep sold

The household head said that he sold livestock for the following reasons:

- to get money to buy livestock vaccines;
- to buy young cows and commercial bulls; and
- to buy seeds and fertiliser.



### Case-study one (continued)

He sells livestock to local people when they are needed for occasions like weddings and funerals. He also sells at auctions. His recent income from livestock sales is:

1996	R750 (sale of 5 sheep)
1997	R1 500 (sale of 1 cow)
1998	R1 600 (sale of 8 sheep)
1999	R2 000 (sale of 10 sheep) R6 000 (sale of 4 cows)

He has many problems with livestock diseases, including:

1995	Sheep: <i>ibhula</i> (shedding of the skin) and <i>urudo</i> (diarrhoea) Cattle: <i>umbendeni</i> (redwater), foot rot, ticks Goats: <i>ibhula</i> , <i>isiboko</i> (bottlejaw) and <i>ukuphunza</i> (miscarriage)
1996	Sheep: blue tongue, <i>ibhula</i> , <i>iintshulube</i> (worms), <i>urudo</i> , <i>ukuphunza</i> Cattle: <i>umbendeni</i> , ticks
1997	Sheep: <i>iintshulube</i> , <i>urudo</i> , pulp kidney, blue tongue, <i>ibhula</i>
1998	Sheep: <i>iintshulube</i> , <i>urudo</i> , pulp kidney, blue tongue, <i>ibhula</i>
1999	Sheep: <i>iintshulube</i> , <i>urudo</i> , pulp kidney, blue tongue, <i>ibhula</i> Cattle: <i>umbendeni</i> , foot rot Goats: <i>iintshulube</i> , blue tongue, <i>ukhwekhwe</i> (mange), <i>urudo</i>

In recent years the household has spent the following amounts on livestock vaccine and feed:

	Vaccine (R)	Feed (R)
1995	750	300
1996	800	300
1997	900	380
1998		450
1999	1 900	500



The household's cows produce 15 litres of milk per day, which is not sold but used for family consumption. They also consume goat milk and sell goat hides. The household head once sold wool in Butterworth, but in recent years he has sold to the BKB organisation. Income from wool has been:

1995	R350
1996	R290
1997	R400
1998	R350

The second case-study also refers to a household with substantial numbers of livestock, although they are not quite on the scale of the first case-study and do not include sheep.

Both case-studies describe households that take livestock production seriously in order to achieve multiple economic and some cultural goals. Both owners strive towards professional management of their animals

and undertake livestock marketing when this is required within their broader livelihood and herd management strategies. It is clearly wrong to suppose that communal area stock owners like these are completely outside the commercial sector, or that their only motive is the cultural desirability of possessing large numbers of animals. We turn now to more detailed evidence from one village in which detailed research was done.

### Case-study two

This household head owns 13 cattle, 22 goats and no sheep. Since 1995 his holdings of cattle have been increasing. In that year, one of his cows gave birth in the mountains. In 1996, he bought a cow from a white shop owner. He expected it to mate immediately, but that did not happen. In 1998 he wanted to slaughter it for his daughter's wedding, but then found that it was about to give birth. In 1999, it was one of four of his cows that had calves. Another was the one that had earlier given birth in the mountains, and the other two were cows that he had received as bridewealth from his son-in-law.

He keeps cattle for draught power (pulling fuel wood home, ploughing and harvesting tasks); milk for home consumption; sales in times of difficulty; and the production of hides. He sells hides or uses them to make leather ropes. His commercial dairy cow gives him five litres of milk a day, and his other indigenous breeds 3.5 litres. He also gets manure from keeping cattle, and uses it during the planting season. Fear of stock theft stimulates him to sell cattle.

Since 1995, the number of his goats has increased too. He puts this down to proper management and inoculation. He keeps goats for milk, meat, skins, cultural uses and sales in times of difficulty. In the past, he tried to improve his goats by buying commercial animals, which are larger. In 1995 he sold three goats and received R1 200.

He has spent R300 per year since 1995 on inoculating his livestock. They were mainly troubled by worms. He has also spent almost R2 500 on livestock feed between 1995 and 1999.

## The livestock sector in Mkemane village

### The importance of livestock

In Mkemane, data were collected from 58 randomly sampled households in 1998–1999 (Ntshona, forthcoming). These data again show the many reasons why people keep livestock, and clearly disprove the notion that they do so simply for the sake of owning large numbers of animals. In Mkemane, 43% of the sample households own cattle. 10% have sheep, and 38% own goats.

As shown in Table 6.7, cattle are the most common form of livestock owned in Mkemane. Savings, daily subsistence in the form of milk, draught power, slaughter for feasts and ceremonies and cultural uses were the most usual reasons why people said they own cattle. Slaughter for feasts and ceremonies is distinguished from 'ritual slaughter'. The latter (*amasiko*) were explained to mean things like rituals, and feasts and ceremonies were taken as other

activities not in honour of the ancestors. The use of livestock for meat is taken in Mkemane to mean the slaughter of an old cow (*ukugugisa*) that does not have a market value. People would never slaughter a cow that is not old for meat, except for a major ceremony or feast. In many households, sheep would occasionally be slaughtered.

Reasons for keeping livestock were widely distributed among all owners, with the exception of goats. For these animals, cashmere and mohair production and sales of goats were the least popular reasons for ownership. Cashmere production was introduced to the area by agricultural extension officers. The few who managed to produce a little did not get their money back. Since then, people have been reluctant to try it again. No households have the angora goats that produce mohair.

Overall, it can be seen that economic reasons are the predominant motives for livestock keeping in this communal area. The frequent mention of livestock having a



**Table 6.7: Reasons for keeping livestock in Mkwemane**

Reasons people keep livestock	% of households with this type of stock that indicated 'yes'	% of households with this type of stock that indicated 'no'
<b>Cattle (43% of households own cattle)</b>		
Draught power	80	20
Ritual slaughter	80	20
Savings	76	24
Milk	68	32
Slaughter for feasts and ceremonies	52	48
Meat	32	68
Bridewealth	40	60
Aesthetic value	36	64
Sales	16	84
<b>Sheep (10% of households own sheep)</b>		
Savings	100	0
Wool	100	0
Manure	100	0
Meat	100	0
Sales	67	33
Slaughter for feasts and ceremonies	67	33
Ritual slaughter	67	33
<b>Goats (38% of households own goats)</b>		
Savings	91	9
Ritual slaughter	91	9
Manure	82	18
Meat	68	32
Slaughter for feasts and ceremonies	41	59
Sales	23	77
Cashmere	0	100
Mohair	0	100



'savings' function is particularly notable. Cultural reasons are not insignificant, and some cattle owners agree that they have an 'aesthetic' motive for keeping these animals.

### Livestock and livelihoods

It is useful to look at the distribution of livestock ownership across the different types of livelihood that predominate in Mkwemane. Table 6.8 does this with reference to the main source of livelihood on which each sample household said it depended.

It is interesting that the ownership of cattle is distributed across all but three of the principal source of livelihood categories shown in Table 6.8. Goat ownership is also quite widespread. It is important to note that this is a small sample. For example, there is only one taxi owner in the sample, out of the total of three in Mkwemane.

We now show the distribution of different sizes of holdings of cattle across the various main source of livelihood categories. Table 6.9, which includes only those households that own cattle, shows that all those whose main source of livelihood is

**Table 6.8: Livestock ownership and principal sources of livelihood in Mkekane**

Main source of livelihood	% of households with livestock					
	Sheep (%)		Cattle (%)		Goats (%)	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Pension	81	19	69	31	63	37
Piece jobs	100	0	85	15	77	23
Remittances	100	0	54	46	77	23
Kin dependency	100	0	100	0	100	0
Herding livestock	100	0	100	0	100	0
Herbalist	100	0	0	100	0	100
Unemployment Insurance Fund	100	0	0	100	0	100
Subsistence agriculture	60	40	20	80	40	60
Dead husband's pension	100	0	0	100	100	0
Early pension	100	0	0	100	0	100
Spaza	100	0	0	100	0	100
Combination of natural resources & remittances	100	0	100	0	100	0
Specific skill	100	0	0	100	0	100
Local security guard	100	0	0	100	0	100
Taxi owner	0	100	0	100	0	100

**Table 6.9: Cattle ownership and principal sources of livelihood in Mkekane**

Main source of livelihood	% of households owning cattle by herd size					Total
	1-5	6-10	11-15	21-25	>25	
Pension	60	40	0	0	0	100
Piece jobs	100	0	0	0	0	100
Remittances	50	17	17	17	0	100
Herbalist	100	0	0	0	0	100
Unemployment Insurance Fund	0	100	0	0	0	100
Subsistence agriculture	25	0	50	0	25	100
Dead husband's pension	100	0	0	0	0	100
Early pension	100	0	0	0	0	100
Spaza	100	0	0	0	0	100
Specific skill	100	0	0	0	0	100
Local security guard	100	0	0	0	0	100
Taxi owner	0	100	0	0	0	100



**Table 6.10: Sheep ownership and principal sources of livelihood in Mkekane**

Main source of livelihood	% of households owning sheep by flock size						Total
	1-5	16-20	21-25	26-30	46-50	>50	
Pension	33	0	33	33	0	0	100
Subsistence agriculture	0	50	0	0	0	50	100
Taxi owner	0	0	0	0	100	0	

piece jobs have between one and five animals. Various other categories fall into this group with comparatively small holdings of cattle, including herbalists and households that mainly depend on *spaza* shops or employment as security guards. Larger holdings of cattle are restricted to households who said that their main source of livelihood was 'subsistence' agriculture or remittances.

The ownership of sheep is much more narrowly distributed, and apparently restricted to households that are somewhat better off.

Goats, on the other hand, are more widely distributed among Mkemane households (Table 6.11). Poorer households, such as those whose main source of livelihood is piece jobs, also own these livestock. One third of this group have 16–20 goats. The one herbalist in the sample (out of a total of three in Mkemane) has a larger flock of goats than anyone else interviewed. Economically, it would appear that the goat is a more versatile animal than the sheep in the livelihoods of communities like Mkemane.

### Livestock and well-being

We can look further at the distribution of livestock across the economic strata of Mkemane society by referring to the four levels of well-being<sup>3</sup> into which people there categorised themselves during participatory research exercises.

Table 6.12 shows that all the households that people categorised in the 'rich' and 'upper middle' groups own cattle, whereas the majority of those categorised in the 'lower middle' and 'poor' groups do not. None of the 'poor' households owns sheep, but 14% of them have goats. All the households categorised as 'rich' have goats, as do 80% of those in the 'upper middle' group. 4% of the 'lower middle' and 19% of the 'poor' households have no livestock whatever, which was taken to mean no cattle, sheep, goats, pigs or poultry.

In the categorisation of well-being, people considered households that were receiving remittances regularly to be 'upper middle', and those that did not receive them regularly as 'poor'. The conclusion we draw from the data is that people whose main source of livelihood is remittances or subsistence agriculture have more livestock units than those who have other sources of livelihood. People who depend on activities like piece jobs, livestock herding, support from kin and a combination of natural resources and remittances tend to have no cattle.

In Mkemane, people with ten cattle are perceived to be better off than people with five cattle. As Hatch (1996) puts it, the actual number of cattle counts. However, this is not because of some abstract significance of numbers themselves. More livestock means more economic value.



Table 6.11: Goat ownership and principal sources of livelihood in Mkemane

Main source of livelihood	% of households owning goats by flock size						Total
	1–5	6–10	11–15	16–20	21–25	36–40	
Pension	33	17	50	0	0	0	100
Piece jobs	33	33	0	33	0	0	100
Remittances	33	33	0	33	0	0	100
Herbalist	0	0	0	0	0	100	100
Unemployment Insurance Fund	0	0	0	0	100	0	100
Subsistence agriculture	0	67	0	33	0	0	100
Early pension	100	0	0	0	0	0	100
<i>Spaza</i>	100	0	0	0	0	0	100
Specific skill	100	0	0	0	0	0	100
Local security guard	100	0	0	0	0	0	100
Taxi owner	0	100	0	0	0	0	100



**Table 6.12: Livestock ownership and well-being categories in Mkemane**

Levels of well-being (% of total)	Households with some livestock						Households with no livestock (%)	Total (%)
	Cattle ownership		Sheep ownership		Goat ownership			
	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)		
'Rich' (3.4%)	0	100	50	50	0	100	0	100
'Upper middle' (17.2%)	0	100	70	30	20	80	0	100
'Lower middle' (43.1%)	64	36	92	8	64	36	4	100
'Poor' (36.2%)	81	19	100	0	86	14	19	100

People with four to five cattle can plough their fields without necessarily being involved in work parties. Disposals of cattle by this group are very rare. The fewer the cattle, the less likely it is for the household to dispose of them. As the number of cattle increases, more benefits accrue. People are able to sell or exchange.

### Caring for livestock

The comparative prosperity that remittances may bring is now threatened by the rate of retrenchments in the formal sector. More people must contemplate a totally rural livelihood, and may be tempted to convert their capital from the formal sector into livestock, which they believe might support their livelihoods in the long run. Although this is true in some cases, diseases are a major problem. The support that government can provide through livestock health services is, therefore, an important factor. Partly because of disease

risks, the viability of livestock production as a livelihood alternative, and the corresponding commitment to sustainable natural resource management, are currently not assured.

Some households, although they own livestock, do not have the money to provide feed for their animals in winter. Most of these are categorised as 'poor' households. Only 4.8% of them bought feed in 1998, and no 'poor' household bought it in 1999. As can be seen in Table 6.13, 50% of the 'rich' bought livestock feed in both 1998 and 1999. Even for these better off households, the purchase of livestock feed does not seem to be a universal practice. In Table 6.13, levels of annual expenditure from R701 to R1 100 are not shown, because no household reported spending an amount in this range.

Expenditure on animal health is similarly concentrated among the better off

**Table 6.13: Expenditure on livestock feed by well-being categories in Mkemane**

Well-being levels	Amount spent on feed (R)														Total
	Did not buy feed		1-100		101-300		301-500		501-700		>1 100		Unknown		
	'98 %	'99 %	'98 %	'99 %	'98 %	'99 %	'98 %	'99 %	'98 %	'99 %	'98 %	'99 %	'98 %	'99 %	
'Rich'	50	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	50	0	0	100
'Upper middle'	60	50	10	0	10	20	10	20	10	10	0	0	0	0	100
'Lower middle'	88	92	4	8	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	100
'Poor'	95	100	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100

strata of Mkemane households. All those households categorised as 'rich' indicated that they had bought vaccines, while 50% of the 'upper middle' and 4% of the 'lower middle' said that they had done so. Other forms of livestock medicine can be obtained from natural resources in the area. 50% of the 'rich' and 'upper middle', 24% of the 'lower middle' and 14% of the 'poor' indicated that they had used natural resources for animal health care. Clearly, the natural resource base is providing a necessary input for livestock production that poor people cannot otherwise afford. However, we do not have data as to the comparative effectiveness of commercial livestock medicines and those based on natural resources.

Overall, the data suggest that livestock owners in Mkemane are not blind to the benefits of supplementary feeding and animal health measures. They do not practise either as intensively as 'commercial' farmers. This is partly because their livestock economy does not generate the monetary turnover that would be needed to achieve the level of inputs that their neighbours on privately owned farms maintain. It is also because stock farmers in the communal areas were able to turn to government veterinary services for many decades, but during the 1990s have found themselves largely deprived of these facilities. So far, few of them are in a position to make alternative arrangements.

### Livestock marketing

Another problem for livestock producers in places like Mkemane is the availability of market outlets. Many people struggle to sell their livestock for good returns. In many cases they have to sell for very low prices, especially when they are pressed for money. Not surprisingly, the 'rich' are earning more money from livestock sales. 50% of those who sold animals did so to local people, while the rest sold their stock in neighbouring villages, to relatives or at stock sales.

Table 6.14 shows that in 1998, 50% of the 'rich', 20% of the 'upper middle' and 4% of the 'lower middle' earned more than

R1 100 from livestock sales. Those in the two 'middle' groups did not earn that much in 1999, but the same proportion of the 'rich' did so, as did 9.5% of the 'poor'. However, the table shows that in both years, the large majority of all groups except the 'rich' did not sell livestock at all.

## Conclusion

We have presented these data from Maluti district and Mkemane village in order to test the common assumption of 'private unreason' among communal area livestock owners in South Africa. Although this is a limited data set, it supports the contrary argument that livestock keeping is a highly rational activity with a series of economic functions, as well as a number of cultural or social purposes. We will not enter here into the economic anthropology of these latter purposes. Suffice it to say that the boundaries between economic and cultural or social rationales in African livelihoods are less absolute than outsiders suppose, and that there are economic dimensions to many of the cultural practices that involve livestock in African societies.

However, it is also clear from the Maluti and Mkemane cases that livestock production in such areas faces a number of obstacles. Some are long-standing. Others are steadily becoming more severe:

- The nutritional and health conditions for livestock production are not ideal. Supplementary feeding and veterinary measures are needed to enhance the economic functions of livestock. The former is beyond the reach of most owners. The latter used to be provided mainly by government, which has now – intentionally or by default – largely withdrawn from such services.
- Like 'commercial' farmers, these communal area stock owners believe in rotational range management, ideally through a system of fenced camps of the kind imposed by the 'betterment' programme of the apartheid administration. Although they would certainly not welcome the hostile social approach of

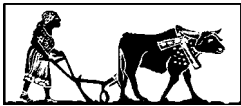


Table 6.14: Livestock sales by well-being categories in Mkekane

Well-being levels	Amount received from livestock (R)														Total	
	Did not sell livestock		1-100		101-300		301-500		501-700		>1 100		Unknown			
	'98 %	'99 %	'98 %	'99 %	'98 %	'99 %	'98 %	'99 %	'98 %	'99 %	'98 %	'99 %	'98 %	'99 %		
'Rich'	50	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	50	0	0	100
'Upper middle'	80	80	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	0	10	0	100
'Lower middle'	92	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	4	0	100
'Poor'	95.2	90.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9.5	4.8	0	100

'betterment', these farmers would be glad to see a new government intervention along similar technical lines. There is little sign yet of government providing one, or achieving any kind of practical action with regard to communal areas range management.

- Stock theft, for generations a minor irritant in South African livestock production, is now a crisis for 'commercial' and 'communal' farmers alike.
- Partly because of the multiple functions that their livestock must perform in an environment of poverty, and partly because of a lack of infrastructure, communal area stock owners find it difficult to engage profitably in marketing, or in the purchase of feed and other inputs. Market outlets and supply points are inadequate and often remote. Produce prices are low. Input prices are high.

The evidence and arguments suggest a number of conclusions for South African policy:

- The former 'homelands' are not an economic vacuum as far as livestock keeping is concerned. On the contrary, they are the site of complex economic operations in which stock owners make sophisticated economic and technical judgements about how to optimise their benefits across a series of functions. The single purpose enterprise of the 'commercial' dairy or beef farmer is simple by comparison. Policy must

begin from the assumption that livestock production in the former 'homelands' is economically sophisticated and significant.

- Whatever the current trends towards the privatisation of services in South African society, policy must recognise that the structure of the communal areas livestock economy requires the provision of adequate veterinary services by the state.
- The extension of co-operative marketing and input supply arrangements to communal area producers, which has already begun in some places, should be stimulated.
- Government should intensify its existing efforts to curtail stock theft.
- Government should engage seriously with the challenges of community-based natural resource management, within the framework of land tenure reform for the communal areas, so that livestock producers in the former 'homelands' can achieve the technical benefits that they know effective range management can generate.

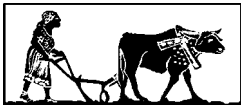
The differences between 'commercial' livestock production on privately owned farms and the practices of stock owners in the 'communal' areas are much less absolute than South African policy has assumed. 'Private unreason' is at least as hard to find among Maluti district stock farmers as it is among their 'commercial' colleagues. The profit motive is just as



strong; but it is calculated in a more complex manner across a wider set of economic functions. By intervening in the ways recommended above, policy can unlock the full realisation of the profit potential inherent in 'communal' area livestock production.

## Endnotes

- The authors thank Lungisile Ntsebeza for his invaluable contribution to the development of this paper and for his useful comments. Thanks also go to Mr Gwababa of the Umtata Veterinary Office for livestock data; Mr Ndwaiyi of the Maluti Agricultural Office for information on animal health; Mr Ndaba, Pat Dlamini, Sis Mazoz and Sis Nosizwe of EDA for organising all the meetings; Mr Chase of Stock Owners in Cedarville; Thembela Kepe for advice in the initial stages of this study and reference to relevant people; and last but not least to participants in discussions in Mkemane, Madlangala and Mvenyane villages.
- Literally means to gaze in appreciation. Because cattle in the district are seldom kraaled, people have to consistently check on the well-being of their cattle which graze in the mountains. More than that many cattle owners do this for their own self-fulfilment because cattle that stay in the mountains are healthier than those that come home every day, allowing cattle owners to aesthetically appreciate their investment.
- A wealth-ranking exercise was used to get the four levels of well-being in the study area. People gave indicators of whom they considered 'rich', 'upper middle', 'lower middle' and 'poor'.



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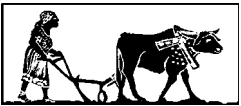
# Chapter 7:

## A review of cattle production in Peddie district

Andrew Ainslie

### Introduction

The current patterns of cattle production in Peddie district<sup>1</sup> underline the three major themes in this report: first, that African people in the Eastern Cape continue to make extensive use of cattle and cattle products. The logic they employ in this process cannot be understood *only* in terms of an economic rationality, but rather as part of the risk-averse livelihood strategies that rural people everywhere in Africa and elsewhere develop and use to survive.



Second, the high levels of economic interaction between white, commercial farmers and speculators on the one hand, and African cattle owners on the other are such that, certainly in 'border' districts such as Peddie, it makes little sense to speak of a strictly dualist agricultural economy. In fact, as will be argued below, it may be wholly counter-productive to continue to use the notion of a dual economy in describing particularly cattle production in areas like Peddie district, because of the ideological baggage this distinction carries.

Third, along with the high levels of unemployment and impoverishment experienced by the majority of rural households in districts like Peddie, it is clear that the ownership of cattle has become more concentrated, i.e. broadly the same number of cattle are increasingly owned by fewer people, with implications for the future operation of local mechanisms for wealth redistribution within communities. For this reason, the analysis in this chapter pays particular attention to

who currently owns cattle in the communal areas of Peddie district.

Given the financial and labour costs that cattle ownership entails, it is also clear that for the majority of households, such ownership now constitutes an unattainable social and economic goal. Instead, cattle ownership and production have become just one of a broad and differentiated range of potential livelihood strategies that constitute the complex *bricolage* of livelihoods that people construct to survive. As I argue below, however, what is of considerable significance to policy-makers and would-be development agents, is that the *continued* presence of cattle does provide those who own cattle with a mechanism to make a wide range of economically significant (*redistributive*) transfers within the rural setting in particular. These transfers go unnoticed and unrecorded by formal accounting procedures and are difficult to capture in 'snapshot' research surveys. For this reason, the importance and cultural relevance of cattle ownership and production for *both* the urban to rural and the

intra-rural redistribution of wealth is often undervalued.

The following case-study of Peddie district begins with a brief overview of the bio-physical attributes of the district. It then moves on to give a demographic and socio-economic profile of the district, before turning to consider cattle ownership and production in some detail. The conclusion returns to the issues alluded to above and attempts to point out a way forward for the understanding of cattle production systems in the communal areas.

## Bio-physical description

Peddie district is situated in the central part of the Eastern Cape province. During the period 1981–1994, the district formed part of the nominally ‘independent’ Ciskei Bantustan territory. The district comprises an area of 1 760km<sup>2</sup> (176 000ha) and lies between the Great Fish and Keiskamma rivers.

Peddie district is regarded as semi-arid with a summer rainfall regime. Rainfall increases from west to east, with the coastal parts of the district experiencing the highest rainfall. The latter receive some 650mm of rainfall per annum while the drier interior receives around 500mm of rain per annum. The Great Fish River valley itself receives least rain of all: at times less than 400mm per annum. (De Lange et al. 1994:5).

Rainfall variability in the district is high and greatly increases the inherent risks of dryland crop farming. This variability in rainfall and the shortage of arable land have contributed to the steady decrease in extensive arable production across the district since the 1950s. Only in the villages close to the coast, which experience higher and more reliable rainfall, do people continue to cultivate their arable land, usually to maize and vegetables.

Soils in Peddie district consist of a variety of sedimentary rocks dating back to the Karoo sequence. These soils generally have very limited dryland cropping potential, and they are shallow, highly

dispersive, erodible and exhibit a phosphorus deficiency. A particular ecological concern that has been raised over the past decades regarding Peddie district is that of accelerated soil erosion, which is considered to have affected many parts of the district, especially those areas under modified communal tenure regimes (Loxton et al. 1979; Kakembo 1997).

Much of the endemic vegetation in Peddie district consists of two main veld types: both are variants of Valley Bushveld, namely Fish River Scrub and its Southern Variation, and the grassland which is known as the False Thornveld of the Eastern Province. Acocks argued that the dense Fish River Scrub had been thinned out through over-utilisation by domestic and wild ungulates, leading to (some of) the landscape being invaded by cactus, euphorbia and unpalatable Karoo vegetation (see Palmer & Avis 1994). Fabricius and Burger (1994:5) contend that a feature of the endemic vegetation is that it is highly sensitive to grazing pressure by livestock and wild ungulates and that it is very slow to recover once a threshold amount of woody vegetation has been removed through over-utilisation.

Overall, given the real constraints to agriculture described above, it is perhaps not surprising that Peddie district has come to be regarded best suited – and then only ‘moderately’ so – to extensive livestock production from natural grazing (Steyn 1988).

## A demographic sketch of the district

In terms of ‘urban’ settlements, Peddie district consists of the town of Peddie, and the hamlets of Wesley and Hamburg. The rural hinterland comprises 35 ‘locations’ (consisting of some 66 villages) and around 60 freehold farms. The total population of the district is estimated at around 61 000 people (1996 Census).<sup>2</sup>

The town of Peddie, which comprises a resident population of about 10 000 people, has expanded to include the adjacent



settlements and villages. Nonetheless, by far the majority of the population of the district resides in the rural areas, where some opportunities continue to exist for agricultural production. This does not mean that cattle ownership by residents of Peddie town is negligible: on the contrary, large numbers of cattle utilise the grazing on the Peddie commonage and adjacent areas (see Higginbottom et al. 1995).

Given that a considerable proportion of land in the district is under nominally private forms of tenure (especially freehold land which previously constituted 'white'-held farms), with concomitant (artificially) low population densities on this land, the rural, Xhosa-speaking population is heavily concentrated in what were historically the 'reserve' areas. In terms of landholding, these areas are state-held and the settlements have modified forms of communal tenure.

Since at least the late 1940s, Peddie district has experienced high people-to-land ratios in its communal tenure areas (see Ainslie 1998:78–81). Accentuating the impact of the large and growing (through in-migration) numbers of residents was the fact that the 'reserve' areas were hemmed in by white-owned freehold farms, making expansion of the area available for settlement by the former impossible. The biggest population increase occurred in the period 1951–1985 (the African population of Peddie district nearly trebled in this period), as apartheid planners and legislators sought to confine African people in ethnic enclaves.

In Peddie district, the forced removals and resettlements that accompanied the creation and consolidation of the Ciskei Bantustan, forced thousands of families to re-establish their homes as best they could in the already overcrowded and impoverished 'reserve' areas (Mager 1992). Resettlement camps were established in Peddie district at Glenmore, Kammaskraal, Zweledinga, Bell and Bingqala, where thousands of people (4 500 people in Glenmore alone) endured years of hardship and uncertainty about their future

(SPP 1983). Many other families relocated to existing villages, where the additional overcrowding, land-hunger and general impoverishment contributed to considerable social tensions (Manona 1980).

Recent research (Ainslie et al. 1997) indicates that Peddie district exhibits many of the distinctive features of the rural Eastern Cape hinterland, viz. high indices of economic out-migration, high absenteeism of men (and women) of employable age, and the typical rural demographic profile of fairly high numbers of elderly people matched only by even larger numbers of young and very young people. Lloyd and Levin (1995) show that Peddie district has one of the lowest percentages of resident adult males (aged 20 to 64 years) in the Eastern Cape (note that these figures predate the 1996 census, but the overall percentages are probably reliable) at 10.2% of the total rural population (almost certainly indicative of the dire lack of rural job opportunities) while children (0 to 19 years) constitute 63% of the population.

### Socio-economic conditions in Peddie district

As early as 1905, Bundy (1988) argues, 'reserve' areas in the district, despite the continued efforts by Africans to engage in arable cultivation and to farm livestock, had largely become reservoirs of labour which underpinned the development of the urban industrial economy of the country. Ironically, directly adjacent to these 'reserves' resided prospering white farmers on freehold land, who would come to regard these farming areas of Peddie district as 'some of the best grazing land in the country'.

For the rural African population, the situation deteriorated steadily. The 1940s were a particularly difficult period for rural people, especially given a devastating drought in 1945, which killed more than half of the cattle and sheep and a third of the goats in the 'reserve' areas of the Ciskei, including those in Peddie district (Mager 1999). Arable production was dealt





a serious blow by the scarcity (and weakness) of surviving oxen for ploughing and by the spread of erosion, which partly resulted from desperate ploughing measures. From the late 1940s, recurrent droughts, increasing landlessness and a widespread lack of resources for investment in agriculture ensured that the majority of rural people in Peddie district would never again engage in arable production on a scale beyond the cultivation of small gardens (see Cinderby 1997; Ainslie 1998).

As the apartheid policies of the Nationalist government began to bite, political tensions in particularly 'chequerboard' districts like Peddie were heightened. 'White' farmers began to hear rumours that they would be directly affected by state plans to 'consolidate' the boundaries of the Ciskei and incidents of racial animosity began to surface more regularly in the district. What was not seriously undermined, it seems, was the long-standing practice whereby a number of local 'white' farmer-speculators, fluent in isiXhosa, were able to scour the 'reserve' areas for cattle to purchase with a view to reselling them after they had been fattened up (see Ainslie 1998; Beinart 1979). This is a practice that continues to this day (see below).

Socio-economic conditions during the decades 1970–1990 were similarly harsh for rural people, with the national economic downturn affecting those employment opportunities that were available to unskilled workers in the wider economy. Out-migration by those people who were able to command some of the necessary resources, to acquire formal training and skills and to set up homes in urban 'townships' was to have a further, negative impact on the economic situation in rural villages.

State support during this time was virtually non-existent, except for occasional public works and poverty relief programmes, which often consisted of natural resource management programmes, including soil conservation projects. State

pensions were very low: in the mid-1980s, an old age pension in the Ciskei was R46 per month (Steyn 1988). One important consequence of these developments was the entrenchment of socio-economic differentiation in the countryside. De Wet (1995:57) lists a number of possible factors that contributed to the marked degree of differentiation:

- differential access to pensions;
- the regularity and extent of migrant remittances;
- differential access to arable land and livestock;
- the length of residence in an area; and
- the extent of access to political and bureaucratic power and patronage.

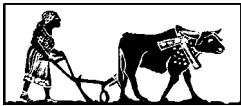
Access to political patronage was to become a real factor in districts like Peddie: the growth of civil servant job opportunities that accompanied the elaboration of the former Ciskei Bantustan administration created opportunities for upward mobility – albeit for a relatively small number of people – that were eagerly embraced, despite their political taint. With bureaucratic office, further opportunities for enrichment opened up. Senior officials, for example, were able to purchase freehold farms in districts like Peddie and Alice that had been consolidated into the Ciskei Bantustan. It is this group which forms the core of the so-called 'emerging' African commercial farmers in the district, who have access to sufficient land and grazing resources, and often to a non-farm income, either salary-based or from their other business interests, which they can invest in their livestock production enterprises.

Current local employment opportunities in the formal sector remain limited to the civil service-based jobs associated with the health care sector, the magistrate's court, police service, the Department of Agriculture and the municipality in Peddie and Hamburg towns. There is a growing number of businesses in Peddie town, including a hotel, liquor stores, general dealers, furniture retailers, butcheries, petrol stations and hardware stores, which employ a growing number of people.



However, self-created ('informal') jobs remain central to the livelihoods of many people, particularly in the transport industry and in the provision for sale of food and a wide range of other goods and services.

In rural parts of the district, entrepreneurial activities are hampered by, *inter alia*, the poor condition of the rural road and telecommunications networks and the complete absence of formal banking and credit institutions. In the informal sector, women sell goods, run crèches, shebeens, *spaza* shops, do hair-dressing and enter into service for wealthier households. Men similarly construct multiple livelihoods by undertaking the building and renovation of rural dwellings, herding livestock, repairing kraals, collecting and selling firewood and running taxi services. The overall *cash* contribution of agriculture, both of livestock and arable production, to these livelihoods is low but does increase along the coastal area of the district. It is evident that the consumption of produce from garden cultivation and of animal products continues to offset domestic cash expenditure, something which is critical for many households.



Overall, the predominantly 'subsistence' economy that has come to characterise rural Peddie district has several implications: possibly the most significant and far-reaching of these is that people in the district have invested heavily in urban networks. There exist elaborate and longstanding patterns of rural-urban migrations and interactions between rural Peddie and specific urban centres in the Eastern Cape. Patterns of circular migration between town and rural area play a critical role in providing resources in cash and in kind for the relatively impoverished rural economy. Maintaining ties with family in their rural villages provides the necessary security for urban-based workers who wish to retain the option of retiring to the rural area in future (or of falling back on this environment in case of retrenchment).

Since 1994, rural prospects have improved somewhat, though not because of

any real increase in employment opportunities. Rather, it is the considerable coverage, although not yet 100%, that has been achieved in the provision of services, principally water, electricity and telephone services to most rural villages (albeit at an ongoing cost), that has been most welcomed by rural residents.

A significant improvement to household incomes has been the steady, if consistently *below* inflation,<sup>3</sup> increases in the value of state transfers in the form of old age pensions, disability grants and child support grants. Not surprisingly, this has seen a considerable shifting of the burden of securing livelihoods for the majority of rural households onto the elderly recipients of these pensions and grants. Ainslie et al. (1997) found that fully 67% of households in their sample of 379 households in six villages in Peddie district were in receipt of *at least one* old age pension. To a lesser extent, migrant remittances are still significant for the poorest and for 'younger' households where no members are old enough to qualify for an old age pension. Rising unemployment levels in the urban sector have often translated into increased return migration of people (both men and women) to rural villages, especially where the delivery of much-needed services has taken place and where rural household members have secured access to state transfers. It is not entirely clear, however, to what extent the unemployed who are returning from urban centres are doing so with significant resources to invest.

Certainly, most villages in Peddie district now boast several conspicuously large and expensive houses that have been constructed in the past decade years or so. These are generally owned by a younger generation of people in civil service or in positions in corporate business who have unequivocally sought to invest in a rural presence. It is often the case, however, that the work commitments of this potentially influential group of people generally mean that they remain out of the village for extended periods.

## Studying cattle ownership and production

To begin to understand the distribution of cattle in the district, dipping records were collected from all the dipping foremen in the district. These veterinary section records indicate that in July 1998, there were 2 644 cattle owners in the 'reserve' areas of Peddie district. This means that the cattle-holding households constitute some 26% of the total households in the district, with the latter numbering around 10 200.

Using this dipping records data set as a sampling frame, I then stratified the population in two ways: first, the whole district was divided into four zones. The four zones correspond closely to those used by local government for planning purposes on the basis of agro-ecological and socio-demographic factors. From these four zones, four nodal settlements were selected at random as broadly representative of that zone (in some cases, dipping tanks were

the *de facto* unit of analysis selected, especially where a dipping tank was used by livestock from more than one village).<sup>4</sup>

The second stratification of the sample consisted of dividing the owners on the cattle dipping registers into different categories according to the number of cattle they owned. The four categories selected and the corresponding numbers of owners are listed in Table 7.1.

Using these proportions of numbers of cattle owned, cattle owners in the four villages were selected in such a way that the random selection of owners in each village corresponded with the proportions listed in Table 7.2. below. Where it emerged, however, during an interview that the actual numbers owned by the respondent differed from the figure noted in the dipping register, this was noted, but the interview was not terminated. In all, 48 interviews and their corresponding questionnaires could be used.

**Table 7.1: Numbers of owners in Peddie district by category of cattle owned**

Categories of ownership	No. of owners	Percentage of total
Nil cattle*	(893)	0.0
1–6 cattle	1412	53.4
7–12 cattle	691	26.1
13–20 cattle	323	12.2
21+	218	8.2
Total (owners only)	2644	~100

\* A high percentage (25%) of the people who are listed on the register no longer have any cattle, although they had owned some in the past (up to ten years previously) and remain on the register.

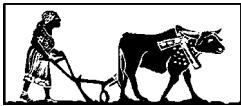
**Table 7.2: Survey respondents by number of cattle they owned**

No. of cattle	No. of owners interviewed	Percentage of total interviewed
1–6	23	48
7–12	14	29
13–20	6	12.5
21+	5	10.4
TOTAL	48	~100



Other research methods used in the study included observation at two of the regular stock sales that occurred in the district during the course of the study: one at the stock pens adjacent to Peddie town and the other at the pens close to Lover's Twist (Mansfield). At both sales, buyers were interviewed about their buying patterns and perceptions of local livestock production regimes. Furthermore, some of the records on stock sales for the period 1972–1986 were available at the offices of the Department of Agriculture and these were consulted.

Other records consulted were those of the subsidy programme for sire bulls that were leased and sold to rural people over an extended period. Additional archival research was conducted using the extensive archival material on Peddie district that is now housed in the Provincial Archives Service in King William's Town. The owners of two butcheries in the district were interviewed as was one commercial farmer, who runs a successful Bonsmara stud in Peddie.



## Problems with the methods adopted

### Accuracy of records of cattle numbers

The agricultural staff were not prepared to release their records of the numbers of cattle held by 'emerging' commercial farmers on freehold land in Peddie district, even though these are up-to-date<sup>5</sup> as a result of the very recent TB testing programme which has been carried out in the district. Of course, there is some merit in their argument and concerns, as releasing these figures would be tantamount to one's bank manager releasing one's bank balance to a third party on request. For livestock owners in the 'reserve' areas the situation is different, since their numbers are officially recorded and are in the public domain. This is a situation that most (but not all) livestock owners in the latter situation have come to accept, at least on the face of it, but that was not always the case. Indeed, a few informants declined to

provide the numbers of the goats and sheep they own, as they were well aware that these numbers are not the subject of public records and they desired to keep this information confidential.

A second issue concerning the cattle numbers captured in dipping registers is that the state of some of the actual registers viewed (as opposed to the aggregated figures that are forwarded from the dipping tank to the Peddie office of the Department of Agriculture) are a cause for concern. On the one hand, it is clear that the different individuals involved, all of whom are salaried employees of the Department, fulfil their tasks with different degrees of accuracy and care. On the other hand, everyday activities such as sales and purchases, calving and deaths, not to mention the practices of farming out cattle (particularly by migrants) and of moving one's cattle within the district (and thus to a different dipping tank) in times of drought, bedevil the retention of accurate figures and allow considerable room for 'manoeuvre' by cattle owners. This dynamic situation requires that the dipping foremen engage continuously in what both they and cattle owners may well regard as somewhat anti-social 'detective work' in order to keep abreast of changes in local cattle ownership patterns and thus to keep their registers up-to-date.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, their position in the local order is undermined when, as in recent times, the supply of dipping materials by the Department, over which they have no control, becomes erratic. This may result in cattle owners resorting to dipping their own cattle or simply not dipping at all. Quite apart from the implications for broader management of tick-borne diseases, both of these developments will detract from the immediate and future accuracy of the dipping registers kept by the dipping foremen. In the final analysis, the best that can be done is to continue to supervise the work of each of the dipping foremen in the district, but also to offer advice and retraining where necessary in order to ensure that their recording is of a

consistently high standard so as not to render the whole exercise futile.

### Categories of people interviewed

In retrospect, it is regrettable that only the less than one-third of households who currently own cattle were interviewed. The approach adopted thus has the built-in bias of only dealing with the situations and opinions of cattle owners, while those of people who do not own cattle are not reflected in the data. As a result, what is not clear from this study is whether, for instance, there will be significant numbers of newcomers to the ranks of cattle owners in future.

In terms of the broader objectives of this study, it would have been very informative to interview a sample of households who do not own cattle to find out their reasons for this. Not having interviewed any of these individuals or households, it would be unreasonable to impute any reasons they may have, but the question of what factors account for their present state and what circumstances may persuade them to again invest in cattle, remains one of considerable interest.

### Representativeness of the survey sample

48 questionnaires were used for the purposes of this analysis.<sup>7</sup> This represents a miniscule 1.8% sample of the 2 644 cattle owners in Peddie district. The results of the survey are described and discussed below, and it is argued that the sample can be taken as broadly representative of cattle owners in the 'reserve' or modified communal areas of Peddie district.<sup>8</sup> It should also serve as a useful starting point for

more directed and in-depth studies about cattle ownership in the district.

## Characterising cattle-owning households in Peddie district

The first significant feature which emerges from the survey, is that the average age of the household heads<sup>9</sup> in the survey is 61.4 years. 46% of the household heads in the survey are 65 years and older (see Table 7.3). In fact, for this category of 22 respondents (65 years and over), the average age is 71.3 years.<sup>10</sup> These figures should be seen against the backdrop of a rural demographic situation where the category 65 years old and over, for both men and women, constitutes some 8% of the rural population of Peddie district (Lloyd & Levin 1995:54,73).<sup>11</sup>

While the prevalence of cattle-owning household heads who are *particularly* advanced in age (i.e. 80 years plus) is somewhat unexpected, it is not surprising that this group should be elderly in the first instance. This is after all an established and familiar trend in terms of the demographic patterns known to characterise the rural Eastern Cape: it is typical for people in this age group, who have generally 'retired' earlier from urban-based employment, to have returned permanently to a rural village where they have, over a number of years, endeavoured to build up their herds of cattle.

Where the household head is a woman, a similar pattern is prevalent, except that she is usually an elderly widow – sometimes of long standing – who is in receipt



Table 7.3: Age distribution of household heads in the survey

Age of household head	Number of households	Percentage
Up to 40 years	7	15 *
41–50 years	5	10 *
51–64 years	12	25
65 years plus	22	46
Do not know	2	4
Total	48	100

\* rounded off to the nearest percentage point

of a pension, or she is the eldest daughter in a household in which both parents are deceased (see Table 7.4 below for the gender distribution of household heads). The advanced age profile of the household heads does not mean, however, that these cattle-owning households consist *only* of elderly people. Equally, one should not infer from this that cattle ownership is an artefact from an earlier period of more active agrarian production in Peddie. On the contrary, these are predominantly multi-generational households, which almost invariably include a number of younger people.

The average household size for the sample is 6.6 people, although given the high indices of rural-urban mobility, not all of these people are necessarily resident in the respective households at all times.<sup>12</sup> It is often these younger people (particularly boys and young men) who are responsible for the actual herding duties, including taking the cattle for dipping, for kraal repairs and other matters relating to cattle and small stock (including milking, where relevant). Where such younger people are

absent, the herding work may be contracted out to a neighbour or young herdsman in the same locality. It is thus difficult to argue that husbandry skills are being lost across the board, as the younger generation still performs much of the cattle husbandry work.

Table 7.4 indicates that only ten cases (21% of the households in the sample) volunteered that they constitute a 'female headed household'. Six of these household heads indicated that they had been widowed and had inherited cattle upon the death of their husbands. In all ten cases, the female heads indicated that they consulted their male (and sometimes female) adult children or other kin when making decisions about the management, including the sale, of these cattle. Some respondents claimed that cattle held by a widow are only nominally under her control: they insisted that she is simply 'keeping' them for the eldest son of her deceased husband, who will inherit them upon her death.

With respect to gender, the ten female (21%) headed households, the heads of which feature in each of the age groups in



**Table 7.4: Gender distribution of household heads**

Household heads by gender	Number	Percentage
Male headed households	38	79
Female headed households	10	21
Total	48	100

**Table 7.5: The educational level of household heads in the sample**

Level of education	No. of household heads	Percentage
No formal education	16	33
Sub A to Std. 1	8	17
Std. 2 to Std. 4	6	13
Std. 5 to Std. 8	8	17
Std. 9 to Std. 10	3	6
Tertiary	2	4
No response	5	10
Total	48	100

Table 7.6: Cattle holdings by age of household head

Age of household head	No. of cattle	Average no. of cattle per household
Up to 40 years	82	11.7
41–52 years	32	6.4
53–64 years	99	8.3
65 years plus	209	9.5 (7.7) <sup>15</sup>
Do not know	14	7
Total	436	9.1

Table 7.3, currently hold a total of 68 cattle, or an average of 6.8 cattle per household. These households, irrespective of age, thus hold the lowest *average* number of cattle, but this disguises the fact that four of these households have ten or more cattle, proving once again that generalisations about who owns cattle can often be misleading.

33% of the household heads in the sample have never been to school (Table 7.5 above). A further 30% have enjoyed less than seven years of formal education. Only two individuals (4% of the sample) have tertiary education and both of these people hold teaching diplomas. This sorry state of affairs is a serious indictment of the policies of the previous government and the legacy this has left, particularly in the rural areas of the country.

This lack or rather limited amount of *formal* education, together with people's experiences under apartheid, tend to underpin all manner of misunderstanding, suspicion and frustration in the mostly sporadic interactions that many of the household heads have with 'outsiders', including government officials and 'white' buyers at stock sales.<sup>13</sup>

The reality is that the experience of many rural cattle owners in dealing with officialdom in the past has been predominantly a negative one, as discussed in Chapter 1 of this report. In this respect, the cattle owners of Peddie are no different.

## Who owns cattle?

Given that we might expect the more 'senior' households to hold *more* cattle on

average, it is noticeable that no significant positive correlation between the age of the household head and the number of cattle per household was found for the whole sample. On average, the 46% of the total sample that have heads of household over 65 years of age, own 9.5 head of cattle, with only five households (10.4%) in this group currently owning 13 or more head of cattle. This is, however, slightly more than the average of 9.1 cattle per household for the entire sample. For the other 24 households (50%) for which data is available on the age of the household head, the average cattle holding is also nearly 9.5 head. Six (12.5%) of these households owned 13 or more head of cattle. However, it is only once the cattle holdings are broken down further by age of household head, as in Table 7.6, that we see more clearly their distribution across the different age groups in the sample.

As Table 7.6 indicates, it is, on average, the age group 41 to 52 years that has the least cattle per household of all the age groups in the sample.<sup>14</sup>

It is also this age category of household head that we would expect to be *least* likely to have disposable income to invest in cattle: given the stage of the life cycle at which they find themselves, they do not have access to pensions and there are likely to be pressing expenses including education, clothing of teenage children, and possibly the cost of caring for very young grandchildren, which of necessity take precedence over cattle ownership. On the other hand, the cost of these expenses



may in fact be offset primarily through the sale of cattle.

Intra-district differences certainly exist: when the average cattle holdings are plotted by village of residence it emerges that the lowest average holdings in the sample are in Peddie Extension (6.2 head per household on average) while Qeto village has the highest average (13 head per household). This is not unexpected, as the practically urban nature of the former settlement is least conducive to cattle holding, specifically with the shortage of grazing in the area and the loss of stock as a result of stock theft and road accidents. Also contributing to this low average is the fact that many of the residents of Peddie Extension have moved at least twice before settling there. Each move has almost inevitably resulted in some loss of livestock.

Quite surprisingly, it is the seven youngest household heads who have, on average, the highest number of cattle (11.7 head). Why is this so? *First*, the small sample again makes it dangerous to generalise, as these seven households hold the following cattle:

- Household 1: 2 head
- Household 2: 3 head
- Household 3: 6 head
- Household 4: 7 head
- Household 5: 7 head
- Household 6: 27 head
- Household 7: 30 head

It is obvious from the above that the last two households own by far the most cattle in this category. Significantly, the heads of both households were absent at the time of the interview as both have formal employment elsewhere.

*Second*, as Household 6 demonstrates, inheritance can largely explain why this group own cattle: for Household 6, the eight adult children of the late household head have inherited his 27 head of cattle, nine goats and 12 sheep. Two of these children work in industries in Port Elizabeth and another two are teachers in Humansdorp. The livestock are nominally 'owned' by the legitimate (but not eldest) son of the

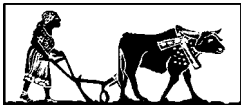
late man, but this son must take major decisions regarding the livestock only after reaching consensus with his siblings.

Household 7, however, seems exceptional: it consists of a 29-year-old man, his wife and four dependents. He is in formal employment. He owns 30 cattle and he claims not to have inherited any of these. It seems likely that he managed to build up this considerable herd on a formerly white-owned farm, prior to moving to the village of Lover's Twist. Although he has sold cattle at stock sales in the past, he claims to have no other investments or savings and is thus 'still building up his herd'.

Another issue which is addressed in the survey is that of absentee herd ownership. Only two cases of absentee owners were recorded: in the first case, the household head, who has six cattle and 15 sheep, is resident in the village and is heavily engaged in arable farming activities, as well as buying, rearing and selling chickens. He is responsible for his elder, urban-based brother's ten head of cattle and five sheep. In the second case, a man with eight head of his own also looks after the seven head of an absentee neighbour. There were cases of goats and sheep being cared for on behalf of absentee owners, but in all instances the numbers of animals involved are low. If these cases reflect what is happening generally in the district, then the 'problem' of absentee owners of livestock can hardly be said to exist in the 'reserve' areas of Peddie district. The situation on the freehold farm areas may be different.

## Securing livelihoods

As has been borne out in earlier reports (Ainslie et al. 1997), state transfers by way of old age pensions have become the lifeblood of rural people's livelihood strategies (see Table 7.7 on the following page). 61% of the households in our current sample are in receipt of one or more old age pension or disability grant. The second largest contribution in terms of livelihoods is the informal sector, where members of the households in the sample





are involved in running *izirhoxo* (village shops), raising and selling chickens, selling firewood, hawking chicken pieces, running a herbal cure business and finding employment in the taxi industry. Only seven (15%) of the heads of households in the sample are in salaried employment, but given that 61% are receiving old age pensions, this is not surprising. While only five households claimed to be in receipt of remittances from members of their family in urban centres, there are at least 17 urban-based members of the households in the sample who may be contributing to the livelihood of the household in ways that were not specified during the interview.

An interesting fact to note is the number of people who claim to sell livestock (i.e. cattle, goats, sheep and pigs): 88% of the households in the sample claim to do so as part of their multiple livelihood strategy. This is very plausible given that people readily sell chickens, pigs and small stock, such as sheep and goats. Actual sales of cattle are somewhat more circumscribed (see below).

40% of the sample (19 households) indicated that they have no savings in a bank or post office and rely on their cattle (and other stock) as their bank.

13% of the total (six households) are not in receipt of an old age pension or formal wages and really do appear to 'rely on their kraals' for their livelihoods. They characterised their strategy in the following ways:

*Our cattle are our bank.  
I have exhausted my savings, I*

*depend on my kraal.*

*I do not have savings in a bank, I save in my kraal. Cattle are the safest way to save money.*

## Sales of cattle

*Organised* stock sales for African-owned cattle are not new in Peddie district: records kept by the Department of Agriculture show that sales have been held since at least 1972, while oral testimony suggests that regular sales were taking place in the early 1950s. In 1972, sales were conducted every two months, with 445 animals offered for sale during that year. Of these, 105 animals were not sold, bringing the total that were sold to 340. Prices ranged considerably, for example, the highest price paid for an ox in December 1972 was R220, and the lowest price was R56.

During 1999, a total of 12 stock sales were organised at the two auction sites in Peddie district, namely in town and at Lover's Twist. These sales were conducted by Cape Eastern Stockowners, in co-operation with the Department of Agriculture. They were advertised well in advance, professionally conducted and supported by some six or seven 'white' farmers and speculators and one African farmer/butchery owner from Peddie.

Turning once again to the households in our sample, when asked whether they had sold any *cattle* in the past five years, 26 households (54% of the households) claimed to have sold one or more head of cattle during this time (see Table 7.8



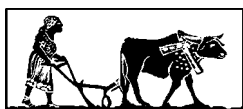
Table 7.7: Sources of household livelihood <sup>16</sup>

Source of livelihood	No. of households	Percentage of households in sample
1 pension/grant	18	38
2 old age pensions	11	23
Salaried employment	7	15
Informal sector	12	25
Remittance	5	10
Livestock sales	42	88

below). A further ten households (21% of the total) indicated that they had sold cattle in the period *prior* to the past five years.

The response of the remaining 12 (25%) households, when asked whether they had sold any cattle, was: 'not yet, we are building our herds'. This may indicate a willingness to sell at some point in the future, as ten of these households have seven or less head of cattle and may well be attempting to consolidate their holdings first.

Moreover, five of the 12 households are each in receipt of an old age pension and the heads of two others have salaried employment. They may thus not be in any desperate need to sell the few animals they have. What is not clear, though, is the threshold number of animals at which they will feel secure enough to commence selling. In a more likely scenario, they may be forced by future economic circumstances to begin to sell their cattle, quite possibly before they deem their herds to have been 'built', but, even then, in these 'distress sales', they are likely to dispose of mature cattle, i.e. unproductive cows and big oxen, first.



A *minimum* of 121 head of cattle were sold by the 26 households for which sales were recorded in this five-year period (see Table 7.8).<sup>17</sup> Sixty-two of these cattle came from of what amounted to a 'dispersal sale' upon the death of a widowed head of household (his eldest surviving offspring i.e. the new head of household, was a 36-year-old woman, who is employed as a teacher and is firmly of the opinion that 'people are selling all their cattle').

While 19% of the total sample claim to sell at both formal stock sales and to neighbours or others in the village, a significant number of the other households in the sample have strong views on where they sell their cattle (or where they would sell them in future) and why. Ten households (21%) either have negative experiences of their own to relate concerning the sale of animals at stock sales, or have never been there because, they argue, of the negative impression they have of these sales:

*I don't sell there anymore: they charged me R80 when I last sold there and I had to pay people to drive my cattle to the stokvel in Peddie ... I recently sold a young cow [to my neighbour] and got R1 500 for it; at the stokvel, I would have got R980 for the same size animal.*

*A stokvel hits me very painfully – they don't pay [there].*

*I don't want to [sell at the stokvel].*

*They manipulate prices there.*

What remains largely unstated here is that many people only sell cattle when they experience financial difficulty. In these situations, they are under pressure to liquidate a bovine asset quickly and thus in a weak position *vis-à-vis* the bidders in haggling over the price. At stock sales, many would-be sellers reject the price offered and choose to return home with the animal unsold. The difference in price sought and price offered can be surprisingly large, indicating a lack of experience in selling animals, or alternatively, that the seller is 'not hungry' and will return with the animal at another time or sell it locally.

**Table 7.8: Place and number of cattle sold in the past five years**

Place of sale	No. (and %) of households	No. of cattle sold
Village/neighbourhood	7 (15)	8+
Stock sales	8 (17)	19+
Village and stock sales	9 (19)	92+
To 'white' speculators	2 (4)	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>26 (54)</b>	<b>121+</b>

The fact that many of these people live up to 20 kilometres away from the two sites of regular stock sales in Peddie, i.e. Peddie town and Lover's Twist, means that they have incurred considerable effort and often cost in driving their cattle to the stock sale on foot in the first place, only to be disappointed by the prices offered. If they are desperate to sell and thus sell at these low prices, the experience is likely to put them off following this route in future.<sup>18</sup>

As the comments indicate, there is also dissatisfaction with – and possibly misunderstanding about – the 'deductions' made by the auctioneers for their commission (which amounts to 7% of the sale price). People expressed their displeasure that even the – for them low – price realised in the auction ring, is not the sum that the seller finally pockets after the sale. Some respondents have a political/racial angle on stock sale prices:

*The prices at the stokvel are controlled by white people.*

Certainly, there are some people who sell at stock sales more regularly and who have a more nuanced grasp of this process. They are all too aware of their disadvantaged position *vis-à-vis* the buyers<sup>19</sup> in terms of their limited information on the current state of the market and their lack of an alternative public market, but they are usually in more regular attendance at the sale, and thus more in tune with current local prices, and thus ultimately more confident about accepting or rejecting an offer for a particular animal:

*I did sell there, but the price was not good because the animals were not in good condition.*

*At the stokvel, the condition of the beast affects the price.*

*The prices at the stokvel depend on the market.*

Eleven households declared that they preferred not to sell to local people in their village or neighbourhood:

*I don't sell to local people unless they are genuine buyers.*

*I do sell locally, but if I can't get the*

*price I want, then I take it to the stokvel.*

Both of these statements suggest that a greater degree of perhaps subtle haggling is likely to occur over the price of animals offered for sale in the village. This situation may arise from the more personal nature of the sale, particularly if the buyer and seller are known to each other and perhaps have a prior and ongoing social relationship. This may allow the buyer to apply moral pressure on the seller to be generous both with the price and the terms of payment. Given that the seller probably wishes to meet some pressing need for cash through this sale, this scenario is unlikely to appeal to him/her.

### Sales to butchers, abattoirs and speculators

None of the respondents listed their making any sales to butchers in Peddie district, but an interview with a butcher in Peddie brought to light that, on average, this butcher 'reluctantly' purchases one live animal per month out of hand from private individuals in Peddie. The animal is then transported, with its health status unknown, to the abattoir in East London at some cost to the butcher. If the animal is condemned for whatever reason (for example, internal parasites), then the butcher receives no compensation and would not be able to recover the money that was paid to the seller. Not surprisingly, buying graded carcasses directly from the abattoir is a more economically prudent option.

There is a total of seven small butcheries around the district, three of which are situated in Peddie town. Some open for business only sporadically. Several are owned by 'commercial' farmers holding freehold land in the district, who slaughter their animals at the abattoir in East London and then sell the meat in their own butcheries.

At least five 'white' buyers operate independently in Peddie district on a regular basis, buying and exchanging cattle directly with rural people. Three of



these people farm in nearby Bathurst and Albany districts, and are also regular buyers at the stock sales in Peddie. It is not known what number of animals are involved in the activities of these buyers, but it is possibly as high as 80 animals/buyer per month.<sup>20</sup>

### Multiple use benefits from cattle

With respect to income to households from other cattle products, there is not a single instance of sales of (dressed) beef *per se* by the households in the sample. Many people were emphatic that cattle are never slaughtered simply to eat meat, instead people preferred to slaughter sheep for this purpose. Outside of consumption for ritual slaughter, cattle are only consumed if they die of old age or disease.

Four households listed occasional sales of sour milk or milk locally. The sums involved in milk sales, although not quantified in the survey, are likely to be small. On a 'subsistence' level, 75% of the households in the survey indicated that they milk their cows whenever possible.<sup>21</sup> No respondents in the present survey could, however, provide quantitative estimates of what this milk yield might be and, when pressed, many indicated that they in fact had no cows 'in milch' at that time.

In terms of other domestic uses of cattle, only four households (8% of the total) indicated that they make use of their cattle for draught purposes, specifically for ploughing. Two households listed the local sale of manure as a source of income from their cattle. A few respondents indicated that if they could interest someone in buying manure, they would definitely sell it. For several other respondents, especially those from Tyefu Location, kraal manure is regarded as 'belonging to the ancestors' and is expressly not used to fertilise their gardens or fields.

23 households (48% of the total) listed the sale of hides as a further source of income. Many respondents indicated that the trader who 'used to buy hides' has not been seen in the district for a long time and

that they have not been able to dispose of the hides they have accumulated. One elderly male respondent volunteered that he made and sometimes sold leather thongs locally.

### Purchases of cattle

While not much information was collected on the purchase of cattle by people in the sample, it was established that the majority of households rely on the natural increase of their existing animals in order to build their herds. They may only be tempted to purchase an animal if their existing herd does not include a fertile cow or if they wish to hold a ritual and do not have the requisite animal in their existing herd.<sup>22</sup> What did emerge is that a small proportion (4%) of the total animals they own, have been acquired through *lobola* (bridewealth) exchanges. Only five households (10% of the sample) indicated that they have acquired cattle in this way.

More substantial were the numbers of cattle acquired through inheritance: at least 87 cattle (20% of the total number of cattle owned by those in the sample)<sup>23</sup> were inherited by 21% of the households. The proportion of inherited cattle is skewed by one case of inheritance described above, in which 53 head of cattle were inherited (and then duly sold off by the children of the deceased man).

Local purchases in the village or local area do occur, but the majority of purchases are made from neighbouring 'white' and Xhosa-speaking (freehold) farmers. Steyn (1988), who conducted his research in two Peddie villages (Nyaniso and Lujiko), found that especially the rebuilding of post-drought herds was based almost entirely on purchases from 'white' farmers. Some of these farmers both sell cattle outright to people in Peddie and also exchange young cattle (often heifers) with Peddie people. These exchanges, where the farmer provides two 'tollies' in exchange for a full-grown ox, are a practice of longstanding in the area (see Ainslie 1998). One of the African commercial farmers in Peddie indicated



that he has 'a queue of local people wanting to buy cows, both heifers and mature cows'. The latter are for 'culling', i.e. ritual slaughter, and it is not uncommon to see several trucks traversing the district on a Thursday or Friday afternoon with a beast loaded on the back that has been purchased so that it can be ritually slaughtered in a village that weekend.

A further means of acquiring animals has been through the various government schemes aimed at the introduction of 'improved sires' into the 'reserve' areas. Documents in the Department of Agriculture in Peddie show that in one example of this programme (in 1992), people in Peddie were able to hire 'improved' bulls from the Ciskei Department of Agriculture and Forestry. Several cattle owners took advantage of this offer and many of these went on to buy 'subsidised sires' at reduced cost. A Nkone bull was quoted as costing between R1 000 and R1 100 at the time. Bonsmaras, bred on the Ciskei National Ranch in Peddie South, were leased and sold most frequently. It would be very instructive to get access to any documented evaluations that may have been conducted on these subsidy schemes. This is especially so in the light of the reported desire of the MEC of Agriculture and Land Affairs to destroy all bulls in communal areas that do not meet the quality standards set by his department. The owners would be compensated and rural communities would be supplied with quality sires at government expense.<sup>24</sup>

## Herd management

Herd management has several dimensions, and only two areas are of interest to us here:

- Who does the *actual work* of herding the cattle?
- What costs are people incurring in keeping cattle?

### Who does the work?

Responses to the first question are captured in Table 7.9 below. The question of who does the actual work of herding cattle is a function of the composition and structure of the household in question and thus whose labour the household commands. The household head of the cattle-owning households herds or participates in the herding of his or her cattle in 54% of the households in the sample.

Hired help comprises only eight cases or 17% of the households. With 61% of all the households in the sample in receipt of old age pensions and unemployment at high levels, there are both retired elderly men and (otherwise unemployed) young men in cattle-holding families who can take on the responsibility of herding their cattle.

Women and girls participate in herding as well, although their role is probably understated in the responses given by informants, except where the head of the household is a migrant. In these instances, it is often clear that his wife and daughters play an active role. For the elderly men in the sample, the major consideration is their physical frailty, which limits the amount of herding work they can actually do. As they



Table 7.9: Herding of cattle

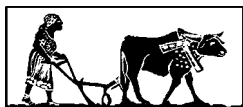
Who herds?	No. of households	Percentage
Self	21	44
Self and children	5	10
Son and other kin	13	27
Hired help	8	17
No data	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>

receive pensions, they are not particularly concerned about the opportunity costs associated with herding. But for younger men, there is an opportunity cost in being engaged in herding duties: the time spent herding could be spent more profitably by seeking a job and (possibly) earning a cash income.

### The costs of keeping cattle

In terms of what it costs to keep cattle in rural Peddie, it appears that the most expensive element is that of kraal maintenance, which is usually undertaken once a year, sometimes more frequently if a ritual is to be held in the kraal. Even so, only 19 households (40% of households) indicated that they pay cash for someone to do this task. The remaining 60% of households do the work themselves at no cost. For those who pay, this involves paying for the:

- chopping of *amahlahla* (saplings and sticks) in the forest;
- transportation of these materials by tractor or truck; and
- labour involved in the repair/rebuilding of the kraal itself.



Where payment is made for kraal maintenance, the payment varies from R20 (which seems to be a one-off token amount paid to small boys or a family member for their assistance) to R650 per annum. The average sum paid for by the 19 households for kraal maintenance is R272 per annum, which seems low, but taken as nearly R23 per month, it is a notable household expense.

The second major cost is made for the purchase of medicines and dip for cattle. There is a travel cost component here too, as people usually have to travel to King William's Town or East London to buy stock remedies, although they would ordinarily combine such trips with other consumptive activities (e.g. grocery shopping). In some villages, when the government dipping programme has lapsed on occasion, cattle-owners have pooled their resources (usually R5 per household), bought dip and dipped their own animals. Cattle owners in other villages stated that they do not incur any costs for dipping and

stock medicines, preferring to rely on the government dipping programme and assistance given by the veterinary section in the Department of Agriculture in Peddie town.

Six households indicated that they pay herdsmen to care for their cattle. The costs of hired herders varied between R50 and R200 per month, depending on what this herding involved: some owners do not kraal their cattle on a daily basis, allowing them to stay out for three days or more. The herdsman is only required to walk through the grazing area periodically during this time to check that all the cattle are still there and not in any distress. Such cattle are often only kraaled for the night before a dipping day. Other owners require their cattle to be kraaled every evening and to be herded more closely during the day. The herdsman is also required to take the cattle to the dip and ensure that they are dipped properly, and is responsible for monitoring their health more generally.

So what are the average costs incurred by cattle-keeping households in Peddie? In total, 41 households<sup>25</sup> in the sample of 48 households provided reliable data on the subject of total costs incurred. Of these 41, 11 households (i.e. 27%) indicated that they have *no costs* in respect of keeping cattle. These 11 households hold 100 head of cattle, at an average of just over nine head each, indicating that it is not simply a case of people who own only two or three animals incurring minimal cost in their maintenance. For the remaining 30 households, costs range from R5 per annum (these are people who have never incurred any costs in relation to their cattle in the past, but who have recently paid a small sum towards dipping costs) to R2 560 per annum. The total outlay incurred by these 30 households in maintaining the 258 head of cattle they own is R13 850 per annum, or an average of R54 per animal per annum. When the cattle of the other 11 households, which incur no cost in keeping their cattle, are included, then the *overall average cost of keeping cattle in Peddie drops to R39 per animal per an-*

*num, which amounts to just over R3 per animal per month* (based on data from our reduced sample of 41 households).

What this average cost *per animal per annum* does not elucidate is the highly variable costs incurred *per household*. These costs range widely between different households, partly because of the different numbers of cattle they hold, but also because of their particular circumstances, for example:

Household A is headed by a widow, Mrs M, and holds 13 cattle. Mrs M receives an old age pension and remittances from her children. With no one in her household available to herd the cattle, she pays a herdsman R200 per month to manage the cattle. The herdsman also maintains the kraal. Mrs M estimates that she spends R160 per annum on medicines and dipping material. Her annual cost to maintain her herd is thus R2 560, or some R213 monthly. Her average cost per animal is R197 per annum (or more than *R16 per animal per month*).

Household B is headed by an 84-year-old man, Mr Q. He and his wife both receive old age pensions. Like Mrs M, he holds 13 cattle (he also has six sheep). Mr Q and his son do all the herding of their cattle. He pays R300 per annum for kraal maintenance and a further R40 per annum for stock medicines and inoculations. His total annual outlay is thus R340, or just over R28 per month. His average cost per animal is a mere R26 per annum (just over *R2 per animal per month*), which is less than one-seventh of the cost that Mrs M incurs.

What emerges from this simple example is that cattle-owning households in Peddie incur highly variable costs in maintaining their cattle. Clearly, some households continue to invest a large percentage of their cash resources in the maintenance of a herd of cattle. One important implication is that, because of their considerable cash investment, rather than their investment in terms of the *absolute number of cattle held*, these people might be expected to be more sensitive to any changes initiated

from outside, in the way cattle are maintained or controlled (for example, changes in the government dipping programme, or increased grazing pressure in their area).

As mentioned above, people spend a not inconsiderable sum of money on kraal maintenance. The saplings, sticks and twigs used (mostly *acacia karoo*), do not last long and kraals need regular attention. Payment for kraal repair may well be an ongoing, 'legitimate' way of distributing wealth – and of dissipating the possible arousal of jealousies because of visible wealth discrepancies – in the villages, as it is often unemployed men who are hired to undertake this work.<sup>26</sup> A major cost is, however, the hire of a tractor and trailer or *bakkie* to transport the *amahlahla* from the forest to the homestead, often with the added pressure that a ritual is to be performed in the kraal in due course. This is a task that cannot easily be undertaken by unemployed men who, virtually by definition, do not own tractors or *bakkies*.

## Animal health issues

Veterinary services are provided in Peddie by staff of the Department of Agriculture, who work under considerable pressure: they are understaffed in critical areas and, for the most part, underfunded.<sup>27</sup> For much of the past five years, a single State Veterinarian has been responsible for animal health in six districts of the former Ciskei. With this workload, he relies heavily on his 'second-in-command' in each of these districts to ensure that policies and programmes of the department are implemented, with mixed results.

Some of the veterinary staff have strong views on the dipping of cattle. They feel that the provision of dipping material by the government is a legacy of the past and that there is little or no justification for continuing to provide this service now. Their main concern, however, is about the immediate problems caused by the 'on-again off-again' nature of the dipping programme, as well as the overall lack of clarity about the longer-term future of the dipping programme, given the budgetary



constraints that the provincial Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs faces. This lack of clarity undermines their relationship with cattle owners, who look to them for information and direction on this issue.

There is also an argument made about the equity of providing dip free of charge: such provision is said to benefit those with large herds, including some freehold African farmers who apparently make use of the village dipping facilities. Since it currently costs around R1.20 per month to dip one animal, the larger, wealthier herd owners with 30 plus cattle are being subsidised to the tune of R36 per month. The many households with only two or three animals are only receiving a subsidy of between R2.40 and R3.60 per month. It is argued that some other, more equitable way must be devised for 'cutting the cake.'

Again, irregular attendance at dipping days is said to be linked to the free provision of dip: where cattle owners do not have to pay for dip, they are not particularly concerned about attending every dipping day. Conversely, if the same people were paying for the service, they would make more effort to dip their cattle regularly. This begs questions about whether owners would be prepared to (or are able to) pay for regular dipping, the extent to which dipping can be regarded as a necessity for cattle in the 'reserve' areas and other questions concerning the apparently negative effects of regular dipping, such as increasing the resistance of ticks to dipping chemicals.<sup>28</sup>

Clearly, aspects of the way the dipping programme functions are a source of frustration for all the role-players. Nevertheless, a rigorously managed dipping regime remains critical in places like Peddie district that have a particularly high exposure to ticks and tick-borne diseases. The department is coming around to the understanding that a freely provided dipping programme is unlikely to be fiscally sustainable in the longer-term. Instead, the department needs to set about devising ways and means of ensuring the ongoing management of the state-owned

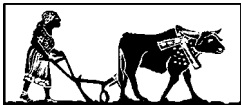
dipping infrastructure. One suggestion is that this infrastructure could be handed over to self-organised groups or collectives of cattle owners, who will undertake dipping programmes on behalf of their members. If this is the emerging trend, then new strategies for estimating cattle numbers, that have historically taken place at the dip-tank, will also have to be devised and tested.

## Conclusions

What this chapter has shown is that the study of cattle ownership cannot be restricted only to the technical aspects of animal husbandry. Patterns of cattle ownership in areas like Peddie district appear to have a great deal to do with the current socio-economic situation in the district and local people's assessments of economic opportunities that are available to them. Changes in the overall economic situation will inevitably result in them modifying their livelihood decisions.

Furthermore, the data presented in this chapter show just how risky it is to use broad brush strokes to characterise cattle-holding households in Peddie district or anywhere else, as there is considerable variability on the ground. This variability stems from a number of factors, which include *economic* factors, specifically past employment experience and people's assessment of future prospects for a reliable income (including by way of employment and pensions) and the current investment portfolios and strategies of rural households. All of this impacts on the extent to which these households are able to accumulate or conversely, may be forced to liquidate bovine assets (i.e. cattle) to meet emergency expenses.

*Socio-structural* factors have also been shown to be significant, particularly the stage of a household in the domestic cycle, the number and nature of rituals that this household has to, or feels inclined to, conduct and the number of dependents to consider (including the care and education of grandchildren).





*Other* factors include local perspectives on the continued importance and relevance of owning cattle to the well-being of Xhosa families and in particular, to the status of Xhosa men in a rural context. Numerous other factors, including the seasonal and inter-annual availability of grazing, as well as questions over access to grazing land, the local incidence of stock theft, the loss of cattle through road accidents, the quality and reliability of veterinary care provided by the state, the accessibility of, and prices paid at, stock sales, all impinge on people's livelihood strategies and decisions around cattle holding.

The changing rural economy that is characteristic of much of Peddie district – and indeed of the former Ciskei 'reserve' areas – is bound to impact on people's views of cattle ownership in future. In what appears to be an increasing tendency, cattle owners in Peddie derive minimal utility benefits from their cattle: very few people still plough with cattle and the day-to-day consumption of other cattle products, such as milk, also appears to be declining.<sup>29</sup>

What we might expect in future in places like Peddie, therefore, is not a decline in the overall attractiveness of cattle ownership to rural people – although further concentration of ownership appears to be a likely scenario – but a greater commodification of cattle, in the sense that their importance in terms of their monetary value as fungible assets is likely to increase relative to their utility values. In this way, off-take of cattle may remain erratic, i.e. linked to distress sales, but may be expected to show an upward tendency over time. This means that the 'throughput' of cattle may increase, while the overall numbers of cattle remain reasonably constant, implying that either herd productivity will increase (which appears unlikely at this stage) or cattle owners will be purchasing more cattle from neighbouring 'white' farmers and selling them more frequently or at younger ages.

Possibly the greatest uncertainty for cattle owners at this time is the future of

the government's dipping programme and veterinary support, key areas of concern in respect of prospects for improved animal health. The direction that these programmes are to take in future, needs to be clearly and unambiguously articulated as a matter of urgency, so that cattle owners can begin to organise themselves, individually and collectively, for dealing with the fall-out from this that is likely to affect them.

As this case-study has demonstrated, one key aspect of cattle husbandry in Peddie district is the significant role played by 'white' farmers and speculators in the communal areas: they are both a significant source of young animals and practically the only reliable market for the sale of mature animals. This throws into question the existence of a hard dualism in agricultural production in this and other 'border' districts. Rather, the reality is that high levels of integration exist between the enterprises of 'white, commercial' farmers and speculators on the one hand and Xhosa-speaking, 'subsistence' farmers on the other.

There is nothing inherently 'backward-looking' about continuing to own cattle in communal areas of Peddie district. Rather, rural people here continue to strategise, to implement their current livelihoods and to plan for their future security in ways that do two things:

- promise maximum material benefits – given the limited options open to them; and
- resonate with cultural values that are still deemed to be important.

Understanding the interplay of these strategies in a dynamic social and economic environment remains a challenge for analysts and policy-makers in the livestock and rural development sectors.

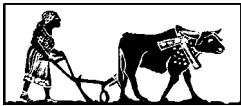
## Endnotes

1. As of November 2000, 'Peddie district' no longer officially exists. It has been re-demarcated (together with 42 villages of the former Zwelitsha district) and renamed 'Ngqushwa municipality'.



A similar fate has befallen the other 'district' case-studies in this report, but hopefully such changes spell progress, not just change!

2. But see previous footnote.
3. I am grateful to Ben Cousins for pointing this out to me.
4. These four villages/dipping tanks are, with the number of questionnaire surveys administered in brackets: Mgecwa tank (10), Lover's Twist (12), Peddie Extension – including Peddie town and German village – (13) and Qeto (13).
5. There are said to be between 10 000 and 15 000 cattle on these freehold farming areas of Peddie district (personal communication, Dr. Nick Fischer, State Veterinarian, Peddie, 28/05/1999). There are some 24 000 cattle in the communal areas of the district.
6. The comment of one informant, Mr F, during an interview illustrates the point: 'You have taken from the government records that say I have nine head [of cattle]. I show you records that say I have forty-seven. Both records come from the same government. Clearly work is not being done [properly] in our dips.'
7. No inferential statistical analysis has been conducted with these data.
8. The 'emerging' commercial cattle owners, of which there are about ten to 13 in the district, and who are farming with far larger numbers of cattle on leased or privately owned freehold land, did not form part of the survey sample.
9. The notion of household head is not unproblematic, given: (1) the local context of extensive rural-urban interactions, which can bifurcate the household and affect the way decisions are made within such households, and (2) households nominally headed by widows, in which a male kinsman (the husband's brother or eldest son) may play a central role in decision-making.
10. Remarkably, nine of the respondents (19% of total households) are 80 years



or older.

11. This source uses data that predates that of the 1996 Census. The latter was not available to the author in this sort of detail.
12. Ainslie (1998:153) found that the average de facto household size in Gwabeni village (Peddie district) was 3.4 resident people. When all the bona fide members of the household were included (i.e. including absentee household members), this average rose to 10.1 people.
13. Obviously, formal education and 'worldliness' or 'savvy' are not the same thing, as the vast literature on 'peasant' resistance to domination attests.
14. Interestingly, the average holding for the *combined* age category 41 to 64 years, is also 7.7 head of cattle.
15. This average is skewed by one household that owns 47 head of cattle, by far the most in the sample. Excluding this household brings the average for this category down to 7.7 head per household.
16. The percentages do not add up to 100%, as most respondents gave more than one response with respect to their sources of livelihood.
17. This is definitely an undercount of the sales, as several people were not prepared to volunteer the exact number of cattle they had sold, even though, given more time, this information might be gleaned from their stock cards. A further complication is that people can enter 'slaughtered for ritual' or 'died' when, in fact, they may have sold the beast out of hand.
18. Included in this effort is the securing of a written statement and stamp of the local 'headman' (nowadays, usually the chairperson of the local residents' association), verifying that the animals to be offered for sale are in fact the property of the seller.
19. There is indeed evidence of some collusion (buying 'rings') amongst buyers with relation to the prices paid

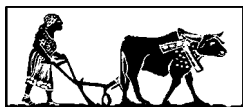
- for the animals on offer at these stock sales.
20. An informed *estimate* of the annual off-take of cattle from the communal areas of Peddie district is between 26% and 35%. This is made up of formal stock sales (8%), informal sales of cattle in villages (7%), sales to speculators, who buy in villages (12.5%) and home consumption of sick animals (1.5%), i.e. 29% (or about 6 960 cattle per annum, although this will fluctuate from year to year) out of a total of 24 000 cattle per annum. I would argue that this level of off-take is not exceptional for what I call 'border' districts in the province.
  21. This is much higher than Steyn's figures of 49% and 32% for 'cattle owners' in Nyaniso and Lujiko respectively in the mid-1980s, but the impact of the severe drought in 1983–4 would have to be factored in here.
  22. For rituals connected with funerals, people will slaughter an ox for a deceased man and a cow for a deceased woman. In both instances, the size of the animal (and sometimes its colour) is an important consideration: the animal should not be 'too small' since there are often many people to be fed.
  23. A total of ten households indicated that they had inherited cattle, but two households did not indicate the number of cattle they had inherited.
  24. Personal communication, W Mzozoyana, based on attendance at the NERPO AGM, Port Elizabeth 13–15 October 1999.
  25. Information elicited from seven households on the *actual costs* (in rands) of keeping cattle was either vague or ambiguous and could not be used. These households own a total of 78 cattle.
  26. The same may be said of herding, to some extent, except that households appear to resort to hiring herdsmen only when their domestic situation demands it: payment for herding work can be either a token R50 per month to a kinsman or R200 per month for another villager's labour.
  27. The bulk of the available budget still comprises salaries and wages: at least 100 'watermen' in the districts of Peddie, Alice and Seymour are paid between R400 and R500 per month to ensure that water is available at dipping times. These positions are a legacy of the Ciskei Bantustan and the great majority of these posts are superfluous.
  28. Transkei Veterinary Services Annual Report 1986/87 notes that young animals have the ability to develop resistance against ticks and tick-borne diseases. A light tick infestation is considered to be beneficial and allows for the development of natural resistance. Young animals, it is therefore suggested, should not be dipped until the age of six to eight months unless they have heavy infestations. For the same reason, dipping intervals should be increased gradually, where possible, with the long-term strategy of producing tick-resistant animals. This suggests that serious questions need to be asked about the efficacy and desirability of a blanket, 'one-size-fits-all' government-*organised* (as opposed to *funded*) dipping programme.
  29. This is quite unlike other parts of the province, for example, Lusikisiki where the overall utility of cattle remains high.



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# Chapter 8: Conclusions

Andrew Ainslie

## Introduction

One theme of this report has been to account for, and address, the serious lack of detailed data concerning patterns of ownership and forms of management of cattle in the areas under communal tenure in the former Bantustans of the Eastern Cape, i.e. the former Transkei and Ciskei (see Tapson 1993:52). In the absence of such data, several poorly substantiated assertions concerning cattle production and holdings, and the impact of this production on grazing resources in these areas, have been allowed to prevail for a number of decades.

As Ainslie points out in the Introduction to this report, this dominant discourse of 'low off-take coupled to overstocking and overgrazing leading in turn to a wasteful use of resources', has been, at least from the perspective of those outside this system, self-fulfilling. This sector of the rural economy, i.e. cattle production in communal areas, has long been seen as inherently 'irrational' and 'inefficient' and, as a result, state support, at least as seen by politicians and bureaucrats, was not warranted, except to curb the perceived excesses of overgrazing, land degradation and the spread of animal disease (Chapter 2). In general, the state has historically sought to control and administer the people and the cattle in these 'reserve' areas at minimum cost to itself. The result has all too often been a bleak legacy of inadequate levels of investment in infrastructure, education, agricultural extension and marketing support in this sector.<sup>1</sup>

Given this scenario, ownership of cattle in the former Bantustans has proven to be remarkably resilient over the decades, although there has been a steady concentration of ownership of cattle. Numerous

other challenges, not least that of human overcrowding and the subsequent pressure on grazing resources, institutional conflict and problems like stock theft, as described by Ntshona and Turner (Chapter 6) have also increased the stakes in this sector. Nevertheless, the overall numbers of cattle in these areas have been fairly constant for the past five decades, except for the periodic, drought-induced decreases in animal numbers.<sup>2</sup> As all the case-studies in this report show, and given the considerable investment in cattle (an estimated 1.7 million for both the former Transkei and Ciskei in 1998), it is clear that cattle remain an attractive proposition for many rural people. Not only this, but as Kepe's and Ntshona and Turner's chapters demonstrate, cattle are still firmly embedded in social and economic relationships between many, if not most, people in the rural sector. Furthermore, communal forms of tenure, under which this production system operates, are highly unlikely to be abolished or even radically modified in the foreseeable future. This means that the overarching system of practices that accompany this tenure regime, for exam-

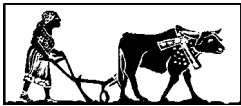


ple that of common property grazing management, are set to remain in place and will have to be recognised, understood and accommodated by policies and interventions in this sector.

### Understanding patterns of cattle production and ownership

The poverty of understanding and conceptualisation of the political economies of the former Bantustans in the Eastern Cape stems partly from the fact that broad, ideologically loaded and often implicitly unilinear analyses of the past have ignored or downplayed the inherent 'messiness' of the reserve areas (see Ainslie 1998). More recently, it has become more acceptable, and indeed more realistic, to acknowledge that, at least socio-economically, the former Bantustans are complicated places, which are conceptually 'messy' and thus consistently defy attempts at pigeon-holing into neat development concepts and categories, especially of the sort that are proffered by agricultural economists and other development specialists. One example here would elucidate this point: the notion that a small group of full-time, 'committed' commercial farmers exists 'out there' that might be identified and plucked out of this system, is one that has spawned a number of previous studies, launched multi-million rand irrigation schemes and 'farmer-support schemes', and still tantalises some analysts and policy-makers. However, given the political and economic realities that exist, the establishment of a 'yeoman class' of any depth remains an illusion.

Undoubtedly, both ecological and socio-economic conditions in the former Ciskei and Transkei show a high degree of geographical variability. Significant variation exists at the levels of access to infrastructure, local employment opportunities including 'off-farm' economic opportunities, access to markets and information. Even within those areas that may be regarded as broadly homogeneous, marked levels of socio-economic differentiation exist *between* households. These variables do indeed complicate efforts at



broadly conceptualising what is 'going on' in the former reserves, but do not make the task any less urgent.

If part of the project of understanding cattle production includes building a model of *expected* cattle numbers, then the points discussed below may be useful in flagging the issues for developing a framework to analyse this sector. This may in turn provide some predictive power with respect to the actual and future numbers of cattle held and how this might be affected by other developments (see Cousins 1997).

1) *Spatial variation* is important, as is variation in *agro-ecological zones*: where low rainfall or poor soils render arable cultivation insignificant, the use of cattle for draught power is likely to be negligible. Also, the existing agro-ecological conditions may render certain areas of the province more suitable to sheep and goat production than to cattle and this will affect the numbers of cattle that local people hold.<sup>3</sup> In this vein, Cousins (1997) speculates that sales of livestock for cash may be more important for drier areas with poor cropping potential.

Moreover, spatial variation in respect of infrastructure can be equally significant: some 'reserve' areas within the former Bantustans have historically had relatively good access to dipping facilities, road networks and markets, and are at least partially integrated into the commercial beef production system. Accessibility is obviously a major consideration here. Road and telecommunication networks vary considerably across the province and within districts. It is clearly difficult to market cattle and livestock products in the many parts of the province where the road and transport (including rail) network is in a bad condition.

2) *The macro-economic profile of the area*: districts that have historically been regarded as economic backwaters (often those in 'deep rural' areas) or as hotbeds of political activism (such as Xhalanga) are also more likely to suffer from official neglect, resulting in an inadequate provision and maintenance of infrastructure,

such as dipping tanks, as well as a legacy of negative sentiment from the Department of Agriculture that make cattle production more difficult, time-consuming and thus less profitable. Other districts were favoured during the Bantustan era and 'enjoyed' the attentions of agricultural corporations and development agencies. This often meant large and essentially unsustainable investments in infrastructure that have left an ambiguous legacy, especially in the wake of the collapse and subsequent liquidation of the agricultural development corporations.

However, even providing the best road and communication networks and other physical infrastructure in the world is unlikely to bring forth an endless stream of cattle and cattle products from the former Transkei and Ciskei rural areas (see Tapson 1982). This is because, as the chapters in this report have clearly demonstrated, other macro- and micro-economic and social factors impinge on people's ability or willingness to own and particularly, to market their animals.

One of these factors is how the employment profile of the area or district, which is often a function of its relative proximity to urban centres in the province, such as Umtata, East London-Mdantsane, King William's Town-Bisho-Zwelitsha, Queenstown or Kokstad, impacts on local patterns of labour migrancy and thus the nature of livelihood options available to rural people. Some districts such as Gatyana ('Willowvale') are apparently still deeply engaged in the more 'traditional' practices of long-distance migrant labour, coupled with agrarian pursuits (both arable and livestock production) in the rural sector (see McAllister 1999). This implies that cattle ownership in these areas may still be attractive both for utility purposes, such as ploughing, manuring and milking, and as a component of longer-term retirement plans, i.e. as a 'store of wealth'.

Residents in districts such as Zwelitsha, Alice and Umtata have become more closely associated, in terms of economic opportunities and livelihoods, with the

former Bantustan administrative bureaucracies in Bisho and Umtata. These proximal employment opportunities underpin the more localised patterns of rural-urban mobility that people here are involved in (see De Wet & Whisson (eds) 1997). These people probably have a wider suite of economic options with respect to investments in both rural and urban spheres from which to choose, including livestock, rural businesses, and so on, but also financial sector options, such as bank savings accounts and investment 'policies' (unit trusts, shares, life insurance, pensions, burial policies, etc.).

The macro-economic effects of the *recent* rise in the value and coverage of old age pensions and disability grants, is something that needs to be factored in here (see Sagner 2000). As regular *and* reliable injections of cash into the rural economy, pensions now appear to constitute a critical component of the rural economy and to underpin the livelihoods of an increasingly high number of households in most districts around the province. This is alarming given that the real value of pensions has declined since 1994.

3) In terms of *micro-economic factors*, whether a household has access to, or is likely to get access to secure employment or (as is more likely) a pension in the foreseeable future, will impact on expenditure and investment decisions made by members of the household. The skills base and formal educational qualifications of the members of the household are further factors that are likely to impact on opportunities for employment and thus on upward mobility. This, in turn will influence the regularity with which the household may be forced to liquidate whatever bovine assets it possesses to meet emergency expenses.

4) With respect to *socio-structural factors*, the structure and composition of rural households, the stage that a particular household is at in the domestic cycle and hence the number of wage earners and dependents to consider (including the care and education of children and/or grand-



children), all affect the labour available to the household for herding and managing cattle (McAllister 1992). These factors also affect the disposable income and thus the investment strategies that the household may adopt (see Ainslie 1998; Kepe's chapter in this report).

5) '*Cultural values*', which are by no means static, continue to shape people's investment decisions. These may include local (even household) perspectives on the continued importance and relevance of cattle ownership to Xhosa people. Local opinions on the necessity of actually owning or simply being able to access cattle for the purposes of ritual slaughter will affect people's decisions regarding cattle ownership. Attitudes towards the payment of bridewealth in live animals as opposed to the more widespread use of proxy cattle, i.e. cash, may be significant in shaping trends in the ownership and disposal of cattle in particular districts.

Patterns of inheritance and the notions that inform them also impact on cattle ownership and management, particularly when cultural discourses that influence the role of women in cattle ownership are also taken into account. The alleged lack of interest of 'the youth' in cattle ownership was mentioned by rural informants in Lusikisiki, Xhalanga and Peddie districts, and by Department of Agriculture staff in Umtata and Bisho. Ntsebeza notes, for instance, that 'cattle are no longer the sole measure of wealth' in rural areas of Xhalanga. This apparent lack of interest among the younger generation, and new social priorities, suggest that attitudes and values towards cattle may be changing in significant ways that may best be understood through longitudinal study.

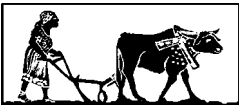
### Priorities for the future

It is now commonplace to assert that the poor – and the majority of the people who live in the former Bantustans continue to fall into this category – of necessity construct their livelihoods from multiple sources in order to spread the real risks of impoverishment and hunger. It is equally

so that this notion, i.e. of rural people engaging in multiple livelihoods, runs counter to the modernist ideas that still dominate development thinking in this country, as government and development agencies seek the holy grail that will 'unlock agricultural production in the communal areas' and 'transform subsistence producers into commercial farmers'.<sup>4</sup>

If, however, development broadly construed, is about increasing both the *capacity* and the *options* of poor people to enable them to make strategic investments in their own futures, then it is relatively clear how government and other agents with developmental pretensions, should proceed, at least in terms of cattle ownership and production in these former Bantustan areas.

The first step would be to officially recognise that cattle ownership for many Xhosa-speaking people in the Eastern Cape remains a culturally resonant, economically rational and socially acceptable option for strategies of production and accumulation. This being the case, the role of the state in this sector should be to safeguard and enhance these investments with targeted interventions that expressly increase both the productivity (for example, in weaning percentages) and the overall rand value of the herds in the 'reserve' areas. A critical starting point in this regard is that of improving the *actual implementation* of animal health programmes, specifically the dipping programme, which are already provided by the state. This will translate into better overall prices for those animals that the owners choose to sell in the marketplace. Moreover, by increasing the capacity of cattle owners to deal with stock disease, such as contagious abortion and measles infestations, through educational programmes and improved access to veterinary medicines, the same goal would be realised. Overall, the emphasis should be on providing the services and know-how for doing the *basics* of animal husbandry more effectively, rather than more newsworthy – but far less effective – interven-





tions such as bull leasing schemes. Clearly, issues like stock theft should also enjoy priority attention, to prevent any general spread of lawlessness, including vigilantism.

For their part, progressive analysts and researchers need to conduct studies that characterise and highlight all the subtleties, complexities and, indeed, fragilities of rural life and people's livelihoods. This engagement is critical to check the inclination of policy-makers to fall back on technicist solutions for what are essentially complicated social and economic challenges (see Kepe 2001). Moreover, more nuanced, historically informed perspectives can stress the critical importance of actor-directed change, as opposed to a perception that any modifications or 'improvements' necessarily come from outside interventions and expert prescriptions that can be imposed on this sector, once processes of 'consultation' have been followed.

More specifically, future research should address the incomplete picture that exists of the overall distribution of cattle across rural households in the province. At present, we are still forced to rely on extrapolations from case-studies of small areas. Research into herd productivity *in situ*, including reproductive rates, birth and weaning rates, for different areas of the province, is needed. It is still not possible to say anything definitive about the actual productivity of individual herds in communal areas, because the longitudinal data do not exist, except in the somewhat tenuous form of 'stock cards' that remain difficult to access. The average age and composition of individual herds, which has a direct influence on productivity, is also largely unknown.

On a more practical note, it is strongly advocated that agrarian research undertaken in Eastern Cape rural areas in future should, as far as possible, consciously extrapolate the level of the (post-1999 local government demarcations) *municipality*, so that data from a variety of sources can be integrated meaningfully at

a common unit of aggregation, enabling us to establish and then build iteratively on macro-data sets for each municipality of the province. This will also allow for much greater depth and continuity in our understanding of processes of social and agrarian change across the province.

## Endnotes

1. This paragraph admittedly simplifies a far more complex reality: in both Bantustans, sizeable monetary investments were made (particularly in the late 1970s and 1980s) in cattle production programmes, but much of these investments appear to have had limited impact due to mismanagement and because of opposition to the explicitly political nature of the apartheid 'separate development' policy and the depoliticising nature of these programmes.
2. Some districts, such as Maluti and Lusikisiki, have experienced steady increases in cattle numbers since the 1940s.
3. A detailed exploration of the rationale(s) people have for keeping (and switching between) various combinations of cattle, goats and sheep was beyond the scope of this study, but it is something which should enjoy attention from researchers in future.
4. It is astounding how many aspects of these debates were passionately engaged in by analysts working in neighbouring states such as Zimbabwe, Botswana and Lesotho in the mid-1980s to early 1990s and how the arguments made in this report resonate so strongly with many of the ones laid out in those cases.



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