

## **BOTSWANA**

### Field Report from Jimmy Brooks' visit to Botswana January/February 2010.

There is enormous potential for Borans in Botswana. The vegetation consists largely of *Acacia mellifera*, *Combretum* and *Terminalia* spp. that are thicket forming, with a few bigger *Acacias* along with other succulent plants that are characteristic of the Kalahari. In between the scrub, grass growth is prolific, if overgrazing has not occurred. The vegetative cover is very like parts of Coast and Eastern Provinces in Kenya. Gemsbok (*Oryx*), Greater Kudu and Eland thrive on this land as do domestic livestock. It is true range land with paddocks (if any) of 1,000 or more hectares, where cattle have to walk long distances to reach forage and then back to water. On many ranches, the cattle only have access to water once per day for a 3 or 4 hour period. After that, they must wait for the next day.

A few Boran embryos and semen have been sold by Embrio Plus to a couple of ranchers in the Tuli area but I did not learn about them until I met Morne de la Rey, after leaving Botswana. Two of the ranchers that we did meet are very keen to import Borans, as embryos and semen, in order to start a stud and to crossbreed with cattle already there.

The competition is pretty stiff, with the possible idea that carcasses for export to Europe must be from big animals, as was the case in Namibia, so Borans would be competing with Charolais, Simmental, Brahman and several composite breeds. These are already well entrenched, so we have to get the Boran on the ground and show ranchers the benefits of using Borans. The bigger breeds may perform better in feedlots. The Government is trying to encourage people to sell weaners to feedlots but most, if not all feeds for these feedlots, have to be imported. Undoubtedly, the bigger continental breeds are unlikely to be hardy enough to withstand the long dry season, without losing condition and without supplementing their feed. This is where the Boran should be at an advantage and should fatten even in the driest season with little or no feed supplementation.

I had thought that selling Borans from there to SA might be an option but according to Morne de la Rey of Embrioplus, the South Africans would not approve the importation because of disease. My impression is that disease control is fairly good and the challenge to the animal is low.

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