



Thornham Farm April 2016



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It is always a pleasure and privilege to visit, work and be at Thornham, seeing the changes in season, watching the wildlife both Flora and Fauna.

It's the beginning of Autumn and closes the momentous summer of 2015 and 2016. This summer is one we will not forget as many changes, challenges and careful boxing as we continue to grow and farm in East Griqualand.

2015 saw us realise the goal of completely stocking Thornham and this happened by purchasing 50 females and calves from Excelsus Landgoed in the Free State.

These are a mixture of Simbra, Beef-master and commercial cattle. The Simbra cows are mostly stud animals and we hope to add these cows to our Simmentaler stud animals. These are mostly young animals to replace the ageing Thornham beef herd.

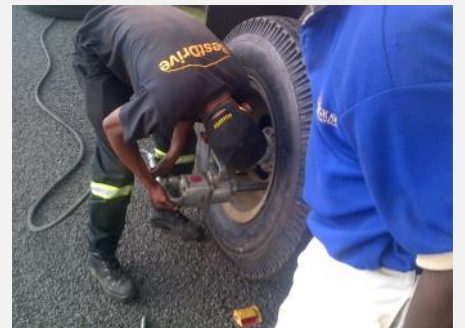
They arrived in the middle of a difficult summer and we have had a few casualties due to the chronic red water that is Thornham's Achilles heel. I would like to thank the Thornham staff for all their hard work and labour, injecting, caring for and the phenomenal effort in ensuring that these losses were kept to a minimum.

Our first Conestoga stud cows have now had their first Thornham calves!





What a Weekend!!



We loaded cattle at sunrise on a clear Thursday morning separating the calves and loading bellowing cows into the dual levels of the interlink trucks! All our stud simmentaler females and their calves as well as fifty of the Excelsus females and their calves. We also loaded a cattle clamp and ten home made portable gates to help build our cattle handling facilities at Thornham. All went smoothly until just past Harrismith when Ian, Sybrand and I had our first of three tyre blow outs. We changed the tyre in 35 degree Celsius heat and only a truck driver will be able to tell you how difficult it is to change the inner back wheel of an old truck! Margi was riding shotgun and came to the rescue bringing along a skilled tyre mechanic and his pneumatic tools! What a pleasure! He replaced one tyre with a new one next to the N3 highway in five minutes flat! To make matters worse one of the Interlink trucks blew its thrust bearing on top of the legendry Red Hill ten kilometres from Thornham. The condensed version is after offloading the other Interlink we then used it to tow the broken one up the last of the Red Hill and then down the other side and into Thornham! You can imagine the stress levels! It then came to a stand still in the old Oak avenue and our cattle had to jump off of it onto a hay bale! We finished at Three o clock in the morning!

No broken legs or dead cattle and all the calves were just fine!

We were truly looked after and blessed!



Jack Bastard must be smiling! We raised some good Simmentalers back in the days of the J's Harlequin Simmentaler Stud and some of those genetics are back in EG only this time at Thornham Farm! Soon we will have around sixty Simmentalers calving to the very best bulls we can lay our hands on. We have also added fifty Excelsus Simbra and Beef Masters to our Thornham herds. These too carry calves bred from the best Simbra bulls and will supply us with some quality Simbra bulls to breed with.

I just love Cattle!





Thornham is in beautiful shape considering the season! The cattle came out of the winter a little on the lean side but all calved successfully with beautiful simmentaler cross calves.

We have also shorn all the sheep producing twelve large wool bales packed tight with high quality Dohne and Merino fine wool!

We sold this through BKB Wool and Mohair for what is for us a record price and a record wool clip. I wish we had a hundred of these bales to sell.

Eileen also recorded a conception rate of over ninety percent with our ewes. This only occurs when sheep are well and truly cosseted and looked after! These will lamb from quality rams purchased from Bennie, Rowan and Diel Miles Cederville and also rams from the Bryden flock.

Above Ian, Andile and Twane branding the young stock, shearing, our first 2016 twin lambs and me helping shear one of the last ewes!

A Thornham Sheep is a happy sheep!



Fixing Bob's Shed!!



Everyone in the family knows a Thornham weekend you work like a navie, there is no TV and you go to bed early and tired.

Every time we visit there we try and identify a project that needs doing and then get stuck in.

April saw us take on Bob Adams dairy byre shed. This was erected by Bob in 1925 and it is still standing.

All the old bark and compost has been cleared and will be turfed onto our lands and pastures.

All the old sneeze-wood poles were re concreted, all the rotten zink replaced and a new fence made up of old irrigation pipes erected.

This will now serve to hold our small sheep feedlot and also provide shelter for lambing ewes.

We took on half the shed and will complete this first before the other half is tackled.

All the old stone work needs attention and the roof fastened, sealed and painted.





Random Cattle Pictures showing some of our first Simbra and Simmentaler stud calves



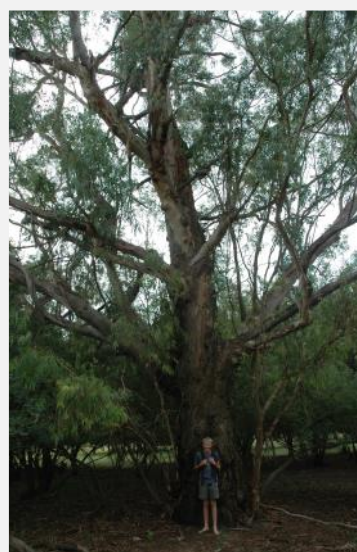


Most of the summer on South African farms are spent preparing for the tough winters that lie ahead.

Our Sugar graze is two meters tall! This makes top nosh for ruminant animals whether being grazed or as silage. We also planted 8ha of maize for cob crush and Stover as well as 7 ha of green feed that is looking magnificent.

Andre Schoeman who leases the lands at Thornham and plants our crops for us is also realising record crops this year.

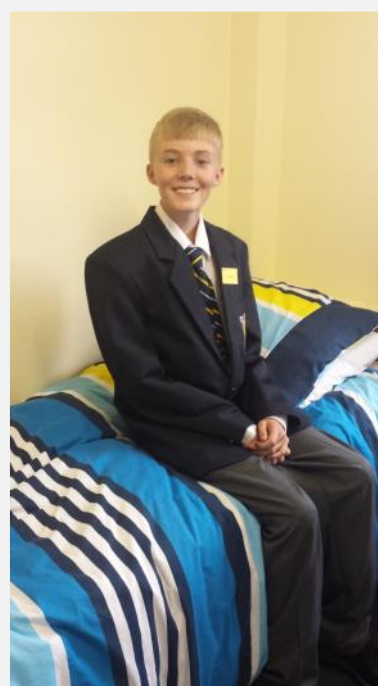
We try and increase our cropping program each year and should hopefully put in cash crops soon



Some of my favourite trees, an old Deodar Cedar, A magnificent old Gum Tree and one of the old Belhambra Trees.



The Grand Children!



They say a families riches are counted in their children and we are very blessed to have a great bunch of the next generation!

Ian Currin Jnr is at his first year at Weston Agricultural school and is loving it. He won his first Endurance horse race after his horse's heart beat passed the vet check quicker than the first two riders in.

Tayla is excelling in Art and will be at Girls High School next year, Sarah-Kate made the D7 trial cross country team and missed the Gauteng trial team by one place.

Robbie James is playing some good cricket and hockey and Sally James seems to excel in many sports including Judo and hockey.

Nick and Chris joined us for our shearing and again during our April visit. Both looked well and full of beans. Chris wants to become a professional cricketer and it looks like Nick enjoys the farm life.

They are all growing so fast!!