



DATE: 1 July 2011

ATTENTION: The News Editor/ Agricultural reporter

WEANER AUCTION TIME AT AGRA!

Agra's weaner auction time is an exciting time. It means a lot of hard work and movement on the farms and at Agra auction centres. It is an opportunity to share in the pride and delight of farmers bringing their cattle "harvest", showing off the quality they produced and making it available to fellow farmers. It is also the time of the year when suppliers and other companies are involved in awarding prizes to producers of good quality, at the weaner calf competitions.

The Agra Weaner calf auctions in 2010 saw almost 16 000 calves changing hands at an average price of N \$3 110 per animal. In 2009, 13 000 calves were sold, 3000 less than in 2010, but the price per animal at N\$3 146, was N\$36 more than in 2010. In 2009, Agra sold 230 more calves than in 2008 and the average price was N\$365 more per animal than in 2008. Agra and the producers are excited to see what 2011 will bring.

Weaner calf competitions always add to the excitement of the events. These competitions aim to create an awareness of the ideal product that is in demand for use on natural grazing as well as in the feedlot. Producers delivering the best quality weaner calves are not only rewarded by means of prizes, but through the exposure and recognition they receive during the weaner auctions. This initiative of Agra is in support of growth of the industry through the number of calves and the quality of the Namibian herds that are adapted to produce optimally. Besides contributing to the competitions, the sponsors' presence at the auctions contribute to making it a get-together of all who love and are involved in cattle farming, and a wonderful opportunity for networking and exposure for businesses.

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Judging of the weaner calves will be done by Agra professionals who are experts in the field. Weaners in the northern area will be judged by Barend Dorfling, Kiep Lepen will do the judging in the central area, while George Pearson will judge the weaners entered into competitions in the south.

Optimal weaning weight, good growth potential under feedlot and free range conditions, and applied animal husbandry such as dehorning, brand marking and animal health will earn good points and fetch good prices.

The competitions

Competitions will be hosted at all auctions where the required amounts of lots are entered.

A lot should consist of 15 steers and the following numbers of lots will justify competitions, making equitable and objective judging possible:

- Large auction centres (Windhoek, Otjiwarongo, Grootfontein, Gobabis en Nomtsas): 20 lots
- Medium auction centres (Okahandja, Imkerhof, Tweerivier, Saambou, Summerdown, Outjo, Otavi, Kalkrand/Kamanjab, Aub en Loskop): 10 lots
- Kleiner veilingspunte (Khorixas, , Akanous, Aranos, Samehaling, Karasburg, Keetmanshoop, Okamatapati): 5 lots

This year, after all the weaner calf competitions are completed, regional winners and a Namibian national winner will be announced. These winners will be determined by a panel of judges, consisting of the three judges, Kiep, Barend and George, Agra's regional livestock coordinators and Agra's Manager: Livestock. The number of points achieved by each producer will be added and if more than one participant achieves the same points, the price per kilogram achieved will be taken as determining factor, taken into consideration the price achieved per region and in the specific category.

Weaner producers will compete in three categories being growth potential on natural grazing, growth potential in a feedlot and the producer offering the most calves (minimum 70 calves to qualify)

The following requirements are set for participation in the weaner competitions:

- All competition lots should be entered with the agent before the auction in order to reserve sufficient pens.
- As usual, only steers are eligible to be entered for the competitions.

Criteria for the judging of lots consisting of 15 steers are:

- Brands: clear branding
- Skin damage: no damage to skins
- De-horning: properly and well de-horned
- Temperament: calm
- Mass uniformity: little difference (all about the same mass)
- Type uniformity: little difference
- Mass competency: (calves 7 – 12 months)
 - Calves between 201kg and 280kg will achieve the highest points with the most desirable mass being 221kg – 260kg. Calves of 170kg and less will not receive any points.
- Growth potential and muscularity: the ideal calf has a dry condition and good muscularity.

Agra remains the largest and most flexible livestock marketing organization in the country/Namibia with world-class marketing facilities throughout the country. Agra's livestock division provides professional services and expert advice to assist with the production of weaning calves, which includes selection and preparation of high quality animals. Agra looks forward to this weaner auction season as a time of good business, but especially as a time of interaction with our livestock clients and other role players in the agricultural field.

Agra would like to thank the following sponsors, who are supporters of the weaner auction competitions:

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