

GSSA research skills workshop

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One of the challenges facing the research community in the developing world is the large proportion of young, inexperienced scientists relative to experienced mentors. It was to help address this challenge that Justin and Freyni du Toit arranged a research skills workshop in the Midlands of KwaZulu-Natal on the 12th and 13th November 2008.

The workshop was packed, with over 70 participants from all over the country and one visitor from Zambia, mostly from government agencies.

Dave Spurret, of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, opened the day with a philosophical discussion of what knowledge means and how we obtain it. For an audience educated almost entirely in the technical disciplines of science, his talk was engaging and exciting.

Several talks discussed the fundamental skills required for a career in science. Mark Hardy outlined the basics of setting up and running meaningful field trials. Frikke Calitz explained how to conduct statistical analyses such as various types of Analyses of Variance using MS Excel. Craig Morris also gave an entertaining account of how to choose the correct statistical tests for the data (with one comment that one school of thought considered these tests to be a waste of time).

Justin du Toit described the best ways of managing data from research

trials, and later supervised a practical exercise where participants learned how to use Pivot tables in spreadsheets.

Terry Everson described the challenges and rewards of working with complex rural communities for many years, and what she had learned along the way. The most important factor was that the community should want the outsiders to be involved. Luthando Dziba described arguably the most useful tool for a modern professional - networking and collaboration across boundaries.

Finally, three talks outlined basic skills for shouting one's work to the world. Dave Ward described the basic rules of writing up results for peer-reviewed publication. His advice could be summed up as: keep it simple and answer the question! Start with the figure or table that addressed the basic question and work backwards from there. Terry Olckers outlined the right way to do a Power-Point presentation (do NOT use the fancy animations!) and Adrian Schrader explained how to attract interest in 11 seconds with a poster at Congress.

The participants were as enthusiastic at the end of the second day as at the beginning. As Kwezi Booi of the ARC put it: "The workshop showed young researchers that anything is possible if you put your mind, hard work, and dedication to it".



Success is in our Genes



A complete forage crop package

*Nutritious green forage crops for excellent
autumn, winter and spring grazing.*

Forage Cereals

Dryland and/or supplementary irrigation

Oats

- DRAKENSBERG
- LE TUCANA

Triticale

- PAN 248
- PAN 299

Stooling Rye

- PAN 233
- PAN 263
- SOROM

Management Hint: For a balanced fodder flow and longer utilisation, plant more than one cultivar between February and April.

Intensive Forage Crops

Irrigation

Annual Ryegrass

- VOYAGER 55 and VOYAGER 31
- DARGLE
- MISPAH
- ENERGY

Perennial Ryegrass

- QUARTET
- DOBSON

Tall Fescue

White, Red and Berseem Clover

Management Hint: Plant when maximum day temperature begins to drop below 25°C. Plant shallow and roll to ensure good contact with soil and moisture.

Forage Cereals Package:
Planting date and expected grazing period.

	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
DRAKENSBERG	x	xx								
LE TUCANA	x	xx								
PAN 248	x	xx								
PAN 233 & PAN 263	x	xx								
SOROM	x	xx								
PAN 299	x	xx								

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THE PANNAR EXPERIENCE

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