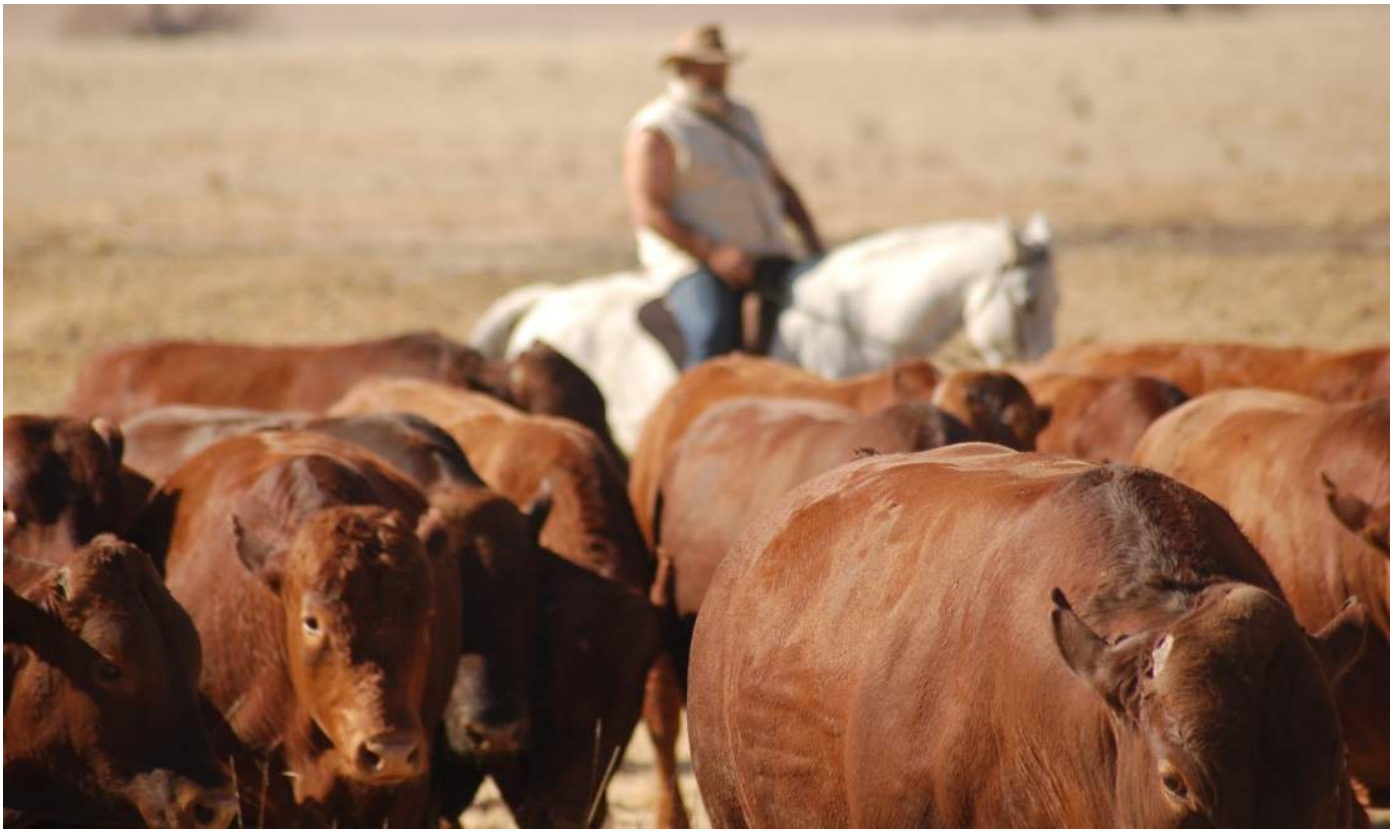

Hi to all our friends and people with interest,

Thank you for all the years of support, well wishes, comments and generally anyone interested in the Elmic philosophy. We have started many new and wonderful projects, like extensive testing on the veld, where we have been doing veldbul testing for 25 years, to meat quality and dressing percentage, with easy calving. Many of our friends who have bought bulls, tested them in different ways and methods, and the result have always been very good and positive. The one test that I have started that gained the most interest is the walking and movement test. After answering many questions, I have decided to write a series of articles that will be available on the website.

In part one; we start at a very important part of the animal, the hooves, the fetlocks, the knees and the shoulders. Now, with our walking test, I have found that some animals, who started off in front with great energy, for no apparent reason seem to slip to the back, and not showing any signs of fatigue or heavy breathing, they just ambled along. I then realised that these specific animals were footsore, but why should they be and not the rest? What was very interesting was that the soles of their hooves were thinner and got more easily bruised. Some of them had cracks on the walls of their hooves and some, while they walked, pushed their hooves far apart, which exposed the flesh just above the hoof and under the fetlock. Now the question is always asked, what is the importance of these tests?

It does not help testing if there is not a relevance to the test. One of the first advantages, when you farm in vlei and high wetland areas as well as rocky terrain, is that a solid hoof conformation eliminates foot rot and cracked walls. We have had many floods where these animals had to stand in water for a day or two before we could move them and I cannot remember when last we had a case of foot rot. Even in the thick sandy areas like Bothaville and Odendaalsrus, because the hooves have been tested for sole thickness, wall thickness and good feet and hoof conformation, the hooves don't crack.

When an animal walks correctly, in other words, the hooves strike the ground in the correct sequence and they lift their feet off the ground by bending their fetlocks and knees, the hoof wears of evenly, so that it does not grow out at the toe. This is also a big advantage in the feedlot situation, where we have done a lot of testing, especially at the time when Peter Milton was at Beefcor. We have found that the animals can stand the energy and heat from a diet which is generally to warm and causes foot problems.

Now we get to the fetlock and knee. The fetlock is joined to the knee by tendons and in the fetlock there are a lot of little bones. During walking, it is important to note that the joints are bending and are able to bend. An animal that is overfed for an auction sale and is put into the market as a breeding animal may look nice, but generally, if they are young animals, 2 to 2½ years old, their joints cannot carry the extra weight. That causes the animal to walk with stiff legs, which can take away the elasticity of the tendons and sinews. This can cause serious problems and reduce its longevity with up to 50%.

One of the important factors that came out of this is that a stable animal that has longevity can live in wet, sandy or dry areas and feeds well in a feedlot, as well as have fewer injuries during the reproductive time. A cow can stand squarely with both feet on the ground while a heavy bull mounts her and will not break her hip or become lame. The bull as well will be able to lift himself and hold himself on his hindquarters, thus reducing the weight that is on the female. He is comfortable with his body and has the strength and the subtleness of fetlocks and knees and the strength of the hooves allow him to hold the cow from movement, thus reducing injuries to himself and the female.

We at Elmic hope that you find this article interesting and informative, any comments are welcome