

# An Overview of 50 YEARS <sup>in</sup> the SANTA GERTRUDIS SOCIETY

» YOLANDA VENTER  
Breed Manager, [yolanda@santagertrudis.co.za](mailto:yolanda@santagertrudis.co.za)

What a special milestone for the Santa Gertrudis Society with 50 years of dedication and commitment, hard work and success. Since the Society was officially founded in 1974, we can proudly look back at the history of how this breed established itself in a very competitive stud industry.

---

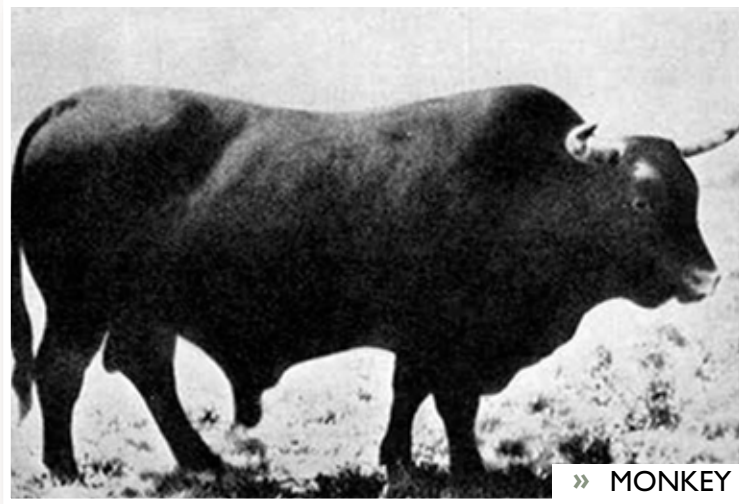
## ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF THE BREED

The Santa Gertrudis breed was actually hand-established by a small group of “cowboys” from South Texas who lived close to their cattle and selected only the best cattle with their trained eye. A demand for more meat of better quality increased sharply and the hardy Indian Brahman was crossed with the Shorthorn in 1910. This offspring showed an increased adaptability and resistance to the extreme climatic conditions.

From this cross the bull, Monkey, was born in 1919 whose genetics consisted of 37.5% (three-eighths) Brahman and 62.5% (five-eighths) Shorthorn. Monkey was the foundation sire of the entire Santa Gertrudis breed and, as far as knowledge goes, the only breed whose origins can be traced back to a single foundation sire. The founder of the Santa Gertrudis Breed was Robert J. Kleberg.

» KING RANCH TEXAS - Home of 60 000 Santa Gertrudis on 825 000 acres





The first Santa Gertrudis cattle in SA were imported from Texas in the early 1960's by well-known researcher and breeder Prof Jan Bonsma. On 11 June 1973 the first Santa was registered by SA Studbook with 61 members. On 30 April 1974 the Santa Gertrudis Cattle Breeders' Society of SA was recognised as a society in terms of the Registration of Pedigree Livestock Act (Act 28 of 1957) by the minister of agriculture at that time. The first animal registered by SA Studbook was Elberta 3 - MK - 2 - 7098 of Mr R Borstlap. She was imported in 1968 and inspected on 20 June 1973. Mr Rehuel Borstlap was one of the founding members and importers of Santa cattle to South Africa. He was responsible for the largest comparative breed studies in the world and as a result of this work, he is known for his promotion of the Santa breed in SA.

### THE FOUNDATION YEARS OF THE SOCIETY

A group of Santa steers of 3½ years old, under extensive grazing conditions, fetched an average of R904.00, after slaughtering and all costs deducted. This was according to an article published in The Santa Gertrudis, Volume 1, Part 1, April 1982.



In the same article the following was achieved by pure bred Santa steers in feedlots:

11 months age	1220lb (544kg)
2 permanent incisors	1 ton and more

The highest dressing weight percentage was 63%

From the *Landbouweekblad*, of 17 March 1978, Mr HR Schneider-Waterberg writes the following:

“For the farmer who is happy with a weaning weight of 160kg and a calf percentage of 50, there is a wide choice of cattle breeds. However, for the pasture-conscious farmer who strives for maximum production per hectare, the Santa Gertrudis is the answer.” How true is this statement. As mentioned in this *Landbouweekblad*: “in order to maintain and continue to improve the good qualities of the Santa Breed, selection and evaluation will take place continuously. All available tools must be used for this purpose.” This is truly still our success and goal today and will be so in the next following 50 years.

## SANTA GERTRUDIS LOGO'S OVER THE YEARS



» This logo was used until 2002



» This logo was used from 2002 till 2015



» Current Logo since 2015

## THE MODERN ERA OF THE SOCIETY

The objectives of the Society are to promote the breed in terms of genetic improvement and to examine breed standards on a regular basis. Council must make sure that these standards are implemented correctly for animal improvement. An important goal is to breed purebred cattle to provide breeding stock for other breeders and commercial cattle farmers and to provide them with good genetics.

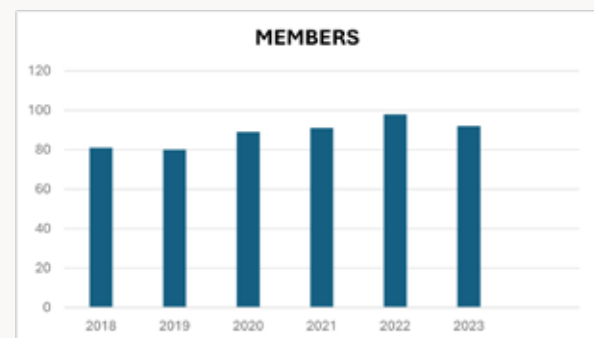
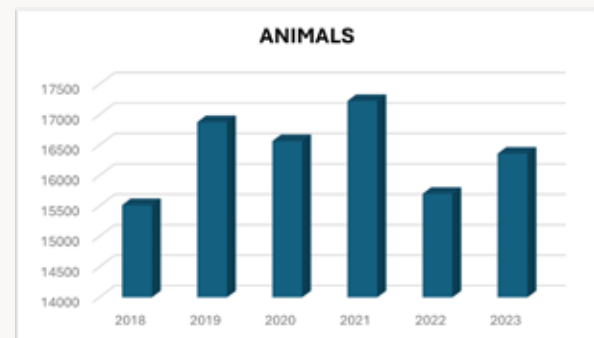
The excellent characteristics of the Santa cattle are impressive, the breeding principles of our breeders have remained intact over the years and breeders are still selecting strictly for adaptability and functional efficiency. The achievements over the years speak for themselves. Several achievements in carcass competitions, winners

of mentors with the ARC awards, judges at world shows, etc.

A major milestone was reached when a reference population of Santa animals was established in 2023, compiled by SA Studbook, and were the first genomic BLUP releases.

Times have changed with new technologies and members were encouraged over the years to participate in production recording to make informed decisions in their herds, it is essential to keep accurate records. Breeders receive breeding values which they can use to identify the most efficient and productive animals in their herds. An Annual Report is compiled annually by SA Studbook which includes weight measurements (birth, weaning, 12- and 18- months, cow weight at calving as well as cow weight at weaning of the calf). These weights are measured and recorded on the farm by the breeder. Weight averages for males and females are adjusted for age to take age variation into account. Fertility traits, such as age at first calving and inter-calving period, are calculated by the Logix Beef System based on birth notifications received from the breeders.

## BREED NUMBERS



## Breed performance information as published in the Santa Gertrudis Annual Report 2022 (period 1 January to 31 December 2022) compiled by SA Studbook

**Table 1:** Reproduction statistics

Reproduction	Months / Days
Average age at first calving (months)	33
Average inter-calving period (days)	442

**Table 2:** Average weights

Average weights	kg
Average Birth weight	36
Average weaning weight	223
Average 12 month weight	296
Average 18 month weight	341
Cow weights at calving	481
Cow weights at weaning	512

### BRIGHT FUTURE AND THE WAY FORWARD

The Santa Gertrudis Society is experiencing growing interest in the breed, not only with our stud breeders, but especially for the commercial breeders and those who want to do crossbreeding. Breeders will have to keep adapting without neglecting the economically important traits of the breed. Breeders must be encouraged to keep on doing proper performance measuring. As the Santa Gertrudis is a low maintenance breed which is very cost effective and popular in the feedlots, opportunities must be seized to promote the breed not only in South-Africa, but also outside South-Africa. It is very important to put high quality bulls in the market. Feedlots play a valuable role in the value chain and it is important to also produce carcasses that are acceptable for the market as well as with good quality dressing percentage and meat carcasses. Besides breeding genetics for the stud and commercial farmers, breeders need to stay informed as well. Emerging farmers need to be involved and informed about the benefits of breeding with Santas.

To keep our high standards, our values must be constant:

- Excellence in everything we do.
- Integrity and high standards in everything we do.
- Impeccable business principles and ethics.
- A common ethos amongst all our breeders.
- Dynamic policies and business strategy.
- A respect for all other breeds.

Let's take hands and make this breed the best and most sought after breed and be proud of what we have to offer. The Society's success depends on you, the breeder, and strive not only to be a success, but rather to be of value!

