

WHY BREED FOR 60 DAYS?

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Cow reasons to run a 60-day Breeding/Calving season:

- The ideal calving date is when reliable spring rains start and temperatures are high enough for growth. 60 days of breeding brings the whole herd close to this ideal date.
- The table above shows spring veld has the highest quality, lowest cost protein, and energy to easily meet the cows needs to produce milk well, hold or gain condition and come on heat. Phosphorus is also at its peak. If the veld is grazed properly and recovered to most palatable stage, higher quality is extended later into the season.
- **Late calving cows cannot use this valuable resource efficiently.** Best grazing is over. Early calving cows on low quality winter veld lose condition, or need expensive lick and new born calves are susceptible to cold stress, pneumonia, death.

Calf reasons:

- **The calf gets the full potential of milk supply on good grazing in spring.** It gets the highest quality of the year now, not a year later if it is born too late.
- **Calves graze more very palatable grass earlier and add extra growth with milk.** The rumen therefore also develops earlier to use the lower quality grass better later on.

Requirement/supply comparison*

Category, Average rain	Protein range	Energy as TDN%
Cow + 1-3 month calf	11%	56%
Veld (sweet/sour spring)	11% -14%	55% - 60%
Veld sweet/sour summer	9% -12%	52% - 57%
Veld sweet/sour autumn	5% - 9%	48% - 54%
Veld sweet/sour winter	3.5 – 7.5%	42% - 50%
Cow, mid pregnancy	7.1%	49%

Management reasons:

- Operations such as castrating, vaccinating and weaning are done more efficiently in fewer sessions with less labour at lower cost and less herd trek and kraaling stress.
- Weaning is more flexible; e.g. easier to wean earlier in drought, feed calves, spare cows.
- Any lick fed matches what the herd needs, because all requirements are similar. Lick is not constantly either, too much for pregnant cows and too little for milking cows.
- Alternatively, two licks for two different herds add management and labour cost.
- **Drought is easier to manage with fewer nutritional groups.**

Selection reasons:

- **Valid comparisons and reliable selection.** These are impossible with long or two breeding seasons. The cows nursing calves and their calves are getting a completely different quality grazing diet at different times of the year, making a nonsense of analysis of performance data for selection.

- Pressure to be fertile and calve at the right time is increased with valid comparisons.

Complaints:

- “My bulls will be overworked in 60 days”. Much evidence-based data shows that fertile bulls with fertile cows in good condition will achieve the same pregnancy rates of more than 85% at a ratio of 1 bull: 40 cows in 60 days versus longer seasons.
- “My cows need more time to come on heat”. It is not about time. 50 days after birth is plenty of time. It is about good breeding condition and the right food for production.
- “Nature has bulls all year round with no breeding season”. **Nature ensures young are born at good grazing time otherwise the young are weak and die with not enough milk.** They get no lick! Early and late born young get no “safety in numbers” and get taken out by lion, leopard, etc. Selection for a short calving season is severe.

* The use of Total Digestible Energy (TDN) is dated (now mega joules/kg) but is used for simple comparative purposes and because it is expressed, like protein, as%.