



LEFT: The entrance to Abel Naphtaly's farm. FAR LEFT: Abel Naphtaly with some of his Santa Gertrudis cattle.



MOVER-AND-SHAKER

In 1992 he left Agrico and started his own business, a security company called Naphtronics based in South Africa's North West Province. He started with one employee, fitting car alarms and radios and home alarms and business alarms. Three months later he had to hire two more staff members. The

Abel Naphtaly shows **DREAMS DO COME TRUE**

When a go-getter entrepreneur bought an ox to celebrate his business achievements, he fell head over heels in love with the beautiful heifers he saw on the farm and decided he would breed cattle himself. Four years later, he has another success story to tell.

Abel Naphtaly is a dreamer, but a dreamer with a difference – he has the ability to make his dreams become reality. And he is so determined to achieve his goals that he ends up living his dreams. Once he has considered all the factors that could influence the outcome, he moves into action with everything at his disposal to realise the dream that makes life meaningful to him.

Born on 17 December 1955, Naphtaly hails from Middelputs in Botswana's Kalahari district. After matriculating in 1974, he started in-service training at the department of post and telecommunications in that country. In 1980 he joined Radio Bophuthatswana

as a radio technicians. In 1983 he moved to the Agrico Development Cooperation, working as an audio engineer and helping the training department with producing audiovisual materials for agriculture.

business grew fast and soon a security guards division, called "Flash Security", was launched.

In 2000, Naphtaly entered the Business Directives competition ran by a Spanish enterprise in Madrid. He won a Gold Star award for quality management, which further boosted his growing business.

Three years later, he went on to scoop gold and platinum awards for quality management at a competition in New York which saw participation from 64 countries.

BECOMING A FARMER

While making preparations to cele-



Abel Naphtaly's Santa Gertrudis cattle graze on pastures of blue buffalo grass.

brate these achievements, Naphtaly visited several farmers in the Rooigrond and Buhmannsdrif areas. In this way he met Thys de Kock on his farm near Molopo Eye and bought an ox for the festivities from him. While the ox was being slaughtered Naphtaly explored the farm and spotted some beautiful heifers in De Kock's kraal. So began his dream to farm with cattle.

When he initially approached De Kock about his idea and told him he wanted to buy the cattle, the farmer said he didn't think Naphtaly could afford them. But Naphtaly told De Kock: "Maybe I haven't got the money to buy them now, but the love I have for those cattle will enable me to get the resources to buy them."

He paid several more visits to the farm to admire the cattle and prayed for help to fulfil his dream of owning the beautiful animals.

When Naphtaly told his wife and children about his interest in the cattle, they asked him, "Where are you going to keep the cattle, you have no land." He replied that God would provide. On a Sunday after church and lunch at a restaurant, he took his family to see De Kock's cattle for themselves. They agreed that the heifers were very beautiful. They prayed and went home.

The following Wednesday Naphtaly

phoned the farmer to enquire about the price of the cattle. De Kock laughed, but promised that he would weigh the animals and offer him a price per kilogram.

Naphtaly bought 19 heifers with savings from his pension and asked Chief Shole of the Ramatlabama area if he could keep his cattle there. The chief agreed and he applied for a piece of land where he eventually built his kraals.

FALLING VICTIM TO STOCK THEFT

During his first week of farming Naphtaly realised that he needed a bull. He went to Derby and bought a Simbra-Limousine cross bull and three more heifers. In March 2003 all his heifers disappeared at Ramatlabama. They were already pregnant and Naphtaly was devastated, but he nevertheless stayed determined to pursue his dream. "I could not allow thieves to dictate my future," he says.

In May 2003 he started buying calves and weaners. He was no longer concerned about the breed and merely wanted cattle to plug the hole in his heart. Nine months later he had acquired 45 heifers, which he kept on Judge President Mogwe's farm. He then contacted the department of land affairs to enquire about a farm to

rent and a while later they gave him the good news that they had found a suitable farm for him. Naphtaly then arranged for a bank overdraft to buy more cattle.

FARMING WITH A SPECIFIC BREED

He decided that he wanted to farm with quality cattle of a specific breed. On his way back from visiting his security business at Kuruman one day, he saw a signpost with a picture of a Santa Gertrudis bull on it. He took the turnoff and met Tina and Willie de Jager, who later became his friends. Their love for the breed inspired him to farm with Santa Gertrudis. "It was a good choice that makes me very proud when I walk among my cattle," says Naphtaly.

He bought two stud bulls and 30 stud heifers from the De Jagers. They immunised the cattle against heartwater and three weeks later delivered them to him at Klippan in the Jagersfontein area.

Naphtaly then realised that if he put his money in the bank, he would only receive 8% interest, while he could earn 10 times more investing in cattle. He informed his family about his decision. It would mean spending more time on the farm he was leasing in order to protect his investment there.

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“If I could not afford to be on the farm, the environment would take my investment away,” said Naphtaly. He became increasingly committed and dedicated to farming.

A FARM OF HIS OWN

Naphtaly became involved in physical work on the farm and discovered that it was good for his health and added to his enjoyment of the business.

Little did he know how close he was to his dream of owning a farm. The farm next to the one he was renting came on the market. Naphtaly responded to the advertisement and discussed his aspirations with Gideon Morule, the president of North West African Farmer’s Union, and Kettle Mabiletsa, deputy director of district services in the department of agriculture, conservation and environment of North West Province. They referred him to an associate at Agri Start. The necessary arrangements were made and Naphtaly succeeded in getting a loan from a commercial bank to buy an excellent piece of farmland of nearly 1 000 ha that was even partly game-fenced.

He clearly remembers how the farm nearly slipped through his fingers. Time was running out and despite having a loan, the land affairs grant could not be paid over due to a claim.

BOXING SMART

It was Wednesday and the offer would lapse on Friday. He had already paid the seller R100 000 and this could be lost if he could not raise the remaining R700 000 by Friday. Morule and Mabiletsa concluded that if Naphtaly kept a nucleus herd of stud cattle and sold the rest, he could raise the amount needed. The money was paid to the lawyer at 2 pm on Friday. “What a relief, but what a terrible feeling of pain knowing that more than 150 of my cattle were gone,” Naphtaly remembers. But he worked even harder and today he will tell you painful decisions are sometimes necessary to secure one’s goals. With only a few years of farming under his belt, Naphtaly was nominated as one of the three finalists in the 2007 Developing Cattle Farmer of the Year awards.

Cois Harman is a director of Agri Start in Zeerust. 🌐



Abel Naphtaly shows off his stud bull to banker Johan de Klerk.

ture becoming more technical you need youngsters (male and female) with technological savvy to keep up with the changes and to come up with ideas. In this regard I’m happy to say we already have a programme focused on bringing the youth into agriculture. For continuity I would hope that after me a much younger person will take over the reins.

5. Do you foresee Nerpo merging with the (predominately white, commercial) Red Meat Producers Organisation?

I’m afraid not in this decade, as there are still many challenges facing our members. Give us some time, our people and their priorities might get lost in one super organisation. At the RPO the stakeholders talk about technical stuff and export, while we are still trying to explain the basics (among others commercial livestock rearing) to our people. We also still need to seriously look out for markets for our people, so that we’re not left with a problem when they start producing. The availability of land is going to be a challenge to some of our farmers, but for that we’ll need to fight hard with the relevant authorities. 🌐