



### Mondays with David Allan



*What we are recording.*

## Essential work: Sharpening up South Africa's databases

**It's all fine and dandy promoting South African racing overseas to the important few who respond in partnership or individually. On the whole, it is not financial life or death and it is *generally* not a professional involvement to the extent demanded by breeding as opposed to racing, with several important exceptions.**

When promoting breeding involvement or - with exports prospectively looming large - related cross-trading, the parameters are different. We need to be educating entire industries that are currently (mostly) ignorant of South African bloodstock. But we are short of the tools that are to be found in most other countries.

Professionals will need to "bone up" on the SA bloodstock industry, meaning act like a sponge and absorb all available information. Confronted with unfamiliar names like Dynasty or What a Winter, or "Fort Wood Mares" or All is Secret, that person will lock him/herself away in a dark room and research,

research, research whether acting as a principal or an adviser to one.

How many mares has XYZ Stallion covered over the past few seasons? What is his fertility? How does it compare to others in the top 20? Can we see patterns of success with this that or the other broodmare sire, or bottom row female line? Where are the ratings of progeny? Let's look at itemised sales results- every offspring sold nationwide - and so on.

Hours later, that researcher would burst out into the light saying "I can't find much detail" (*to page 2*)



## Researching for the sales?

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#### **DAVID ALLAN** (*cont fm p1*)

whereas all of what can reasonably be desired in terms of in-depth data can be found in hard copy or on line in many bloodstock jurisdictions.

This writer has lived and breathed by the UK and Irish versions for a very long time. The main ingredients are the Weatherbys Stallion Book stuffed full of information from commercial stats to fertility; The Return of Mares, a brilliant read for bloodstock geeks in which every mare in the land is shown with what foal she produced that year and which stallion she then visited, indexed per mare also per stallion; Thoroughbred Sales Guides for every yearling sale, and the Timeform narratives and ratings produced days before Horses in Training Sales for every relevant lot; also the Bloodstock Sales Reviews Parts 1 and 2, giving detailed data on the sale of every yearling, every foal, everywhere.

Updating seems instantaneous. In fact the new "Global Stallions" App (which is a Bloodhorse/Weatherbys effort) undertakes to be updated for racing and breeding data three times per day not only overnight.

UK and Irish breeders are pretty good at registering every foal born January-June by 31<sup>st</sup> July, paying more if they miss. Now, if any foal is not formally registered within one year of birth, that foal will never be permitted to race, ever. That is a two way street. Breeders must act and the system must

cope.

To accelerate data further, breeders from 2018 are obliged to inform the authorities (no fee) within 30 days of the birth of every foal, with registration to follow. 13,600 of 'em (UK & Ireland).

In South Africa, the timetable recently published by the SAEHP in relation to export strategies lifts our spirits. Here we have a body of people now mixing decades of bloodstock experience with business and political skills and scientific knowledge backed by other brilliant SA scientists and worthy functionaries.

The standout words in Adrian Todd's release were (for me): "*The team has unified the South African Industry....*". One of the senior members of that Task Team said last year at a meeting that I attended on another matter: "*South Africans can agree with each other for about a week...*". There was an element of irony of course, but the encouragement from the unity manifested in SAEHP is substantial, engendering high optimism for their timeline targets which include: *physical resumption of direct trade with the EU by December 2018/January 2019*. I guess it could be sooner, but a timeline usually means "aiming to be not later than".

Correct me if I'm wrong, but that resumption would not be limited to SA-EU trading. It would greatly speed up the current routing of exports via the EU to Dubai, Hong Kong and Singapore by eliminating the Mauritius stint and more. Future direct traffic to those territories is targeted for December 2019

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SA +27(0)21 828 9288 | SA mobile +27(0)72 740 9061  
UK +44(0)1252 646611 | UK mobile +44(0)7774 697640  
davidallan@allanbloodlines.com | www.allanbloodlines.com





which would be Boost Number 2 and wonderful if achieved.

However the actual SA-EU interaction would have a far bigger breeding element than with the non-breeding importers mentioned above. With such an opening of minds, the blank looks that we get when mentioning a special SA bloodline must reduce rapidly, whether considering exports to the EU or investment in breeding in SA. But the public databases are not there or not up to date.

All such data emanates from the Stud Book of a given nation. No bang up to date Stud Book, no matching coherence in pedigrees around the world at a time when rapid export quarantine may demand rapid and correct documentation. International Cataloguing Committees are patting Kazakhstan, for Heaven's sake, on the head for enforcing corrected records while expressing concerns about South Africa needing to catch up.

South Africa certainly has the capabilities to match anyone for data processing. The Formgrids software is superb, albeit rebuilding after a blood-curdling mishap. It is not as if the British Horseracing Authority actually does the work itself or even relies on domestic expertise. Its own Chief Executive has been an Aussie which demonstrates eye-brow raising broad-mindedness.

In the work itself, Weatherbys have had a bit of practice starting in 1770. But that firm does the work under contract to the BHA. In other words what started as in-house has been *outsourced* for a few hundred years, resulting in all the publications

you or I could ever need in addition to a huge Stud Book accurate back to the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Article 4.3 of Chapter 1 of the Constitution of the NHA states that one of its objects is to maintain and publish the General Stud Book. If it has fallen behind, that would be a constitutional contradiction. But if that is where we are, let's look forward positively. That Article is clear insofar as the NHA must be responsible for the Stud Book but it does not say that it cannot outsource the work.

What would it take to put together a small squad of expert focussed people to spend three months chasing late or vanished data going back a few years to get things mostly up to date? They don't have to be employed for ever.

Good Grief if I think I could easily put those experts together and keep everyone happy, surely someone actually in a position of power could do so. **- tt.**

