The annual National Beef Performers Awards presented by the National Beef recording and Improvement Scheme

Each year, the National Beef Recording and Improvement Scheme (NBRIS) of the Agricultural Research Council presents awards to showcase and acknowledge our country's most outstanding achievers in breeding genetically superior animals using performance recording as a tool. The awards also highlight the ARC's role in applying technologies that address the needs of the beef breeding and production industry. The awards event has become one of the highlights on the South African agricultural calendar and receives widespread publicity in the agricultural media. The objectives of the NBRIS include increasing production efficiency, enhancing product value, developing more reliable and sustainable production systems, improving marketing strategies and increasing profitability, all of which contribute to food security.

Currently eight award-categories are annually contested:

✓ The ARC National Special Performance Test Class, *sponsored by DAFF*

✓ The ARC National Best Elite Cow Awards, *sponsored by Farmer's Weekly*

✓ The ARC National Platinum Bull Awards, *sponsored by GMPBasic*

✓ The ARC National Emerging Beef Farmer of the Year Award, *sponsored by DAFF*

✓ The ARC National Beef Cattle Improvement Herd of the Year Award, *sponsored by DAFF*

✓ The ARC National Young Breeder of the Year Award, sponsored by ARC

✓ The ARC National Small Scale Commercial Beef Producer of the Year Award, sponsored by ARC

✓ The ARC National KyD Province of the Year Award, sponsored by DAFF

ARC NATIONAL SPECIAL PERFORMANCE TEST CLASS
sponsored by DAFF

One of the aims of this category is to also promote the appropriate use of performance data in the show ring and all bulls that have completed a standardised growth test (Phase C) of the ARC's NBRIS and that received either a Gold or a Silver Merit are eligible to participate. Each nominated bull must also have been inspected and approved by the relevant breed society. All bulls competing in this category are, on the day of adjudication, visually evaluated by interbreed judges in terms of functional efficiency and appearance only as they are already qualified to participate based on their performance figures.

ARC NATIONAL BEST ELITE COW AWARDS
sponsored by Farmer's Weekly

Cows should exhibit exceptional performance figures to be eligible to compete in this category, including outstanding reproduction figures and a proven track record in other economically important traits such as maternal ability and pre-weaning growth rate (weaning weight). Cows

from all breeds are eligible to participate in this category. The cow must be alive at the time of evaluation and cows from registered as well as commercial herds may participate. Other criteria for evaluation include (for registered cows); the age at first calving; the average inter-calving period; days since the last calving; the completeness of records for weaning weights; performance records (Breeding Values) regarding wean direct and wean maternal; birth maternal (where available) and the number of calves with reliable weaning weights. For commercial cows where no BLUP breeding values are available, the criteria evaluated include, in addition to criteria already mentioned, the weaning index of the cow's calves individually as well as for all calves weaned. Additional criteria used to identify the best performing cow per breed include breeding values for birth and weaning; average efficiency index (if available); approval ratio (percentage of her progeny approved for registration by the relevant breeders' society); reproduction index and the percentage of performance tested calves. Cows are evaluated only on performance figures and a cow that participated in this category in a previous year is not eligible to participate again.

ARC NATIONAL PLATINUM BULL AWARDS
sponsored by GMPBasic

This category is also affectionately known as "*the best from the best*" category. For a bull to be considered for this award, it had to be bred from an exceptionally performing dam. The bull also had to receive a Gold Merit in the ARC's Phase C test while its mother had to receive an Elite Cow Award before or during the year in which the bull received the Gold Merit award. Bulls considered for the ARC National Platinum Awards had to complete the Phase C test between 1 January and 31 December in the year preceding the award.

2016 ARC NATIONAL EMERGING BEEF FARMER OF THE YEAR AWARDS
sponsored by DAFF

Having started modestly in Limpopo and North West, the ARC flagship project *Kaonofatso ya Dikgomo* (KyD) Scheme has grown into a national scheme and performs a capacity-building function for farmers and young people. DAFF declared the *Kaonafatso ya Dikgomo* Scheme as a national animal recording and improvement scheme in 2007 to assist emerging cattlemen in adopting and applying the available beef recording and improvement technology to increase the productivity and profitability of their herds through improved management practices and accurate selection for economically important traits. The awards finalists are selected through a set of criteria that include general farm management, record keeping, and herd performance.

2016 ARC NATIONAL YOUNG BREEDER OF THE YEAR AWARD
Sponsored by ARC

This award recognises the progress of a South African cattleman younger than 30 years of age who uses performance testing as a tool to improve the genetics of his/her herd through targeted breeding. The winner of this category must also have a proven track record in this regard. A participant should furthermore clearly demonstrate leadership skills and involvement with industry in a formal capacity. He or she must also be acknowledged by industry when it comes to breeding and management of genetically superior animals.

2016 ARC NATIONAL SMALL SCALE COMMERCIAL BEEF PRODUCER OF THE YEAR AWARD
Sponsored by ARC

This award aims to recognise a commercial beef producer who, under the mentorship of an established breeder, participates in performance testing and has made outstanding progress in his/her own enterprise. The recipient should also display a passion and enthusiasm for breeding of genetically superior animals and must have a proven track record when it comes to breeding more efficient animals in his/her own herd by making use of performance recording and associated technologies.

2016 ARC NATIONAL KyD PROVINCE OF THE YEAR AWARD
Sponsored by DAFF

This award recognises the province with the highest number of participating farmers in the scheme. These farmers must be registered on the INTERGIS and must have loaded data on the database between March of the year preceding the award and April of the year of the award. The first three provinces with the highest number of participating farmers receive the accolades Platinum, Gold and Silver respectively.

2016 ARC NATIONAL BEEF CATTLE IMPROVEMENT HERD OF THE YEAR AWARDS
sponsored by DAFF

This award is considered to be one of the most prestigious accolades in the South African beef industry and will a prize that includes an all-paid visit to the annual conference of the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) in the USA. Participation in this award category is open to herds from all breeds in South Africa. The primary purpose of this award is to acknowledge breeders that excel in several criteria related to performance testing, genetic improvement, breeding and management. The top herds are identified based on a wide range of criteria, including the level of reproduction; the level of participation in performance testing and the application of performance testing as a tool for improvement; cow efficiency in the herd (including post-weaning performance); the completeness of performance records; the size of the cow herd (must consist of at least 50 cows); the calving performance of the herd; genetic progress in the herd and the application of modern scientific breeding techniques. The breeders' level of involvement in mentoring other farmers, their involvement in official industry structures and the degree to which they act as role models to other farmers and prospective breeders are also evaluated. Qualifying breeders in this category must be proponents of the application of scientific technologies aimed at genetic improvement of the genepool of the national herd.