



# NEWSLETTER



## Community-based Fire Management Efforts

Page 2

**Landmark Auction  
in Mozambique**

**Page 4**

**Benefits of Fleece  
Naturally Africa**

**Page 6**

**Preparing  
Ecotrainers**

**Page 8**

## Fire Management Based in Community Skill and Participation

The Global Wildfire Information System reported that during one week in August 2024 there was a surge in wildfires worldwide, mainly in Africa and particularly in Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo. With a weekly tracking period from 2012 to 2024, the global wildfire burn rate was 64% higher than any previous week. A wildfire consumes vegetation indiscriminately, burning forests, shrublands and grasslands, savannas, and croplands. Wildfires can be caused by human activity like arson, unattended fires or planned burns gone out of control; others can be started by natural causes like lightning. The amount of area burned by wildfires is driven by several factors: weather patterns, human activity, the management of vegetation and landscapes, and responses to suppress their spread.

Meat Naturally's Community-Based Fire Management (CBFM) is designed to empower communities with the skills and tools to prevent and manage wildfires. By understanding fire risks and implementing effective management practices, communities can protect their land thereby protecting livelihoods as well as the environment.

CBFM is essential for safeguarding the long-term sustainability of the landscapes that MN supports. It is crucial to protect the regenerative grazing reserves that make livestock farming possible. By preventing uncontrolled wildfires, rangeland degradation can be reduced and soil carbon stocks become a stable force in climate change mitigation efforts. Community-Based Fire Management methods make individual communities the first line of defence for farmers and cattle owners.



The multi-step CBFM process considers the needs of a community, the local support for the project, and what training would be necessary to prepare the local defence. A newly created Fire Management Committee assumes responsibility for future hazard assessments and annual updating of the Fire Management Plan. This Committee will also develop action plans like constructing firebreaks and keeping the community informed about individual responsibilities and need for

awareness. Should a fire occur, the committee will coordinate response efforts and do follow-up assessment of the incident to improve future defence tactics. MN will continue to support the community with technical training, mentorship, planning and construction.

CBFM initiatives have already realized significant achievements thanks to collaborations with disaster management agencies, the Working on Fire Programme, and local forestry companies. Participating communities have seen a marked decrease in the frequency and severity of wildfires because they are better equipped to handle fire-related challenges. As MN moves forward, we are committed to refining our approaches and incorporating new technologies and strategies that will enhance the effectiveness of our fire management efforts.



## ROOTING OUT INVADERS, RESTORING RANGELANDS!!

As the winter season came to an end, the participants of grazing associations in the landscape that Meat Naturally Africa (MNA) works in embarked on a necessary chore to clear out invasive alien plants (IAP) infesting their rangelands. Due to the shortage of working tools, the grazing associations took the initiative to write a letter of request to MNA asking for tools needed to accomplish the task.

The letter listed the names of association members who would volunteer and who be responsible for managing the tools. A map illustrating the area that needed to be cleared accompanied the request letter.

MNA replied with the conditions that only associations that had already started removing wattle would be provided with tools and tools that were not used would be collected. A total of nine grazing associations were provided with two sizes of tree poppers, safety goggles, axes, saws and hand gloves. The tools were delivered to the following catchments: Tsitsa catchment (4), Middle catchment (2) and Mzimkhulu catchment (3).

Participants of the Readsdale association in Mzimkhulu agreed among themselves to develop a weekly roster to remove the wattle on Wednesdays. The Singibi Association in the Tsitsa catchment shared that farmers who are unable to work themselves contribute at least a minimum of R10 or lunch to support those who will be on the rangeland removing the wattle.

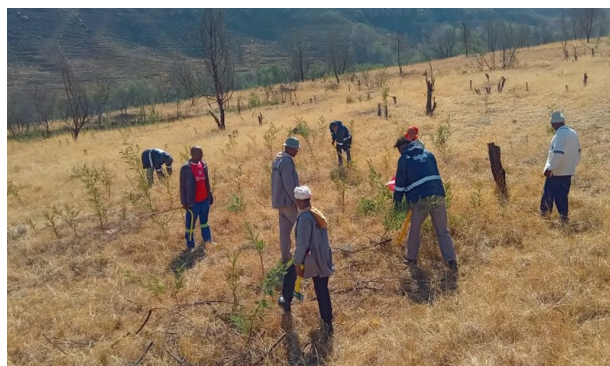
To date, Mbuyisa Imvelo (in the middle catchment), one of the grazing associations that received IAP tools, has cleared 7ha of wattle in their rangeland. Some women were excited about removing wattle because they could collect the biomass for making firewood or selling it to areas that lack firewood. Livestock farmers noted that removing wattle clears out rangelands for grazing.



*IAP clearing at Mzimkhulu (Readsdale GA)*



*Lunch at Mzimkhulu (Readsdale GA)*



*IAP clearing at Singibi GA (Tsitsa)*



*Tool demonstration at Hlankomo GA (Tsitsa)*

## Forging Connections: Auction Event Empowers Communal Farmers in Mozambique

In a powerful demonstration of commitment to community development and conservation, in early 2024 Meat Naturally joined forces with the Peace Parks Foundation and the Herding for Health Programme at Limpopo National Park to host an inaugural auction event in Massinger, Mozambique. This landmark event not only showcased the potential of auctions as a means of market access but also highlighted the transformative impact of the Herding for Health model for communal farmers living adjacent to the park.

This was a crucial test for the viability of auctions as a mechanism for providing market access to farmers who implement the Herding for Health model. The event demonstrated a collaborative effort to reward farmers who actively participate in conservation initiatives. With seventeen animals sold in this initial venture, it became evident that auctions have the potential to create economic opportunities in communities adjacent to conservation areas.



The Herding for Health model, which emphasizes sustainable livestock management practices and community engagement, has been instrumental in fostering harmonious relationships between communities and conservation efforts. By supporting this model, Meat Naturally is not only investing in the well-being of communal farmers living within or

alongside key conservation areas but also contributing to the preservation of biodiversity and ecosystems in the region.

Moving forward, there will be further engagement with farmers and buyers to assess the desirability of future sale events and identify areas for improvement in the system. Through these ongoing efforts, Meat Naturally is not only supporting local economies but also fostering a culture of sustainability and stewardship. By incentivizing farmers to adopt practices that promote the health of both livestock and ecosystems, Meat Naturally in collaboration with its partners is laying the groundwork for a more resilient and prosperous future for communities and conservation alike.

Meat Naturally would like to extend a huge thanks to Peace Parks Foundation, Herding for Health, Mozambique Government and Limpopo National Park Teams for enabling this event!

## MN Kruger Meats Builds Momentum Adjacent to Kruger National Park

MN Kruger Meats continues to make significant strides in its mission to promote sustainable livestock production and conservation efforts in the buffer zone of Kruger National Park. It has solidified its role as a key player in the region's regenerative agriculture movement.

Since February 2024, MN Kruger Meats has purchased and processed 52 livestock from 32 farming households living adjacent to the park. These farmers are part of Conservation South Africa's Conservation Agreements that focus on improving grazing practices and restoring ecosystems in the Kruger buffer zone. Through this initiative, farmers were paid a total of R446,620 for their animals up to the end of August, offering them a fair market for their sustainably raised livestock.



To further enhance their operations, the MN Kruger Meats slaughter team underwent specialized butchery training and purchased new equipment, boosting their efficiency and product quality. This investment is already paying off, as the company secured its first regular order in August for 100kg of drywors and 800kg of stew beef per month. This addition to their existing offerings enables MN Kruger Meats to meet diverse customer preferences with fresh, high-quality, inspected meat products.

MN Kruger Meats hosted an Open Day for local female entrepreneurs, focusing on how these women can expand their businesses by selling meat products. The

event provided valuable insights into the types of meat that can be sold through their networks and explored ways MN Kruger Meats could become a reliable supplier for them. The company, in collaboration with Africa Foundation, aims to support a network of women and youth distributors, helping them build their businesses while promoting the conservation message. This initiative has the potential to bring sustainable meat to the growing population of Bushbuckridge Municipality.



## Fleece Naturally Africa Holds Farmers' Day: Empowering Farmers in the Eastern Cape

Fleece Naturally Africa recently held a series of successful Farmers' Days events across the Eastern Cape communal areas, drawing over 700 farmers from eight different sites. These events aimed to enhance livestock management techniques, build on sustainable grazing practices, and introduce the concepts around the Responsible Wool Standards (RWS) among local farmers. The events were structured around hands-on training sessions that directly addressed critical gaps in animal management, with a focus on practical skills and knowledge relevant to the unique challenges and gaps identified by the community.

A key aspect of the Farmers' Days was the detailed, hands-on demonstrations provided by our expert team from Fleece Naturally Africa in partnership with ERS, CSA and

with great support from Afrivet. These sessions covered crucial aspects of sheep management, including the



optimal timing and proper methods for lamb castration and tail docking, early disease identification and management, low-stress handling techniques and the importance of proper stock registration and ear tattooing.

In an effort to promote sustainable wool production, the team introduced the Responsible Wool Standard (RWS) to the participating farmers. The RWS is a voluntary global standard that ensures wool is sourced from farms that manage their land responsibly and treat their sheep humanely. The concept was well received by the farmers, who expressed keen interest in adopting these practices to improve the quality and marketability of their wool products.

To encourage the active participation and celebration of female farmers during Women's Month, Fleece Naturally Africa implemented a unique: at the end of the day, women who demonstrated the best understanding of the RWS principles

were awarded castration tools for lambs.

The events also featured an auction of breeding rams, aimed to improve the

genetic quality of local livestock by making high-quality rams accessible at affordable prices. This initiative is expected to have a lasting impact on livestock production in the communities, contributing to healthier and more productive animals.

The success of these events underscores the dedication of FNA, partner organizations and the local farmers in promoting sustainable agricultural practices. Moving forward, FNA plans to build on this momentum by continuing to work with farmer associations through training and support, furthering the collective mission to enhance the livelihoods of small-scale farmers in the Eastern Cape while restoring vital communal grasslands.



# Fleece Naturally Africa

## WHO IS FLEECE NATURALLY?

Fleece Naturally is a business that works with farmers and farmer associations to:

- Make sheep healthier and better bred.
- Improve how animals graze to keep the land healthy.
- Help farmers sell wool by providing mobile shearing sheds and getting Responsible Wool Standard (RWS) certification.



## WHAT IS THE RESPONSIBLE WOOL STANDARD?

The RWS is a global certification for sheep wool. It ensures:

- Wool comes from animals that are treated well.
- Grazing land is well-managed.
- People working with sheep and wool are treated fairly.



Wool that meets this standard is worth more money.

## WHY IS FLEECE NATURALLY PROMOTING RWS IN MY AREA?

Fleece Naturally helps farmers meet RWS standards to get their wool certified. This increases farmers' income and improves animal health, wool quality, and land health.

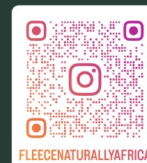


## WHAT IS REQUIRED OF A COMMUNITY TO BE PART OF RWS AND FLEECE NATURALLY?

To join, all farmers must agree through their Farmer's Association and follow their Rangeland Stewardship Agreement. Farmers must also manage their animals and land according to RWS guidelines.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF RWS AND FLEECE NATURALLY TO FARMERS AND COMMUNITIES?

- Healthier animals through better breeding and care.
- Healthier land through managed grazing by trained eco-rangers.
- Better quality fleece from improved breeding, feeding, and animal care.
- Access to shearing and higher price at wool sales
- Access to premium wool markets in the future.



Learn more:  
0678106453



Fleece Naturally Africa  
1 Hawkins Avenue, Matatiela, 4730

## 15 New Candidates Start the Ecotrainer Course

Fifteen candidates have completed the first phase of the Ecotrainer Course, which ran from 14<sup>th</sup> July to 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2024. The candidates, selected from existing Ecoranger groups across KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and the Eastern Cape (EC) landscapes, have been equipped with advanced skills in regenerative farming and livestock health.

The course, organised as part of the Meat Naturally (MN) GRASS programme, provided in-depth training on regenerative grazing practices and livestock health. The goal was to enhance the candidates' expertise, preparing them to serve as Ecotrainers. In this role, they will train new Ecorangers and Farmers, assist farmer associations in maximizing their potential as business units, and work with MN specialists to implement Rangeland Stewardship Agreements (RSAs).

This training went beyond the basics of the Ecoranger Foundations Course, introducing more advanced topics and emphasizing practical applications. Subjects covered included:

- **Natural Resource Management**
- **Regenerative Grazing Planning**
- **Basic Mapping Skills**
- **Community-Based Fire Management**
- **Animal Nutrition**
- **Early Disease Identification**

These areas of study are crucial for the sustainable management of natural resources and the promotion of healthy livestock, which are central to the MN GRASS programmes mission.

The training event marks a significant milestone for these 15 Ecotrainers, who will continue their development with a second training session scheduled from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2024. Upon completing this final phase, they are expected to be fully prepared to lead and mentor in regenerative farming practices.

As these newly trained Ecotrainers step into their roles, their impact is anticipated to be significant, supporting the growth and sustainability of farmer associations in the KZN and EC regions.





## Reviving the Land: uMhlathuze Ecorangers' Innovative Approach to Combating Soil Erosion

In a bid to combat soil erosion and restore degraded land, the KwaJama Association (uMhlathuze/uMfolozi catchment) Ecorangers have embarked on an innovative approach using stone packs and wattle branches to stop soil erosion in a sloppy area. The initiative, led by Nathi Magubane and Sanele Xulu from the KwaJama Association, aims to promote sustainable grazing practices and revive vegetation in the area.

The initiative involves using stones to create barriers and wattle trees to stabilize the soil, preventing further erosion. By trapping soil, the Ecorangers have already seen vegetation start to return in the area over the past two years. The goal is to have the area fully vegetated within the next 7-10 years, providing more grass for cattle to graze on.

Magubane and Xulu emphasize the importance of community support for the managed grazing initiative, warning that it would be a "huge mistake" for residents not to get on board. By working together, they believe that the area can be restored to its former glory, benefiting both the environment and local livestock farmers.



*Using stone packs and wattle branches to restore degraded land and promote sustainable grazing practices*

## Summary of Meat Naturally & Partner Engagements

MN and partners conducted 757 farmer and Ecoranger support activities during the period from June-August. The geographic distribution of the engagements is shown in the table below.

