

LDA officials receive training on Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART):

By Mmaphuti Setati, Lebogang Kgole and Tubake Thobejane



Reproductive inefficiency is the major cause of economic losses in livestock production especially in rural areas such as Limpopo Province. This is due to shortage of good bulls that results in low reproductive and growth rates in the rural communities' herds. The Limpopo Department of Agriculture (LDA) in collaboration with the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) has embarked on a national programme called Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART) funded by Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) to train LDA officials working with livestock farmers on ART.

The training focuses on artificial insemination technique (AI). AI is used instead of natural mating for reproduction. It is the process by which good quality sperm are collected from superior bulls, processed, stored, and manually deposited into the cow's reproductive tract for the purpose of conception.

Sixty-five officials have already been trained on AI during November and December last year. The duration of the training was two days for each group. The first day of the course covered theoretical part on various types of reproductive technologies, basic principles of artificial insemination (AI), the oestrus cycle and synchronisation, methods of oestrus synchronisation, heat detection and description of bovine reproductive tracts.

The second day was more practical. The trainer used reproductive tracts collected from abattoirs and demonstrated how AI is done. The trainees were given the opportunity to apply AI. In this session, officials learned on how to pass the cow's cervix and to identify where semen should be deposited. The trained officials indicated that the AI technique requires more practice.

The training was held at Madzivhandila and Tompi Seleka Colleges of Agriculture as well as Towoomba and Mara Research Stations for the four groups of officials involved in animal production and animal health. The course was offered by Mr Masindi Mphaphathi who is a Researcher under the Germplasm Conservation and Reproductive Technologies at ARC.

The overall objective of the ART project is to improve productivity through application of assisted reproductive technologies to introduce superior genes to the communal herds.