

## Pure- and crossbreeding of ostriches

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There are presently three ostrich breeds available for pure- and crossbreeding, namely the South African Black (SAB), Zimbabwean Blue (ZB) and Kenyan Redneck (KR). Clear differences have been observed between the breeds in terms of size and colour, however it is unknown whether breed differences occurs for liveweight at slaughter age and for reproduction traits. Considering the economic weight of the abovementioned traits, a study was done on at the Oudtshoorn experimental for of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture, to measure growth and reproduction of each breed. Crosses between the SAB and ZB were also investigated. The SAB produced 63% more eggs and 69% more chicks than the ZB. Relative to the KR the SAB also produced 22% more eggs and 69% more chicks. ZB slaughter birds reached a 10% heavier slaughter weight than the SAB. Direct hybrid vigour for bodyweight at 12 months was 6.9% and 4.0% at 15 months. Chicks of the abovementioned breeds also showed 7% hybrid vigour for chick survival. The use of crossbred females resulted in 12% hybrid vigour for egg production and 19% for chick production. Therefore commercial production can benefit from using the good qualities of the different breeds (SAB – good reproduction and ZB – faster growth rate) and hybrid vigour in a structured crossbreeding program. For more information contact Annelin Davids (021 808 5234 [annelind@elsenburg.com](mailto:annelind@elsenburg.com)) or Prof Schalk Cloete (021 808 5230 [schalkc@elsenburg.com](mailto:schalkc@elsenburg.com))