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FRONT COVER

Before and after ... Cleaning up the Hennops River, page 11

COMMENT, by Pete Bower

How will you vote?



Welcome to 2019, the year in which we South Africans get yet another chance to decide our futures. Yes, folks, that's what your vote means – by your cross on that ballot paper in the privacy of your little voting booth you get to tell the politicians what you, as an ordinary citizen, want out of your country.

Do you want good state healthcare? Of course you do.

Do you want an end to corruption? Of course you do.

Do you want free housing? Of course you do.

Do you want free education? Of course you do.

Do you want an end to unemployment? Of course you do.

Do you want to be given free land to farm on? Of cour... Hmmm, well, maybe not, as new research shows, but that's another story.

These, then, are the obvious issues, the low-hanging fruit, that all political parties will latch on to in their manifestoes and which they will try to convince you are the core outcomes which, if favoured with your vote, they will give you.

Likely to happen? Nope. Not in five years, anyway. Let's look at why.

Healthcare. Quite apart from health minister Aaron Motsoaledi's half-baked National Health Insurance scheme (which any actuarial student will tell you is dead in the water it's so impossible to fund), the problem with the public health system is largely one of logistics. There are hospitals (maybe not enough, but they're there, anyway), but they are poorly maintained, poorly resourced, and understaffed. Wards need cleaning and painting, lifts need fixing, medical equipment needs repairing and they need more nurses. Meanwhile, sitting at home is a significant cohort of newly-trained nurses unable to work because they have not been allocated to hospitals. Solving those problems is called logistics, and the reason those problems can't be quickly solved is because of disastrous ANC cadre deployment and consequent corruption.

Housing. While the rollout of RDP housing over the past quarter of a century has been impressive, there's a long way to go yet before all poor South Africans have a decent roof over their heads. It could have gone much faster, but corrupt awarding of tenders to poorly qualified and resourced building contractors has bedevilled the progress.

Education. This is the real elephant in the room. South Africa's public education system sucks. It's dreadful. Many of the schools are bad and broken, and while there are undoubtedly pockets of excellence and some excellent teachers, many teachers are awful ~ lazy and poorly trained ~ and the curriculum has been changed far too often, with the result that many pupils leaving the system are functionally illiterate and innumerate, and practically unemployable. And nobody is fooled, apart from the politicians themselves, by the annual hyped-up announcement of improving matric results.

The solution is long-term and complex, but a good place to start would be to reopen specialist teachers' training colleges countrywide to train up a whole new class of educators and school managers while simultaneously breaking the political strength of the SA Democratic Teachers Union (Sadtu), in the same way that Margaret Thatcher broke the strength of the UK's coal miners' unions in the 1970s.

Corruption. All political parties claim to be "hard" on corruption. When politicians say they'll stamp out corruption and jail the offenders it will come out in the same way and at the same time that they tell you that they abhor racism, wife-beating, child rape and murder. Given the horror show unfolding before the Zondo Commission it would seem like the ANC will have plenty of opportunity to demonstrate just how committed it is to stamping out corruption and jailing the graft-givers and takers. Will it grasp the nettle? Frankly, I wouldn't hold my breath at this stage.

And so on. So if you ask questions about these issues expect pretty standard answers, which depending on the level of intelligence of the person answering may be more, or less, well articulated.

So instead here are the two questions which I will be asking candidates in the election who come knocking on my door, and on which I will base my vote:

What is your party's policy on the total banning of fireworks throughout SA?

What practical policies will you party implement to reduce the use, and wasteful disposal, of recyclable packaging such as plastics, to prevent it from polluting the environment, our watercourses and, ultimately, the oceans?

Hmmm... it looks like I might be making my cross for the Greens on Election Day.

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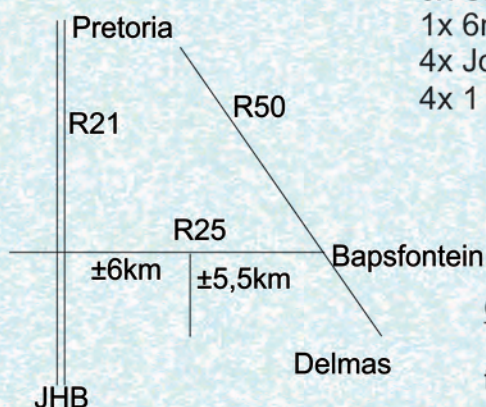
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1x Trailer + diesel tanks
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Trailer frame + axle

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Sir ~ With regard to Eskom I have a friend who has just built and moved into a new house in Bridle Park AH. Eskom quoted her R90 000 to provide electricity to her gate,

which is about 100 m from the actual house, meaning there would be significant extra costs for cable from the gate to the house, etc. At my suggestion she decided to investigate solar power and

had it installed at the house for R140 000. So for around R30 000 more than the Eskom cost she now has:
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last that long); and
 No load shedding nonsense.
Brian Reilly
Broederstroom
 And given that Eskom wants to increase electricity tariffs by up to 45% over the next five years (whether it is allowed to is another matter, of course) your friend will amortise her expenditure in no time, with the added benefit that the value of her property will increase as a result should she wish to sell it. ~ Editor

How to remove otters humanely?

Sir ~ I am wondering if you or any of your readers can help us with this problem? We have an over-abundance of otters who have depleted our goose population, not to

mention our carp and bass fish. Is there a deterrent or a solution to this problem which does not involve poison or killing? Any suggestions, ideas or

solutions will be much appreciated and I thank you in advance! We also always appreciate your informative publication.
Rita Edkins.
By email

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NEWS

FMD hits Limpopo farmers, & meat exports

It may be good news for meat-eating consumers, but it isn't good news for farmers: that's the ban on red meat exports from South Africa as a result of an outbreak of highly infectious foot and mouth disease among cattle in the Vhembe District of northeast Limpopo. Foot and mouth disease is a

severe, highly contagious viral disease which affects livestock with significant economic impact. The disease affects cattle, pigs (domestic and wild), sheep, goats, and other cloven hoofed animals, but does not affect humans. Signs may include depressed animals, sores in the mouth of animals causing a reluctance

to eat and lameness.

Suspected cases must be reported to the local State Veterinarian.

The outbreak in Vhembe was reported to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) early in January. As a result, the officially-recognised foot and mouth-free status of South Africa has

been temporarily suspended. Consequently, any exports where foot and mouth-free zone attestation is required, cannot be certified.

The affected area is under quarantine and no movement of animals and animal products are allowed. Farmers further away from the outbreak have been cautioned to observe bio-security measures, eg, not to allow any new animals into their herds, and to minimise the movement of their own herds to other farms.

Subsequently, steps have been taken to limit the area in which animals are being

Continued on page 8

MAILBAG He wants Gifblaar leaves

Sir ~ Do you know anywhere that will sell me gifblaar leaves (*Dichapetalum cymosum*). I have been in contact with 1080 poison in New Zealand and need to find some natural help.

Daniel Fairley

dsfairley@gmail.com

~ Gifblaar is commonly viewed as one of the most toxic plants in southern Africa, being particularly dangerous to cattle.

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~ Editor



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RAINFALL

2018/9: Not the driest. Not even close

It may seem like the last four months of 2018 were the driest you can remember ~ they were probably the hottest, certainly ~ but you'd be wrong. Rainfall figures collected in Bredell on the East Rand over the past 20 years show that the months from September

to December 2018 were only the third driest, following 2002, when only 171 mm of rain fell, and 2003 with only 183. By contrast, last year's total was 234 mm, closely followed by 2015 with 238 mm. These levels of rainfall in the first part of the rainy season

are below average, to be sure. In only seven of the last 20 years has the total rainfall from the start of the rainy season to the end of December been less than 300 mm with the highest recorded rainfall for the period being in 2016 when 565 mm fell.

These figures are specifically for one measuring point in Bredell. Figures vary from location to location and those on your plot may be different. Nevertheless they give a reasonable indication of what's happening generally, and that is that this is turning

Continued on page 10

FOOT & MOUTH

From page 6
vaccinated to make long-term management of the disease

easier; provided this does not compromise the disease control efforts. In addition, increased police

visibility has been requested. The authorities are also providing feed for the affected villages to limit movement and interaction of animals at grazing sites. The affected location is just outside the foot and mouth Control Zone in the Free Zone where animals may be kept without vaccination. Since the outbreak two sets of teams have started work in

the area, with 17 vaccination teams working in the possibly infected areas conducting inspections and vaccinations; while four inspection teams are working to "clean" the area to determine the extent of the outbreak; 4 021 animals in nine villages have been vaccinated so far. To date, the disease has been confirmed in two villages, and three more are being followed up; with samples submitted to the laboratory and results expected early next week.

The Dept of Agriculture has sent letters to 20 of South Africa's trade partners and says "trade of especially processed products is starting to flow." Meanwhile, no live cloven hooved animals are allowed to move into, within, through and out of the affected area. Law enforcement has been reinforced and any animals found to be moved around

Continued on page 10

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RAINFALL

From page 8

into a dry summer. This will affect, particularly the summer dryland maize crop. Many farmers in the Free State, for example, have held off putting seed into the ground until their soil had built up a reasonable store of moisture to ensure good germination, with the result that they must now hope for a late start to winter, with frosty weather holding off for as long as possible, for them to maximise their harvest. Similarly, relatively little rain over the fodder-growing areas of southern Mpumalanga has meant that fodder growth has been less than usual, resulting in fewer bales and also maybe preventing the cutting of a

second crop before winter sets in. This can be expected to push bale prices upwards, and may lead to shortages of bales later in the dry season. Another effect of lower rainfall will affect users of municipal water in Gauteng as it was recently reported in the very hot weather experienced before Christmas that the offtake from the Vaal Dam (the primary source of water for Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and the Vaal Triangle) was greater than the inflow, meaning that the dam level is slowly dropping. This could lead to shortages later in the year, which will be greatly exacerbated next year if the 2019/20 rainy season is relatively dry, too.

FMD

From page 8

will be confiscated by the police and destroyed. The area concerned is bounded in the north by the R524 from Makhado to Thohoyandou and eastwards up to the Kruger National Park fence, in the south by the R36 from the N1 Highway to Mooketsi, then along the Mooketsi/Giyani road (R81) to where it crosses the Little Letaba River, and along the Little Letaba River up to the fence of the Kruger Park. The Western boundary is the

N1 highway, while the eastern boundary is the fence of the Kruger Park. With red meat exports affected by the trade ban, local prices are expected to fall as farmers take steps to sell their production.

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Here are the heroes of the Hennops River

Here's an unlikely recipe for success. Take Gauteng's most hopelessly polluted river, Dept of Water Affairs officials who can't or won't apply the law; municipal officials from three major metros who behave, well, municipally; broken sewage works;

Editor Pete Bower tells how one man, some Press coverage, and a load of enthusiasm motivated a community to clean up Gauteng's most polluted river

rampant rubbish dumping and illegal property development. Now add one shaggy-haired artist-cum-environmental activist with a property on the

river and the enthusiasm and drive of ten Supermen, a healthy bit of free press publicity, some donations of money, equipment and facilities from concerned

nearby residents. And, it should be added, a presence all over social media. That, mixed well, gives you hundreds of volunteer workers, both riparian residents directly affected by the mess and ordinary people concerned about the

Continued on page 13

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ENVIRONMENT

From page 11

environment generally and, over the course of a few weeks and months, rubbish that has rotted in the water for years, literally, is bagged and removed, fallen trees and branches that are blocking the waterway are cut up and dragged away, and suddenly there is some enthusiasm and interest from government and municipal officials (would it be very cynical here to mention that this is an election year?)

Throw in litres and litres of liquid micro-organisms to speed up the process of cleaning the water, then



Willem Snyman, driving force behind the Hennops clean-up plant some donated saplings and indigenous bulbs along the river banks and slowly what was a disaster area is returned to a more acceptable, cleaner, better state. And you know what? Quickly wild ducks return to paddle about in the pools and eddies, and even the fish start jumping.

That's the tale of the Hennops River and its environmental super-hero Willem Snyman who, by force of character and hard graft, has pulled off a public project that must rank as one of the most impressive community-driven

clean-ups ever, anywhere. Among the culprits in the pollution chain, Snyman

highlights two who have damaged the Hennops. "A major source of pollution comes from the messes left by informal recycling groups, the Bagerezi," he says. An estimated 90 000 Bagerezi countryside push and pull the rickety trolleys laden with large bags of recyclables and many live in, and work mostly from, informal settlements on river banks,

Continued on page 15

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From page 13

due to their need to rinse bottles and wet cardboard. They tend, therefore, to use these 'free' spaces, centrally located, hidden and easily occupied.

"Few attempts have been made to formalise the operations of the Bagerezi," says Snyman. "Yet they play a large role in the recycling of waste in our country, where practically no separation at source takes place."

Snyman also challenged unscrupulous "developers" who sell "plots" on the rubble which is illegally dumped on the river banks, for as much as R4 000 each, to people desperate for housing.

"When the river floods, these people could lose everything, including their lives."

Among the people, business and organisations that came to the party:

□ Gert van Wyk, Royal Elephant Hotel in Centurion,

□ David Cochrane, www.hennopsblue.co.za,

□ Amanda Jacobs, Hennops River Forum,

□ Katherine Fillmore, Healing the Hennops Facebook page, who also disseminated information in Tembisa on World Toilet Day,

□ Jonty van der Byl, Kevin Hinde, Alastair Crewe, Heike Taschner, Jeske and Lynn Hinde,

□ Irene Dairy Farm donated proceeds from sales, including books and the healing crystal river awareness bracelet, created by Clare Smith.

□ Lewende Woord - a riverside church property and park.

□ Hilda de Vroom of the Loerieland Independent School in The Reeds, Centurion,

□ A1 Fruits & Vegetables, the Laudium greengrocer,

□ Simon Varrall, co-creator of FRESH.ngo,

□ Dockie Docrat of Mary's Outfitters supplied gumboots and gloves

□ Ridwaan Docrat of Sensational Angling Supplies provided nets for scooping out rubbish.

□ Anton Francois Bailey of BluSwirl (Recycling) is providing bins,

□ Rita Groenewald (Roots & Shoots South Africa) and Robynn Nolier (Lory Park Zoo), have been undertaking environmental Education at Ivory Park schools.

□ Donations of trees have

also been received,

□ Lynette Becker, City of Tshwane Environmental & Agriculture Management Dept,

□ Mike Correa of Tshwane Environment latterly provided large bags for rubbish,

□ Clothes to Cash Exchange's Jacendra Naidoo and Tammy Greyling run a recycling project working with children with disabilities in disadvantaged communities.

□ Design For Change South Africa. Educational possibilities were planned with this global movement that is empowering students to develop solutions for the problems in their communities. There are five schools surrounding the Kaalfontein wetland.

Picture credits for this article, and the following article: Willem Snyman, Helen Duigan Facebook & biznews.com



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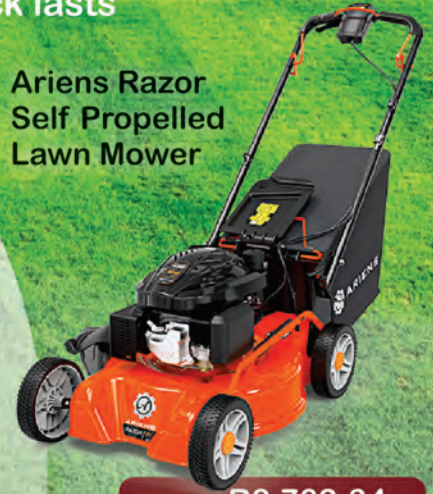
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Hennops River: an open sewer no longer?

If a river is a living thing (and many believe it is) one can't buy help feeling sorry for the poor old Hennops.

For more than half its relatively short length (it flows from Ekurhuleni to the Crocodile River before Hartbeespoort) its course (and that of its subsidiaries) runs through residential, commercial and industrial land, and much of the remaining undeveloped land through which it flows is

How did a river in SA's rich heartland end up choked with rubbish and flowing with a lethal toxic stew? We chart the course of the Hennops from Tembisa to Hartbeespoort

degraded and destined for development. Not for nothing is the Hennops, therefore, described as Gauteng's most polluted river.

It first sees life in two tributaries, the more westerly Olifantspruit, which has its head at the southern end of Glen Austin, and the easterly Kaalspruit, which starts in southern Tembisa. Indeed, all the watercourses of Tembisa discharge themselves into the Kaalspruit at various stages along its length. The Kaalspruit and Olifantspruit meet just north of Olifantsfontein.

Next, as the Olifantspruit, it flows through farm and

plotland, much destined for development, for a few kilometres before encountering the northern edges of

development around Irene, including Cornwall Hill and the bottom boundary of the Smuts Farm of Doornkloof. Here, where it meets the relatively-clean Sesmyspruit flowing out of Rietvlei Dam, it becomes the Hennops proper, turns westward, and

Continued on page 19

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Tembisa clean-up. Residents clear litter from the Kaalspruit's banks

From page 17 flows through Irene, Centurion's eastern industrial and commercial area, and Centurion itself, disgorging its contents into the Centurion Lake (itself one of three failed "man-made" lake projects of the 80s built in Gauteng, the others having been Bruma Lake and Brightwater Commons, now both redeveloped).

After Centurion Lake it meanders through Centurion itself, under Wierda Road and westward towards Sunderland Ridge.

While the course of the river through the industrial and commercial parts of Centurion is pretty grim, for the rest, through the residential areas, it passes through golf courses and nature areas

available to walkers, cyclists and birdwatchers as natural recreation spaces (which is in direct juxtaposition to the appalling pollution of the river itself).

At Sunderland Ridge it is met by the Rietspruit, which flows north from the Carlswald ridge and through all the residential and commercial developments including Olievenhoutbosch.

Next, the Hennops meanders through Erasmia, entering the more natural environment of

the Rhenosterspruit Conservancy through the settlement of Hennops River itself, and onwards till it joins with the Crocodile River, which draws its waters from the northern and western catchment of Johannesburg, Sandton, and Lanseria etc. Given that the Hennops and its various subsidiaries all have their origins in built-up areas,



Centurion... a huge improvement after volunteers removed rubbish from the watercourse.

many of them underserved and industrial, it is no surprise that by the time it reaches Centurion it is choked with rubbish. Fortunately, perhaps, many

Continued on page 19

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WILDLIFE

Vultures in peril

Heat, drought & hunger put raptor population under strain

VulPro, the Magaliesberg-based vulture rescue and rehabilitation NGO, believes an environmental disaster is looming as far as vulture populations in the region are concerned, given the large number of birds that it handled during December and January.

Most of these cases have coincided with the fledgling stages of endemic Cape

Vulture (*Gyps coprotheres*) and African White-backed (*Gyps africanus*) vulture species.

During December, 23 vultures were brought into VulPro for treatment for dehydration, starvation or calcium deficient injuries. Since then in the first six days of January a total of 13 birds were collected. A large percentage of these,

Continued on page 23

ENVIRONMENT

From page 19

of the roads that cross the Hennops in this town are relatively low-lying and thus, in time (with the help of the obstruction of water-flow by the odd fallen tree trunk) much of this waste (comprising plastic bottles, nappies, wetwipes, shoes, other unmentionables and even the odd piece of furniture and shopping trolley), is "filtered" out at these choke points, so that the water that flows onwards to the Crocodile is relatively (but by no means completely) free of such solids.

But, while filtering out solids at low-lying bridges (thereby leaving a most unsightly, unhygienic mess behind) is one thing, quite another matter is the state of the

water itself, which in addition to unsightly floating plastic rubbish picks up a potentially lethal load of dissolved substances including human waste, chemicals, detergents, pesticides, oils and greases, and fertilizer run off etc, which destroy aquatic life in the waterway and flow into the Hartbeespoort Dam, there to feed the recurring water hyacinth issue and kill fish.

Of course unsightly pollution of any Gauteng river is always at its worst early in the rainy season, when the accumulated rubbish of a long, dry winter is carried downstream to points when it is caught up, eg at low-lying bridges and weirs.

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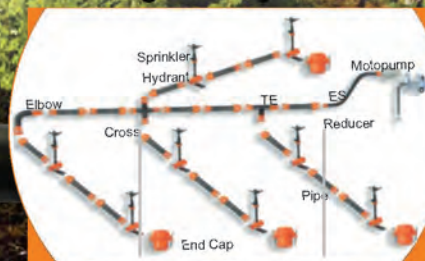
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Distressed juvenile vulture

From page 20

birds are young fledglings that have either left their nest too early, have not had sufficient calcium in their diet and together with the extreme climatic conditions of heat, lack of available water and sufficient food, it is taking its toll on both species.

Says Kerri Wolter, founder and manager of VulPro, "Some birds have come in with broken bones, dislocated joints, or bent bones which is a sure sign of calcium deficiency. Some we have sadly not been able to pull through. This too has stretched our manpower resources.

Cape Vultures are classified as globally endangered with fewer than 4 200 breeding pairs left, and the African White-backed vulture has now been upgraded from endangered to critically endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species,

IUCN 2018-2.

These vultures are typically slow breeding, reaching maturity between five and seven years of age and laying one egg a year. Fledglings leave the nest towards the end of November, beginning of December.

While the majority of South Africa has been experiencing extreme above normal temperatures for the first half of summer together with the

continued drought in many parts of the country, this has led to environmental conditions beyond the norm for the young fledgling vultures. "Many of these birds are being found in areas way out of their range, often in urban areas, or along the highways or even on busy national roads, extremely dehydrated and more than likely they have been without food for up to ten days.

Continued on page 27

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PROPERTY

Managing tenants

Letting out cottages, second homes and granny flats on your smallholding may seem like a good way to supplement your bond repayments but if you land up with bad tenants you may find it more trouble, and expense, than it's worth. It is wise, therefore, to be aware of the status of each of the parties in a domestic property rental situation.

So, some definitions:

A lawful occupier is a

person who resides on land with the permission of the owner of the land. This consent does not have to be expressed (in writing or orally) but may also be given tacitly.

If you give your worker accommodation he/she is a lawful occupier.

If you rent out rooms or cottages, the tenants are lawful occupiers as long as they pay rent.

If you as the owner are

Continued on page 29

VULTURES

From page 23

without food for up to ten days. These birds seem totally disorientated and unless assisted will certainly die. Lack of water and food is the prime cause for this environmental collapse of these vulture populations. Very few birds are being collected in areas where food supply (for example, known active

vulture restaurants) and water is still sufficient."

VulPro appeals to members of the public to contact them directly should they see or find birds that are grounded, disorientated or injured. Furthermore, should it be possible to supply "safe" food, suitable landowners should consider establishing vulture restaurants to assist these fledglings and avoid a complete collapse of these vulture populations, says VulPro. Guidelines in this regard are available from VulPro.

For more information: Kerri Wolter, VulPro, Tel: 082 808 5113 or email kerri.wolter@gmail.com

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PROPERTY

From page 27

are aware that someone has moved on to your land and you make no effort to evict them, you have given tacit consent through your conduct. So if a spouse, family member or friend comes to live with your worker or tenant in your accommodation and you do not object, you have thus given tacit consent.

An unlawful occupier is someone who resides on land without the express or tacit permission of the owner.

If you have dismissed your worker from your employment, in accordance with the provisions of the Labour Relations Act, and ordered him/her to leave your property but he/she continues to stay in your accommodation, that person then becomes an unlawful occupier, because you have withdrawn your permission for him/her to live there.

A trespasser is someone

who enters property without the permission of the owner and can be arrested by the police.

While the relationship between the owner and the worker or the tenant remains cordial, all is well. The difficulty arises when the relationship is no longer good and you want to get rid of the person.

The eviction of persons from land or accommodation is regulated by statute.

The following laws regulate different legal situations:

The Extension of Security Tenure Act, 1997 (Act No 62 of 1997) (ESTA Act) governs eviction from farm land.

The Prevention of Illegal Eviction From & Unlawful Occupation of Land Act, 1998 (Act No 19 of 1998) (PIE Act) - anyone who is an unlawful occupier, which includes tenants who fail to pay their rentals and bonds, is covered by PIE.

Continued on page 31

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PROPERTY

From page 29

These laws are quite often difficult to interpret and apply. Eviction from land is always done in terms of a court order, whether the person is a labour tenant, an occupier (whether unlawful or not), a farm worker or even a trespasser.

The eviction of an occupier or trespasser must be done in accordance with the applicable laws, otherwise such eviction will be illegal.

Under most circumstances a police member will be requested to deal with the "problem" of an occupier when the owner of land lodges a complaint at the Community Service Centre of the police station in the area. Whenever the occupier enjoys the protection of PIE, the police member should advise the complainant to consult with a lawyer in order to invoke the legal eviction procedures.

For an eviction to happen lawfully, these procedures must be followed:

The owner must give the occupier notice of his/her intention of going to court to get an eviction order. This notice must contain a large number of details, so it is best drawn up by someone who knows what is required by the Act.

The owner must apply to the court to have a written notice served on the occupier stating the owner's intention to evict the occupier.

The court must serve the notice at least 14 days before the court hearing. The notice must also be served on the

municipality that has jurisdiction in the area.

If any one procedure is left out, the eviction is unlawful.

It is also a criminal offence to directly or indirectly receive or solicit payment of any money or other consideration as a fee or charge for arranging or organizing or permitting a person to occupy land without the consent of the owner or person in charge of that land.

The court will only give an eviction order if it is proved that:

- the person who is applying to evict an occupier is in fact the owner of the land;
- an occupier is an unlawful occupier;
- the owner has reasonable grounds to ask for the eviction;
- the local authority or any other owner of land in the area can make alternative land available for the occupier.

If the court grants an eviction order, the eviction order will state a date by when the occupier has to leave the land, and also the date on which the eviction will take place if the occupier does not vacate the land.

The Court has to balance out and reconcile the opposed claims in as just a manner as possible, taking account of all the interests involved and the specific factors relevant in each particular case, including the interest of the owner.

The sheriff of the Court will implement eviction orders. In some cases, where there is sufficient information to indicate that the sheriff and his/her employees may be exposed to injury, death or damage to property, the SAPS will be on hand to ensure law and order and protection.

Where land invasion takes place, it is most important that the owner immediately reports the matter to the police. Land invasions are often associated with the

Continued on page 33

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Gousiekte: Caused by the plants in your pasture

The late start to the rainy season in Gauteng this summer may have led to some livestock being tempted to eat the leaves and fruit of certain plants of the *Rubiaceae* family, which might

result in what is known as "gousiekte" or quick sickness. Gousiekte is a poisoning of ruminants characterised by acute heart failure five to eight weeks after the initial ingestion of certain

rubiaceous plants. There are no symptoms, before animals suddenly drop dead, often after exercise ~ hence the popular Afrikaans name "gousiekte".

Affected animals very seldom recover. In the morning sheep are often found dead in the enclosure although they were apparently quite healthy the previous evening. In other

Continued on page 35

PROPERTY

From page 31

occupation of land by force. The owner may obtain an urgent eviction order in terms of section 5 of the PIE Act. The SAPS must investigate to determine whether one of

common law offences, trespass, intimidation or public violence offences have been committed. In all cases where land invasions are policed proper records must be kept for evidence.

There are debates about this law along the lines that any order dismissing an eviction application merely because it is not regarded as just and equitable ignores the very notion that property rights should be fully respected in our new dispensation.

An amendment to the PIE Act is in the process of being

passed but it seems has not yet been passed into law. However, once it has been passed a tenant who once occupied the land with the landlord's consent may no longer be defined as an unlawful occupier.

The landlord on taking steps to evict the tenant may not then have to comply with Section 4 of the PIE Act and can evict him/her in terms of the common law principles. Sometimes landlords become frustrated with tenants who simply stop paying rent and take their own remedial action, such as changing locks

on doors, or removing personal possessions from the tenanted premises, such as TVs or furniture, or, even damaging property such as letting down the tenant's car tyres. Such actions are illegal and will land the landlord in all sorts of legal hot water.

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LIVESTOCK

From page 33 previous evening. In other cases affected sheep suddenly fall down dead when they are driven about in the pen. This sudden collapse is due to a paralysis of the heart caused by the poison.

In less acute forms affected sheep cannot keep up with the flock; they are left behind, stand apart or lie down with outstretched head and neck. Such animals usually live from one to 28 days. Some wheel

round in a circle or suddenly leap into the air, and fall down dead.

Because of the lack of overt premonitory signs during the latent period of gousiekte, it is usually impossible to identify affected animals, even shortly before death.

A single dose can occasionally be fatal, but relatively large quantities of plant material have to be ingested. Animals are usually affected in the early summer when grazing is

scarce.

All six plants known to cause gousiekte are members of the Rubiaceae family. *Fadogia homblei*, *Pavetta harborii*, *Pavetta schumanniana*, *Vangueria pygmaea* (= *Pachystigma pygmaeum*), *Vangueria latifolia* (= *Pachystigma latifolium*) and *Vangueria thamnus*



Fadogia homblei, showing ripe fruit

(= *Pachystigma thamnus*) all induce gousiekte.

Because the majority of reported cases of gousiekte Continued on page 37

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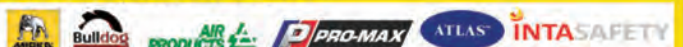
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From page 35

poisoning are at the beginning of the growing season, it is thought that the plants are more toxic at this time.

Fadogia homblei and *Vangueria pygmaea* have been found to have caused the majority of reported cases of gousiekte.

Fadogia homblei is a perennial herb or shrublet with numerous erect stems of up to 50cm high, arising from the thick, woody rhizome below the ground. Above-ground parts die back in winter. The leaves are very characteristic – they are borne in groups of three to five at each node;



Vangueria pygmaea

the upper surfaces are bright, shining and dark green, while the lower surfaces are silvery white. Small yellow, fragrant flowers are produced in clusters at the nodes followed by round, green fruits that turn black when they ripen. These fruits are edible and resemble engorged ticks, hence the Afrikaans vernacular name, bosluisbessie. No case of human poisoning is known but the plant is potentially lethal to livestock. Repeated ploughing on arable land will lead to eradication. Continuous digging will eventually destroy the plants

on pastures, but is costly.

The plant is found in Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West.

Vangueria pygmaea, Dwarf Crowned-medlar or Gousiektebossie has an underground

stem with a branched root system, giving rise to new plants which appear above ground and have from four to eight narrow leaves, green in colour and hairy on both sides. In normal years the first leaves appear about the middle of November, and in the first week of December the plants are in full bloom. The flowers are in clusters and are yellowish-green in colour; the fruit matures by the middle of January and then is more or less the size of a walnut. The first frost causes the leaves to shrink. The plant is found in Free State,

Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West.

Gousiekte is best controlled by good pasture management. Herbicides that contain Fenac or Picloram have been shown to control gousiektebossie without damaging the surrounding grass cover.

Gousiekte remains the most important plant poisoning in South Africa.

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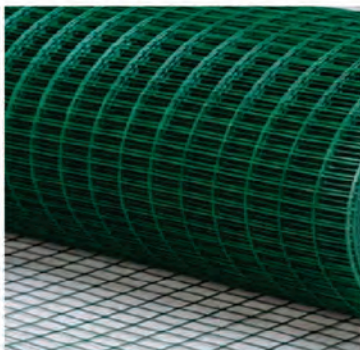
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calcium is to crush up old oyster shells, procured when you visit your local fish restaurant. Simply lay out the wet shell in the sun for a few weeks to dry out and lose their smell, then pound them into a powder/grit. A quick mechanical method is to put them through a hammermill. For larger numbers of hens you might need to strike up a deal with a sympathetic

restaurant to keep a few bags of shells for you for collection every few days. Naturally, there must be a constant supply of clean water available. Sometimes smallholders encounter problems with their egg production. Many factors have a negative impact on egg production, including poor pullet quality, inappropriate feeding

programme, poor feed quality, disease, inadequate

Continued on page 40



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From page 39

water supply or poor water quality, inadequate light stimulation, high bird density, inadequate ventilation, abrupt weather changes, equipment malfunctions or poor plot management.

Examine your individual hens to determine if they are too fat or undernourished. Check your feed for dust or mould or any changes from what the hens are used to.

Consider whether they might be suffering from stress, due to rowdy children, close proximity to dogs or noisy machinery or rodents in their house.

Parasites such as lice, mites or internal worms will also lead to a drop in egg production. Might there be nest-box problems? Hens will not lay on wet straw or in draughty conditions. Sometimes one hen prevents others from

accessing a nest box.

Observe the relationships among the hens. A rooster in the house may help to keep hens in order, but if there are too many roosters that can also be a cause for strain.

Overcrowding can also lead to a drop in laying.

Diseases such as coccidiosis will affect production.

There is also a disease called Egg Drop Syndrome, which has the following symptoms:

Egg produc-

tion drops at peak or fails to peak. Drops may be of 5 to 50% and last for three to four weeks.

Rough, thin or soft-shelled eggs and shell-less eggs.

Loss of shell pigment.

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Lack of signs in the birds

Continued on page 41



A clutch of eggs ready for collection

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KNOW YOUR BREEDS

SA Landrace: SA's top commercial pig

During the 1950s Landrace pigs were imported by South African pig breeders from Holland, Germany and Sweden. Through various

breeding and genetic improvement programmes local pig stud herds responded so well and made such remarkable progress that the breed became known as

the South African Landrace (Afrikaans: Landras). The term landrace refers to a local cultivar or animal breed that has been improved by traditional agricultural

methods. A landrace is a domesticated, locally adapted, traditional variety of a species of animal or plant that has developed over time, through adaptation to its natural and cultural environment of agriculture.

The Landrace is a white haired, pink skinned pig. A

From page 40 themselves.

The disease is caused by a virus and vaccine is available to prevent it.

Other diseases caused by viruses include Newcastle disease (which is notifiable), influenza, infectious bronchitis, infectious laryngotracheitis and avian encephalomyelitis. Consult your veterinarian if you suspect that your chickens have a disease. Of course, prevention is better than cure, so look to your basic management of the hen house. Line the boxes with wood shavings or

straw and keep replacing it to encourage laying in the nest boxes.

Remove droppings regularly. Sprinkle fresh or dried herbs in the nest. Hens benefit from nest box herbs by inhaling, rubbing against and occasionally eating them. Some herbs repel insects and rodents, while others have antibacterial properties, and can act as natural wormers, antiparasitics, stress relievers and laying stimulants. Some improve blood circulation or respiratory health. Use combinations of basil, catnip, dill, fennel, lavender, lemon

POULTRY

balm, marigolds, mint, nettles, parsley, pineapple

Continued on page 42

Continued on page 42



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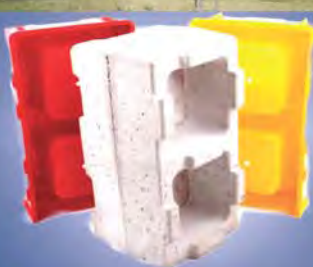
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KNOW YOUR BREEDS

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limited number of blue spots from which hair grow is permissible.

The Landrace is a particularly long-bodied, lop eared white pig, with light forequarters, a well-defined meaty back and large hams. Docility and ease of handling are also features of this breed.

The head should appear small and light in relation to the body, long snouted and free of jowl. Ears are long and

lopped forward. More recently a medium length of ear is preferred allowing the animal more vision when moving and less encumbrance at feeding. Ears must not be erect. The neck is long and slender flowing into neatly angled shoulders. The shoulders are obliquely laid on the body with a hand width between top points. They should not be protruding but well set, forming unity with the body, but loose

enough to allow free easy movement.

They have a long back, with a very slight arch for strength with the hindquarter tending to be higher than the forequarters. When viewed from above it should have a medium to wide breadth of back with a well-defined eye muscle running through full



SA Landrace sow

loins into large rounded hams.

Landrace pigs are renowned for ham development, more so than most of the other breeds. The hams are full, tended to roundness and deeply formed into the hocks. However, they must not hinder the animal's walking ability by being too large or overly muscled. The breed is associated with excellent growth rates and feed efficiency, while the improved breed is recognised for its great mothering

Continued on page 43

POULTRY

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sage, rose petals, thyme and yarrow.

Food-grade diatomaceous earth sprinkled on the feed acts as a natural dewormer. Limit stress by having little activity in the coop in the morning.

Once your hens are laying regularly, take care to remove eggs daily, and especially any eggs that have been broken. These quickly attract bacteria, insects and rodents, but you also want to prevent the hens from eating the contents. When a hen accidentally cracks an egg and she investigates it, she finds that it's tasty and nutritious and gobbles it down. This behaviour can spread quickly among the flock and, if left uncorrected, can be difficult to stop.

Collect the eggs as soon as possible. Most hens lay their eggs before 10h00. If you can manage it, collecting eggs twice a day can help keep them really clean, and also discourages egg eating.

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IN THE GARDEN

Kohlrabi: Confused with a turnip, it tastes of cabbage

Feel like a change from the "same old, same old" in your veggie garden? Why not try kohlrabi, a somewhat underrated vegetable. They are very eye-catching in your garden. Kohlrabi are also called German turnips, and sometimes, erroneously, rutabaga.

This vegetable is low in saturated fat and cholesterol, as well as good source of Thiamin, Folate, Magnesium and Phosphorus, and a very good source of dietary fibre, Vitamin C, Vitamin B6, Potassium, Copper and Manganese. Note, however, that a large proportion of the calories in this food come

from sugars. The seeds are available from a number of online sources. A member of the Brassica family, *Brassica oleracea* (*Congylodes* group), kohlrabi prefers well-drained, fertile soil high in organic matter and with a pH 6.0 to 7.5. Sow directly in the garden, in full sun. Sow seed at a depth

approximately three times the diameter of the seed. Best planted at soil temperatures between 8°C and 30°C, kohlrabi does well as a spring or autumn vegetable. However, it is sensitive to extreme cold. For autumn harvests, transplant or direct-seed into the garden in

Continued on page 44

KNOW YOUR BREEDS

From page 42

traits, producing large litters with regularity over long periods. Because the Landrace has superior mothering ability, it is essential to have at least seven functional and evenly spaced teats on either side of the sow.

This is an animal that can survive on both marginal and high potential grazing and is disease-resistant and heat-tolerant.

The Landrace is popular among non-commercial producers who slaughter mainly for domestic consumption.

When you are buying a pig, as with any animal, be prepared to pay for good quality.

Examine the animal while it is lying down, checking its conformation. Consider its breathing ~ only the chest should rise and fall. If the belly

Continued on page 44

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IN THE GARDEN

From page 43
summer as space becomes available. Crops planted midsummer for autumn harvest generally have fewer insect problems and a less bitter flavour.

Space the plants ten to 25cm apart. This heavy feeder also needs plentiful, consistent moisture.

There are two varieties available ~ White Vienna and Purple Vienna. Purple Vienna has a lovely crispy sweet

flavour and purple skin, and sweet, white flesh that are good cooked or raw.

It grows well with asparagus, bush beans, beetroot, celery, leek, lettuce, onion, pea, petunia, potato, radish and spinach. Avoid growing close to climbing (pole) beans, tomato, peppers (chilli, capsicum), eggplant (aubergine), strawberries and mustard.

They will be ready to harvest in 7-10 weeks.

The edible portion of kohlrabi is the rounded, swollen stem that develops just above the soil line.

Some people also eat the leaves.

Kohlrabi tastes similar to cabbage or broccoli stem while the white variety closely resembles a turnip, but it has a milder and sweeter flavour than either of them.

Young bulbs can be cut up, cooked and eaten without peeling.



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KNOW YOUR BREEDS

From page 43

contracts, the pig is having difficulty breathing.

Observe how it responds to you and the world around it, is it alert and interested in its environment?

When it is standing, check that it is not too fat or too thin. You should not be able to see the hips, shoulders, ribs or backbone under the skin.

Rolls of fat around the neck mean that it is too fat.

A healthy pig will have a shiny coat, the skin should be clean and healthy, the legs are strong and straight and it is able to walk normally.

Do not buy a pig that is coughing or sneezing, rubbing against objects for prolonged periods to relieve itching or if the dung is soft or watery or

small, hard, dry.

If you wish to keep pigs on your smallholding, however, be aware that municipal health regulations in most areas limit the legal possibility of pig-keeping to all but the largest smallholdings. In other words your plot might be too small to legally keep pigs.

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DIARY

ATTENTION CRAFT MARKETS, CLUBS ETC: If you would like details of your events included in the Diary, please fax or email your information to the Editor. For non-commercial enterprises this service is FREE.

NOTE: FARMERS' & CRAFT MARKETS. For a listing of REGULARLY HELD markets and fairs please see the separate section on page 47. Only markets that are held infrequently are now listed in this calendar section.

Every Sunday
Cattle drive with City Slickers breakfast, Diamond X Cowboy Ranch, near Rayton. Call Rudan on 082 410-3180
horses@diamondxrancho.co.za,
www.diamondxrancho.co.za., R500 per person.

Mnandi Methodist Church, 09:00, Mnandi Centre, cnr Tulip and Short Streets, Jen 083 709-3235. Gail 072 477-0708., A small community who worship together. We have a Youth and Children's church.

Premier Mine Presbyterian Church, Lower Oak Ave., Cullinan. Garden of Remembrance (Columbarium), 079 060-9990 or 012 734-1640, Worship and Sunday school. Holy Communion for all on the 1st Sunday of every month.

Every Monday
Alcoholics Anonymous. 'Courage to Change' Group meeting, 19:30, Benoni. Warren 082 335-0049. , If you want to drink – that's your problem! If you want to stop – that's our problem! No fees; no dues; just concerned fellowship.

2019

February

4: New Moon
7: Complete dispersal sale of property, loose assets, agricultural equipment and vehicles on behalf of Karels Family Trust, Dunblane Lifestyle Estate, 9th Road, Bredell, Kempton Park. 1100. Vleissentraal Ermelo. Auctioneer Mike Killassy 082 378-8112 or Johan Taute 073 204 7646
12-15: Introductory Course in Pig Production, ARC Irene. Cost R3 000. Call Mr M Mothabela 012 672-9402
19: Full Moon
25-1 Mar: Dairy Processing Course: Cheese and Yoghurt, ARC Irene. Cost R5 000. Call Mr M Mothabela 012 672-9402

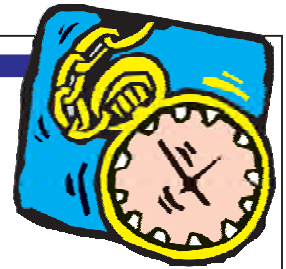
March

2: Bokkie Park Food & Craft Market at the Bokkie Park, Southvale Rd, Parkdene, Boksburg, 09h00 – 14h30. Crafts and food stalls, live entertainment, tea garden, pony and camel rides. Contact Janine 072 713 3332

3332
2: National Dorper auction, Beestekraal, Rustenburg. Vleissentraal Ermelo. Call Peet Kruger 082 809-3836
4-8: Introductory Course in Small Stock Management, ARC Irene. Cost R3 200. Call Mr M Mothabela 012 672-9402
6: New Moon
9: 11th Overvaal Dexter Club auction, Willem Prinsloo Agricultural Museum, Old Pretoria Road, Rayton. 70 animals of both sexes and different ages on offer. Contact Carel Wessels 083 826-8400, BKB van Wyk.
9: Onderstepoort Farmers Day, Onderstepoort, Pretoria North
9-10: 57th Walkerville Agricultural Show, Walkerville Showground, R82, Walkerville. Call Pauline 072 146-9176
10-15: Introductory Course in Poultry Production, ARC Irene. Cost R3 200. Call Mr M Mothabela 012 672-9402
21: Full Moon
21: Autumn Equinox
21: Human Rights Day

April

5: New Moon
6: Bokkie Park Food & Craft Market at the Bokkie Park, Southvale Rd, Parkdene, Boksburg, 09h00 – 14h30. Crafts and food stalls, live entertainment, tea garden, pony and camel rides. Contact Janine 072 713 3332



19: Full Moon
19: Good Friday
20: Bokkie Park Food & Craft Easter Market at the Bokkie Park, Southvale Rd, Parkdene, Boksburg, 09h00 – 14h30. Crafts and food stalls, live entertainment, tea garden, pony and camel rides. Contact Janine 072 713 3332
22: Family Day (Easter Monday)
27: Freedom Day
30: Leon Thom Jerseys auction, Hartbeespoort. Vleissentraal Ermelo

May

1: Workers' Day
4: Bokkie Park Food & Craft Market at the Bokkie Park, Southvale Rd, Parkdene, Boksburg, 09h00 – 14h30. Crafts and food stalls, live entertainment, tea garden, pony and camel rides. Contact Janine 072 713 3332
5: New Moon
14-17: Nampo Harvest Day, Nampo Park, Bothaville district, Free State
18 Full Moon

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Regular Gauteng Farmers' Food Markets

NOTE: This is a listing ONLY of markets held weekly. Markets held less frequently (eg 1st Saturday of each month) are listed in the DIARY section of the magazine and we urge readers to check each month for dates and events of interest. We would like this list of food markets to be as comprehensive as possible. If you know of farmers' food markets that are not listed here, please email us the contact details of the organisers, and details of the market. Only FOOD markets are included. Similarly, if you know of markets in this list that have CLOSED please inform us so that we can delete incorrect or outdated information. We invite you to tell us of your experiences when visiting these markets so that we can better inform our readers. Were they as advertised? Was the produce on sale plentiful, well-priced, well-presented and fresh? Email your comments to editor@gautengsmallholder.com

DAY	WHAT	WHEN	WHERE	CONTACT	WHAT TO EXPECT
Thursday					
Every Thursday	Bryanston Organic & Natural Market	09:00 - 15:00	40 Culross Road, Bryanston (off Main Road)	Konrad or Glenda 011 706 3671 glenda@bryanstonorganicmarket.co.za	Quality hand crafted goods, unique art and fresh organic and naturally grown produce.
Saturday					
Every Saturday	The Red Windmill Village Market	09:00 - 15:00	104 Main Road, Walkerville	082 627 3134 or 072 637 9355 Stalls: 082 641 8982	Fresh produce, food stalls, coffee shop, plants, arts & crafts, book etc.
Every Saturday	Waterfall Estate Farmers Market	09:00 - 15:00	Waterfall Estate, Waterfall Cor Midrand	Robyn 083 311 4768	Fresh produce, pickles, preserves and home industry & craft, food etc. Enquire about stall prices.
Every Saturday	Pretoria Boeremark	05:30 - 09:30	Moreleta Street entrance, Krige Street ext, Silverton	012 804 8031 or 079 987 1025	Fresh produce & traditional bazaar treats like jaffles, kaings with pap & boerewors rolls.
Every Saturday	Bryanston Organic & Natural Market	09:00 - 15:00	40 Culross Road, Bryanston (off Main Road)	Konrad or Glenda 011 706 3671 glenda@bryanstonorganicmarket.co.za	Quality hand crafted goods, unique art and fresh organic and naturally grown produce.
Every Saturday	The Hazel Food Market	08:00 - 14:00	Greenlyn Village Centre, Cor Thomas Edison & Mackenzie St, Menlo Park, Pretoria	Rietha 083 554 5636 www.hazelfoodmarket.co.za	Fresh produce straight from the producer. Coffee, eats on sale
Every Saturday	Walkerville Farmers Market	09:00 - 15:00	112 R82 Main Road, Walkerville	079 076 7680 info@wfmmarket.co.za	Fresh produce, arts & crafts, food court and kids play area.
Every Saturday	Walkerville Country Market	09:00 - 15:00	Walkerville Country Market @ the Showgrounds	Ivan 084 590 2312 market@walkervillesa.co.za	Fresh produce, crafter's market, food court, craft beer, kids play area and pet friendly.
Every Saturday	Bosheuvel Fresh Produce	10:00 - 19:00	54 Glory Road, Muldersdrift	Mitch 082 553 2846	Outdoor country experience working farm cattle, sheep pigs. Free range meat, cheese, eggs and poultry. Craft beer
Every Saturday	The Fresh Co-op Weekly Farmers Market	07:00 - 10:30	204 Allan Road, Glen Austin Halfway House, Gauteng	info.freshproducecoop@gmail.com 082 369 7755	Fresh produce, pickles, preserves, home industry, arts and crafts, food etc.
Every Saturday	Jozi Real Food Market	08:30 - 13:30	Pirates Sports Club, 25 Braeside Road, Greenside	Ingrid 083 532 2992 jozirealfoodmarket@gmail.com	Outdoor pet & child friendly, organic vegetables, food, arts & crafts
Every Saturday	Waenhuiskrans Plaas / Farmers Market	08:00 - 14:00	Cor of Veda & Enkeldoorn Ave opposite Montana Traders and next to Kollonade Centre	Phil Jansen - 083 5050 329 or office 012 567 6076 to book a stall	Stalls: Food, arts and crafts Fresh produce, eggs, chicken, meat, fruit and veg, Kiosk, Maders Pies, coffee
Every Saturday	Glenfresh Farmers Market	08:00 - 12:30	118 Allan rd, Glen Austin	Stefan: 082 829 0185 market@glenfresh.co.za	Local naturally grown produce, hand crafted goods, home baked treats, raw honey, biltong
Sunday					
Every Sunday	The Red Windmill Village Market	09:00 - 15:00	104 Main Road, Walkerville	082 627 3134 or 072 637 9355 Stalls: 082 641 8982	Fresh produce, food stalls, coffee shop, plants, arts & crafts, book
Every Sunday	Fourways Farmers Market	10:00 - 15:00	Cor Montecasino Boulevard & William Nicol Drive, Fourways	011 465 0827 www.ffmarket.co.za	Get your groceries... in the garden!
Every Sunday	Carlington Food & Craft Market	09:00 - 15:00	The Bru House on the R563 Hekpoort-Krugersdorp Road	For stalls 0827824142 Debbie.Prinsloo@outlook.com	Restaurant, live music, safe kids play area, safe parking



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Keeping up

You see them everywhere. Two, three or more youngsters sitting on a bench or lounging up against a wall, heads down, peering intently at their cellphones. Or walking absentmindedly down a street, two telltale wires emerging from their ears and connected to the phone they've got in their hand, just a few inches from their face.

It's a sign of the times, you say. A sign of the mental and physical decay of the modern age. Now all the young do is sit in front of their computer screens or gaze at their smartphones while absentmindedly munching sugar and salt-laden fast food. "It wasn't like that in our day!" you exclaim. "In our day we children went out and kicked balls or climbed trees. The kids of today? Fat and lazy."

Well, here's a thought. Why on earth can't people of a certain age (aka those old enough to have grandkids) embrace modern technologies, too? I know we do, my beloved and I. We both have very smart smartphones (coincidentally, identical models). We Whatsapp furiously with all and sundry (including friends and relatives all over the world), we both have a presence on Facebook (and compete as to how many friends each of us has), we bank from our phones, check our credit card transactions, read and send emails off our phones, and use our phones as cameras (the phones have far better cameras, with better lenses, than any conventional cameras we may have now gathering dust in cupboards).

In addition, our phones have replaced our old Map Studio map books, and the Garmin devices in our cars, as music players and as radios (thank you, LM Radio for your streaming service). I use mine as a torch, a spirit level, an area measuring tool (I thus have an accurate measure of the number of square metres in any one of my plot's fields ... useful when calculating fertiliser coverage, for example), and as an exercise monitor (how many steps have you walked today)?

My phone also wakes me up in the morning, reminds me of what I need to do during the day and tells me the weather forecast (not that it's very accurate, but then neither are the forecasts from the SA Weather Service).

At one stage I had an app that plotted and identified the stars in the night sky simply by pointing the phone upwards in any direction, (but I found it pretty inaccurate).

And, arguments and bets about titles of songs and the artists who sang them are a thing of the past thanks to Shazam.

Plus, of course, I get my news from my phone and when I need

a laugh there are always Riaad Moosa clips on YouTube. And I challenge anybody to take me on in the Africa quizzes on QuizUp.

Finally, if I'm ever stuck for a fact, date, or information on any subject under the sun there's always Wikipedia (although I have to admit that our daughter is better at this than we are. Her fingers are lightning fast over the keypad and although she achieved a large number of distinctions in Matric and has two university degrees behind her name her dexterity on her phone makes her look like she has a much broader general knowledge than she does).

Is all of this bad? Although our children often comment on the two of us hunched over our phones furiously Facebooking or Whatsapping "Look at you two on your phones... Just like a bunch of lazy teenagers!" they say, in (hopefully mock) disgust. But no, frankly, it's not bad. The world is changing, and the nature of life is changing (one could also say that the life of nature is changing, but that's a topic for another day) and while there are downsides to embracing wholesale the modern technologies (what happened to the nicety of a letter written on good quality notepaper?) there is no earthly reason that I can see why one should not use for one's convenience what has been invented for that purpose.

Our forebears, after all, embraced wholeheartedly the concept of the flushing toilet, and the motor car, and even the old-fashioned steam-telephone itself, when they were invented. And at my age the thought of humping around a telephone, encyclopaedia, Garmin, camera bag, radio and all the other paraphernalia of the bygone age, or peering at the well-thumbed pages of a Map Studio map book to find my way around is deeply unappealing.

Although I would like to shut up that bloody American woman who shouts the directions out of my Google Maps app on my phone. Maybe there's a way to change her for an Oirish Colleen? Or Brigitte Bardot, perhaps?



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