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Weed management options in maize

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Editor's Note

Where Innovation Meets the Soil

Welcome to another exciting edition of Farmers Guide, your trusted companion in the fields, markets, and be-yond. Agriculture is no longer just about planting seeds it's about sowing innovation, nurturing resilience, and harvesting stories that inspire.

This quarter, we bring you the very best of what the land and its stewards have to offer. From breakthrough farming methods to bold agribusiness ventures, our stories celebrate those who dare to push boundaries in pursuit of a richer harvest.

One story that has the entire agricultural community talking is the record-breaking sale of a single sheep for an astonishing $4,300! Beyond the price tag, this speaks volumes about the value of premium breeding, careful livestock management, and the growing appetite for quality genetics in modern farming.

What does this mean for small-scale farmers looking to tap into high-value livestock markets? We unpack it all in this issue.

But that's not all. Our investigative feature delves into how climate-smart agriculture is no longer a futuristic idea it's a necessity.

From drought-resilient crops to precision farming tools, we explore practical solutions shaping the future of food security. Plus, we highlight inspiring farmer success stories, market trends, and expert tips to keep you ahead in a rapidly evolving industry.

At Farmers Guide, we believe farming is more than a livelihood it's a legacy. It's about feeding nations, driving economies, and preserving the earth for generations to come. That's why every story we bring you is carefully curated to inform, inspire, and ignite new possibilities.

Thank you for joining us on this journey. Whether you are a seasoned farmer, an aspiring agripreneur, or an agricultural enthusiast, this issue promises to leave you enriched, motivated, and ready to grow both in the field and beyond.

From the Farmers Guide Magazine

Feedback: krooshy@gmail.com

Enjoy

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Weed management options in maize

Agriculture is at the centre of Zimbabwe's economy directly supporting millions of households hence its central role to poverty reduction, economic and industrial development. Successful and productive farming is the golden key to food security and the national wellbeing. As CP Chemicals we see farmers as economic partners that we desire to fully support through our world-class fit for purpose Agrochemicals supply, distribution and technical extension support. Our agrochemical products have been a consistent part of the government led Command agriculture program supporting maize, wheat and soyabean growers through a comprehensive supply of herbicides and insecticides for these crops.

Weeds are part of the biotic constraints to crop production as they compete profusely for the limited nutrients, water, and sunlight and below and above ground space with the crops.

Weed control is essential to achieve optimal maize yields. Successful cultivation of maize depends largely on the efficacy of weed control. The first crucial period for weed control is from planting through the first six to eight weeks of growth. At planting, it is recommended that the seedbed must be weed-free.

The maize will generally germinate after five to seven days, during which time the seedlings are very vulnerable to weed competition. Weed control during the first six to eight weeks after planting is crucial, because weeds compete vigorously with the crop for nutrients, water and space. They are more adapted to competition and, if not controlled, the maize yield will decline.

In fact, the crop must be weed free for the first 8-10 weeks of the crop cycle. Annual yield losses occur because of weed infestations in cultivated croplands. The annual yield loss in maize because of weed problems can even reach 50% or more. The loss occurs as a result of weed competition for nutrients, water and light.

Weed management mainly focuses on annual weeds than perennial weeds. Annuals complete their lifecycle from seed to seed in less than one year or in one growing season. They produce an abundance of seeds, grow quickly and are usually, but not always, easy to control, e.g. pigweed, common blackjack and gallant soldier.

NB: If you fail to control weeds in maize for the first 5 weeks of the crop cycle, then 50% or more of the yields

will be lost. Never allow weeds to seed, it will enhance the weed seed bank and result in future weed control costs and difficulties.

Cultural methods

Ask your local seed distributor for maize cultivars that are adapted to your region. Using high-quality maize seed will aid in reducing weed competition. Healthy, vigorous crops are always more competitive than slow-growing crops or those with poor stands. Changing planting dates can be implemented to avoid weeds germinating at certain times. If maize is planted in narrow rows (0.75 m), quicker canopy closure is promoted which will reduces weed growth and water loss. Increasing plant populations can often decrease weed densities and growth.

Gaps in the field provides weeds with an opportunity to establish and spread. If grasses tend to be the most dominant weeds, rotate the maize with a broadleaved crop such as soyabeans. More grass herbicides are registered on soyabeans than on maize and this will allow better grass control.

Mechanical methods

Tillage controls weeds by burying them, separating shoots and exhausting the carbohydrate reserves of perennial weeds. Killing the initial flush of weed seedlings can make further weed control much easier to achieve. Maximum control is achieved when cultivation takes place after weeds have germinated but before they emerge, because best results from cultivation are obtained with small weeds. Larger weeds are difficult to bury and have sufficient roots to escape total separation from the soil. Effective cultivation needs dry soil, both at the surface and below the depth of cultivation. Dry soil promotes desiccation of the uprooted weeds. Cultivation while the soil is too wet will simply transplant weeds, especially the vegetative reproductive organs of perennial weeds.

Mulching excludes light and prevents shoot growth. Weed seedlings emerging from the soil are killed through starvation from a lack of photosynthesis. Light-promoted weed-seed germination may also be inhibited under mulch. Thick, wide mulches are required to control perennials that creep to the edge of a mulch and emerge. Mulches decrease soil temperature and may promote better plant growth.

In no-tillage production systems, weed control with cultivation is not possible. The stubble left on the soil surface can be regarded as a mulch, but it needs to be spread evenly.

Chemical control

A greater reliance on herbicides requires close attention to the types of weeds, weather patterns, cropping systems and soil types. In order to

decide what herbicides to use, a few factors need consideration.

a) Weeds status

Various weed characteristics influence the effectiveness of herbicides. Younger plants have more penetrable leaves and usually have a higher metabolism than older plants. It is therefore essential to control weeds as seedlings and not as mature plants. Plants under stress are usually less susceptible to herbicides and weed control will be reduced. If the weeds have narrow leaves or leaves with hairs, thorns or a waxy surface, less herbicide will be absorbed.

b) Registered herbicides

USE ONLY REGISTERED HERBICIDES. Herbicides can broadly be divided into two groups namely,

i. Soil-acting herbicides and

ii. Foliar-applied herbicides.

The soil acting herbicides are taken up by germinating seeds, while the foliar herbicides will be taken up by the leaves and the stems. The susceptibility of both crops and weeds to herbicides is related to the time of application. It is important to remember to use the chemical at a time when the crop is at its most resistant and the weeds are at their maximum susceptibility. Timing of applying herbicides can be grouped into four categories:

Burndown:

Burndown herbicides control emerged weeds before or just after planting, but prior to crop emergence. The weed species present and their size and life cycle, will determine the dosage rates. This application is important for no-till farmers.

Pre-plant:

The herbicides are applied to the soil any time before crop planting and persist in the soil. The main objective is to prevent early weed growth.

Pre-emergence:

These herbicides are applied shortly after crop planting but before the weeds emerge. Unfortunately, rain is needed for washing them into the soil and triggering their activity.

Post-emergence:

These herbicides are applied after the crop has emerged and are therefore not strongly influenced by the soil environment as they act on the above-ground plant parts.

Factors affecting herbicide choice

1. Effects of soil

Organic matter content is of particular importance because it is the main factor controlling adsorption and hence availability in the soil. It also

affects microbial activity and has an influence on microbial degradation of herbicides. Herbicides may vary greatly in water solubility and absorptivity to soil colloids. This may explain why some herbicides work well in one situation and poorly in another. Herbicides that are low in water solubility are strongly adsorbed on soil particles, have shortened persistence and are less likely to leach.

This also serves, in part, to explain crop injury under heavy rainfall conditions. Soils with high clay content tend to adsorb herbicides more strongly and thus may lead to a decrease in their availability for degradation.

2. Persistence

The length of time in which a herbicide remains active or persists in the soil is extremely important, because it will determine the length of time that weed control can be expected, or the time a chemical is present in the environment. Residual persistence is also important, because it leads to phytotoxic effects that may prove injurious to subsequent crops. This can restrict crop rotation options available and cause environmental contamination. Persistence is dependent on the herbicide, soil and environmental characteristics.

3. Crop Rotation

Crops may be damaged by herbicide residues applied the previous season. Producers need to know the different waiting periods before planting susceptible crops. Crop failure may require a change in crops for specific fields. Some herbicides limit replant options. When an herbicide tank mixture is applied, the most restrictive label must be observed.

4. Tillage practice

In a no-tillage situation, both simple and creeping perennial weeds can increase. Seed burial is reduced and the reservoir of dormant seed serves as a continuous source of weed infestations. Plant residues can intercept soil-applied herbicides and reduce the amount reaching the soil. Herbicides can be degraded by sunlight and may be lost before rain washes them into the soil. Soil-incorporated herbicides such as EPTC cannot be used with no-till because the herbicide needs to be incorporated into the soil.

5. Application equipment

Safe and effective use of herbicides requires proper calibration and operation of the application equipment. The selection of the type of equipment depends primarily on the weed history of the field, the crop to be planted, herbicide choice and herbicide formulation. Herbicides, formulated as solutions, emulsions and wettable powders, are usually applied to the soil or plants as sprays, with water as diluent or carrier. Granules are applied by mechanical spreaders similar to those used for fertilizer. Pre-emergence herbicides are usually applied through a boom attached to the planter.

6. Climatic factors

If rainfall occurs too soon after a post-emergence herbicide was applied, the effectiveness can be reduced. Herbicides vary in their time requirements for rain-free periods after application. The exact time required to protect herbicide activity will vary with target species and environmental conditions.

7. Tank Mixtures

Only registered mixtures should be used. In many instances these consist of herbicides produced by the same manufacturer. On every herbicide label the herbicides recommended for mixtures are displayed.

Every time a mixture is made up it is advisable to add the products in the same order and proportion as planned, shake it well and leave it. If any flocculation, coagulation or precipitation occurs, the specific mixture cannot be used. When mixing chemicals prior to spraying, half fill the spray tank with water and commence agitation. Add the formulations in the order specified on the labels, creaming them first in a little water, and then adding at least 10% of the total volume of water before each chemical is added.

Summary

Weed interference is a given in any crop production situation, leading to potentially high yield losses if seeds are not adequately controlled. Reliance on chemical control only has drawbacks, such as the development of herbicide resistance, the potential negative impact on food and environmental safety and the failure to control weeds due to adverse climatic conditions or application errors. Therefore, weed management should focus not only on curative methods but instead on combining different cultural methods to prevent and manage weed populations.

There are more than 20 herbicides registered on maize in Zimbabwe, most of which can be sprayed on top of the maize crop.

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US$4 300 Dorper sheep

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In a thrilling display of quality and demand for elite livestock genetics, a Dorper sheep sold for a record-breaking $4,300 at the 57th Zimbabwe Herd Book's (ZHB) National Breed Sale on the 25th of July 2025. This historic price tag not only shattered the previous national record but also underscored the surging demand for high-quality livestock in Zimbabwe.

The auction which was held at CC Sales in Mt Hampden, drew a large crowd of enthusiastic bidders, showcased an impressive selection of Dorper sheep, known for their exceptional hardiness, fertility, and meat quality. The yarding was notable not only for its size but also for the consistently high standard of the animals on offer, making it a challenging task for bidders to select the best of the best.

The coveted Dorper sheep was purchased by renowned farmer Webster Chinoda, who was eager to add this exceptional animal to his flock. Chinoda's acquisition is a testament to the growing interest in superior livestock genetics and the importance of investing in top-quality animals.

"We would like to thank our buyers, Webster Chinoda who bought 24-0079ND on the 57th National Breed Sale for USD4300. We appreciate your support and look forward to seeing your new rams bring you much joy and pleasure in your sheep flocks," said the Northern Dorper Stud.

As the livestock industry continues to evolve, events like the CC Sales auction play a vital role in promoting excellence, driving innovation, and connecting buyers and sellers. The success of this year's auction is a testament to the enduring importance of this event and the Zimbabwe Herd Book's commitment to showcasing

the very best of Zimbabwe's livestock.

The remarkable price achieved by the top ram is a testament to the growing popularity and recognition of the Dorper breed's value. Dorper sheep are highly regarded for their ability to thrive in a variety of environments, making them an attractive choice for farmers seeking a low-maintenance, high-performance breed.

The Dorper is one of the only sheep breeds that is polyoestrus. This means that they are capable of producing young 3 times in 2 years, as opposed to most other breeds that will produce young once per year, usually in late winter/early spring.

Prone to producing twins, they are very protective mothers and if in good condition, they will successfully rear twins with ease. Triplets have also been born from Dorpers, but due to having only two teats, it is rare that the third triplet will thrive.

The Dorper sheep is an excellent breed for meat and leather, and was developed in South Africa and bred through the crossbreeding of the Dorset Horn and the Blackhead Persian sheep. Van Rooy sheep may also have been used in its development.

The Dorper, recognisable by its black head, was developed in the 1930s by the then Department of Agriculture, with the aim of creating a hardy, fast-growing meat breed that was suitable for production conditions throughout South Africa.

The breed is well suited to dry and extensive production conditions in South Africa. It is known for high fertility, good maternal instinct, high growth rates, and hardiness.

The Dorper has short, light wool, and requires no or minimal shearing, making it easy to maintain, particularly under extensive conditions. It is a non-selective grazer, which means that it can be used to graze pasture or veld that other livestock might not want to, and produce high-quality meat with good fat disposition.

It also has thick skin, offering the breed good protection against unfavourable weather conditions, and is sought-after by the leather industry.

The breed is medium-sized and well-muscled. It is also known for its good temperament and easy handling. Dorpers do not need crutching or mulesing, and are far less prone to flystrike than some other breeds.

With this record-breaking sale, the Dorper sheep has cemented its position as a highly sought-after breed in Zimbabwe.

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Zim's Green Indaba Charts Path for Climate-Resilient Agriculture

At a time when the climate crisis threatens food security and rural livelihoods, Zimbabwe is charting a bold path toward greener, more sustainable agricultural practices. This vision was laid out at the 2025 Green Indaba, held on the sidelines of the Zimbabwe Agricultural Show, where policymakers, industry leaders and farmers converged to reimagine the country's environmental and agricultural future.

Delivering a speech on behalf of Environment, Climate and Wildlife Minister Evelyn Ndlovu, Chief Director Washington Zhakata described the Indaba as "more than a conference; it is a call to action" a platform to turn ideas into solutions.

"We meet at a time when climate change, environmental degradation, and unsustainable agricultural practices threaten the very foundations of our livelihoods, ecosystems, and national development," said Ndlovu.

"Collaboration is the key to building resilience in the face of climate change."

Zimbabwe is already feeling the sting of climate extremes. According to the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development, the 2024 farming season recorded below-average rainfall, cutting maize yields by 18% and triggering food security concerns for 4.1 million people.

Experts warn that rising temperatures, prolonged droughts, and erratic rainfall patterns could shrink agricultural productivity by up to 25% by 2030 if adaptation strategies lag behind.

Yet, as Ndlovu's speech underscored, these challenges also present opportunities to reinvent farming systems.

A major highlight of the Green Indaba was the growing emphasis on circularity in agriculture – an approach that transforms waste into resources.

"Agricultural waste, when mismanaged, leads to methane emissions, soil degradation and water pollution," said Zhakata, reading from Ndlovu's speech.

"But harnessed correctly, it becomes compost, biogas, organic fertilizer and even animal feed. This is the essence of circularity: turning waste into wealth." Zimbabwe is already piloting circular economy initiatives through the National Roadmap for Climate-Smart Agriculture and the Circular Economy in Organic Waste Management framework.

These policies promote composting plants, biogas digesters and small-scale waste-to-agriculture value chains – ventures that could create thousands of green jobs while reducing environmental harm.

Zimbabwe has submitted its 3rd Generation Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3.0), pledging to cut per capita greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2035. Agriculture, land use, waste management and energy sectors are expected to lead this transformation.

"This is not just about abstract policies, strategies, and guidelines," said Ndlovu.

"They are our pathways for real action." These goals dovetail with Vision 2030, the national blueprint to transform Zimbabwe into an upper middle-income society. But the Green Indaba added a crucial layer: sustainability and inclusivity. As Ndlovu reminded delegates, "Nyika Inovakwa Nevene Vayo – A country is built by its

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own people."

The Indaba also placed strong emphasis on empowering women and youth to lead in green enterprises. With Zimbabwe's rural economy largely dependent on smallholder farmers 70% of whom are women – the success of climate-smart agriculture hinges on inclusive participation.

"Vocational centres and universities are incubating homegrown technologies – let us harness them," Ndlovu urged.

"We must empower youth, women, and farmer cooperatives to lead green enterprises." From buy-back centres for recyclables to waste-to-energy startups, the potential for community-driven innovation is vast. Early projects such as Geo Pomona's urban waste conversion show how government, private sector and local entrepreneurs can collaborate to build sustainable value chains.

Environmental economist Dr. Rutendo Chikomo notes that the speech signals a shift from "policy talk" to "market-driven climate action."

"The next step is to align climate targets with financial instruments," she explains. "Green bonds, carbon credits, and climate insurance must become mainstream. Otherwise, the goals will remain aspirational." Similarly, agronomist Tinashe Chimhanda warns that the pace of technology adoption among smallholder farmers remains slow.

"Training and affordable financing for small-scale composting and biogas units are essential," he says. "Otherwise, waste will continue to be a liability rather than an asset."

As the Indaba concluded, Ndlovu's speech served as a rallying call: "The choices we make today will shape the legacy we leave for future generations. Let us cultivate tomorrow – where our soils are fertile, our rivers clean, our industries green, and our communities resilient."

But the question remains: Can Zimbabwe translate this vision into measurable change? With ambitious emission targets, policy roadmaps and growing public awareness, the groundwork is in place. The challenge is implementation – scaling pilot projects, mobilising funding and ensuring no community is left behind.

The Green Indaba has set a bold agenda: not just to adapt to climate change, but to leverage it as a catalyst for economic transformation. Whether Zimbabwe can move beyond rhetoric to real, scalable action will define the nation's environmental and agricultural legacy for decades to come.

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The 5th edition of the Annual Goat Indaba 2025, Bulawayo, 23–26 October

Preserving our Indigenous Goats -Understanding the Matebele and Mashona Breed Standards.

Four Days That Will Transform Goat Farming in Zimbabwe

Bulawayo will soon become the heartbeat of goat farming as the Goat Breeders Association of Zimbabwe (GBAZ) hosts its much-anticipated 5th Annual Goat Indaba and Training Courses. For four days, farmers, agripreneurs, investors, schools, and livestock enthusiasts will gather under one roof — to learn, connect, trade, and celebrate the exponential growth of the goat industry.

This is not just another farming event. It is a journey into the future of goat farming, blending knowledge, opportunity, and inspiration.

Day 1 - Back to Basics: Building Strong Foundations

Day one is dedicated to the Basic Goat Farming Training, a must-attend for beginners and aspiring farmers. Through practical sessions led by seasoned breeders and veterinary experts, participants will learn the essentials of housing, feeding, breeding, record keeping, and disease management.

By the end of the day, farmers walk away with not just knowledge, but confidence — ready to start or strengthen their goat enterprises.

Day 2 – The Indaba: Conversations That Shape the Future

The 2025 Goat Indaba will be bigger and more impactful than ever before, featuring:

- Technical & Practical Training Sessions led by industry experts
- Panel Discussions & Policy Dialogues shaping the future of goat farming
- Live Breed Showcases including indigenous Matebele & Mashona goats
- Market & Auction Platforms connecting farmers to buyers
- Youth Mentorship Programs inspiring the next generation
- Networking Opportunities for farmers, suppliers, policymakers, and investors

Days 3 & half day 4 – The Junior Course: World-Class Training with SABGBA

The spotlight then shifts to the two-day Junior Course, a rare and invaluable opportunity brought to

Zimbabwe by the South African Boer Goat Breeders Association (SABGBA).

At the helm is none other than Mr. Kobus Lotter, President of SABGBA, a respected authority on

Boer goat breeding across Africa. Over two full days, participants will immerse themselves in the

fascinating world of Boer, Kalahari Red, and Savannah goats — the breeds that dominate commercial goat farming on the continent.

Through lectures, demonstrations, and hands-on sessions, Mr. Lotter will unpack:

- Breed standards and what makes these goats exceptional.
- Selection and judging techniques for improving herds.
- Genetic improvement and record keeping for long-term profitability.
- Management practices that turn goats into a thriving agribusiness.

The Junior Course is more than training — it is a masterclass with one of the very best, placing Zimbabwean farmers on the same footing as their regional counterparts. You will write a theory and practical exam. Once you pass, you will receive a Junior Course Certificate.

Day 4 Final Day – Auction & Farm Inspections

The four-day experience closes on a high note with the Goat Auction and Farm Inspections. Here, some of Zimbabwe's finest goats go under the hammer, giving farmers a chance to buy and sell superior genetics. Mr. Lotter and local experts will also conduct farm inspections, sharing insights that help breeders raise goats that meet international standards.

Why You Shouldn't Miss It

- For farmers, this is the place to gain knowledge that turns into profit.
- For investors, it is a gateway into a thriving livestock sector.
- For schools and youth, it is an inspiration to see agribusiness as the future.

The GBAZ Indaba and Courses are not just an event — they are a movement, driving Zimbabwe's goat industry forward.

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ZADF promotes women participation in dairy

The Zimbabwe Association of Dairy Farmers (ZADF) and partners are implementing strategic interventions aiming for equal participation, equal control of productive resources and fair resource allocation between women and men in activities along the dairy value chain.

Partners are working towards generating economic and social gains for women and youth from dairy production and marketing to increase incomes and improve their livelihoods.

Through the ZADF women in dairy network forum we have seen a gradual increase in the level of women engagement in dairy business and a notable increase in women's contribution to the national milk output.

ZADF continues to mobilize new women dairy farmers by encouraging women to take ownership in dairy business. ZADF has been working on strengthening partnerships with dairy value chain stakeholders to improve farmer's access to financial resources to enable investment at all levels of the dairy value chain. ZADF through its partnerships provides training and extension services to enhance women's technical and business skills.

ZADF is facilitating growth of existing women dairy farmers through a graduation model from small-scale communal dairy farmers to medium-large scale commercial dairy enterprises.

Together, these initiatives empower women, improve livelihoods, and contribute to sustainable agricultural practices in Zimbabwe.

Examples of success stories include Esther Marwa who started with only 5 cows in 2019 and now currently has a dairy herd of 40cows.

Carol Smith is a fourth-generation dairy farmers with a dairy herd of 400 cows doing well in Manicaland, Fransisca Paramu who started with 2 local breed cows in 2018 and is now milking 15 dairy breed cows yielding and average of 15litres/cow/day. In Matebeland Dorothy Mupfanochiya is one of the women doing well in the province and is currently milking 20 cows.

The Government is also supporting the active involvement of women in dairy through different initiatives. The Government has developed supportive policy frameworks; offers extension services and facilitates microfinance options specifically for women.

The overall aim is to see growth in women participation at all levels of the dairy value chain from input production businesses; milk production to milk processing for retail in their communities and beyond.

While we have seen a significant increase in involvement of women in dairy, gender disparity remains high at production level in the dairy sector as the sector is still typically male dominated.

Women do most of the work in the lower part of the value chain which includes feeding, milking and general dairy management at farm level. Although the level of participation of women in the dairy value chain averages 36%, only 23% of the registered dairy farmers are women and have control or equal control

of productive resources. The major challenges faced by Women in Dairy include land user rights as in most cases they are registered with the male spouse. Ownership of dairy animals and other productive resources are mainly registered with male spouse.

There is generally limited access to finance for investments by single females or female headed families due to the terms and conditions set by most banks. In addition, the high cost of finance impedes women from benefiting from available financial facilities.

Patriarchal systems and norms, especially in the communal areas, also limit women's ability to own and control land or family investments especially in livestock.

ZADF together with its dairy value chain partners including Government continue to work towards enhancing gender equality in the sector.

Antonnette Chingwe, Policy and Development

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Onion Farmers in Mash West Dream of a Better Tomorrow

Nomsa Hloma
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A gentle morning breeze carries the earthy scent of freshly turned soil at Koodvale Farm in the heart of Mashonaland West. Here, beyond Chinhoyi's modest bustle, small-scale farmers are laying the groundwork not merely for onions, but for a leap toward economic resilience.

These farmers, led by women, envision a future where fields yield not just produce but empowerment.

1. Planting with Purpose: Voices from the Field

Tafara Ndlovu, Age 38 "Breaking the Cycle"

Tafara, father of four, peers across neat rows of short-day onion seedlings.

"Maize and groundnuts barely kept us fed," he reflects. "Onions bring faster returns. If we get training and proper inputs, I believe we can lift ourselves out of this cycle."

His optimism is grounded in data: According to Zimbabwe's Crop, Livestock and Fisheries Assessment (CLAFA) 2022/23 report, onion production soared from 220,625 tonnes in 2022 to 290,628 tonnes in 2023 a 32% jump that underscores the sector's promise.

Memory Mutasa, Widow and Community Pillar – "Women Can Thrive"

With trowel in hand, Memory kneels between furrows, eyes bright.

"As single mothers, we often lack access to resources. But I want my children to see that women can farm, lead, and prosper. If we could have irrigation, quality seeds, and training, our yields would triple."

Her hopes reflect a broader reality: across Sub-Saharan Africa, women conduct over 50% of agricultural labor and produce 60–70% of the food, yet receive just a fraction of credit, inputs, and land access. This resource gap constrains both productivity and income.

Tendai Chirwa, Age 31 "A Cooperative Future"

Tendai's gaze drifts to a cluster of traders loading onions onto a truck bound for Mbare Musika.

"Our dream is a community cooperative shared storage, drying facilities, training seminars, maybe even a small processing unit. We've reached out to NGOs and agribusinesses, but we need more visibility and funding."

Her vision aligns with market realities. Mbare Musika offers US $25–30 for a 60 kg bag of onions, roughly US $0.42–0.50 per kilogram, a price only accessible if farmers can access bulk and value-added channels.

2. The Agronomy Behind the Promise

Onions are well suited to Zimbabwe's mid-year climate. The ideal sowing window is February to April, with harvests following 90–110 days later right into the cooler, dryer months. Best practice suggests 650,000 to 900,000 plants per hectare, targeting medium-sized bulbs (50–70 mm), most preferred by consumers.

Proper soil preparation is essential. The optimum pH (5.5–6.8) prevents diseases such as white rot and basal rot. Balanced fertilizer involving nitrogen, potassium, and sulphur at a 1:1.5 ratio helps avoid thick necks and ensures good storability. Post-harvest, onions require 2–4 weeks of curing until the outer scales rustle this reduces decay in storage.

However, constraints persist. The Agricultural Development Authority's commercial operations highlight that white rot and high seed costs, accounting for up to 33% of variable

costs, remain critical challenges. Locally sourced cultivars can reduce seed input to just 8% of variable costs if available.

Climate risk compounds these issues. Rising temperatures and erratic rainfall resulting from climate change threaten crop stability. Pests are shifting zones, while increased water scarcity and disease outbreaks are all tightening the margins.

3. The Market Reality: Too Much, Too Little, Too Late

Surging production isn't always a boon. A 2025 report shows daily onion deliveries topping 150 tonnes, causing oversupply-driven price drops from over US $10 to between US $6 and $9 per kilogram. Oversupply, especially without access to storage or alternate markets, could undercut farmer earnings.

Despite this, onions remain one of Zimbabwe's most widely consumed vegetables. Markets like Mbare Musika, supermarkets, and growing export pathways such as Botswana offer potential, especially if farmers can grade, package, and access aggregation facilities.

Notably, the government's US $30 million Horticulture Export Revolving Fund (HERF) aims to bolster horticulture exports but outreach to remote farms like Koodvale is limited.

Locally, farmers on platforms like Reddit recommend drying facilities and smart stocking strategies letting farmers time sales when demand outweighs supply, rather than flooding the market immediately after harvest.

4. Expert Insight: What's Next for Koodvale?

• Market Alignment: Dr. Charles Dhewa of KTA warns that unchecked production growth may outstrip demand. "Farmers must align supply with actual demand or explore alternate markets," he says.

• Infrastructure Development: AMA is working on aggregation centers with cold chain and drying facilities, which could help smallholders maintain quality, reduce spoilage, and access better prices but the rollout is slow.

• Empowering Women Farmers: Given that women make up a variable but significant share of agricultural labor, targeted intervention like credit without formal collateral, gender-inclusive extension services, and land tenure rights could yield large gains. Research shows equal access to inputs can raise women's yields to match men's.

Essential supplementary and intensive feeding solutions for Zimbabwean beef cattle farmers

Navigating sustainable production targets via the newly developed and improved Feedmix beef cattle supplementary and feed range

Introduction

Zimbabwean beef cattle farmers need to adopt effective and precise supplementary feeding, and, where applicable, intensive feeding practices.

This requires focus and high-level expertise on the importance of specific nutrients that enhance the utilization (intake and digestion) of low-quality grass that is still available and additional feeding where grass is limited, while ensuring that supplementary feeds and feeding practices are cost-effective.

By especially maintaining optimal body condition, your breeding herd can sustain health and reproductive performance, and thereby financial viability with our Feedmix product range and recommendations, even during these challenging times.

Feedmix is proud to introduce our new and improved beef cattle supplementary and intensive feeding range, developed by using the latest scientific principles and tailored specifically for the Zimbabwean beef herds and on-farm feed resources to ensure the resilience of your farming operations, especially through challenging times that farmers are continuously facing.

FEEDMIX
The ultimate stock feed

We offer the following complete and high-protein concentrate products of our newly improved beef supplementary and intensive feeding range specific for Zimbabwean conditions and to complement and add value to a wide range of on-farm feed resources, production targets, and management practices:

Feedmix Beef Feed Range:

1. Feedlot Performer 11 (contains 11% CP and 10.8 MJ/Kg)

A high-protein and high-energy complete feed for growing and finishing off cattle in pens under intensive feeding practices

Feeding and Management Recommendations

1. Feed ad lib (±2,5-3,2% of bodyweight) to cattle that have already undergone an adaptation/ starter period with limited amounts of the feed (<2,3% of bodyweight) for at least 14-21 days, and sufficient additional roughage is available.

2. Always check the manure (not too loose or too firm; ideal is 1,5cm-2cm thick stool with rings in the middle – no splashing when falling on the ground) to determine whether additional roughage may be required and/or whether animals have adapted properly to the feed, before withdrawing additional roughage completely.

2. Stud Performer 12: (Contains 12% CP and 10.6Mj/Kg)

A versatile high-protein and high-energy complete feed with various uses specific to stud animals (e.g., finish off stud animals for sales or shows).

Feeding and Management Recommendations

1. Ideal for performance testing of younger bulls.

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2. Can be given separately in limited amounts with additional hay/silage or on grazing if maximum performance is not the immediate target.

3. For maximum performance, feed ad lib (±2,4-3,2% of bodyweight) to cattle that have already undergone an adaptation/starter period with limited amounts of the feed (<2,3% of bodyweight) for at least 14-21 days, and sufficient additional roughage is available.

4. If maximum performance is not targeted, manage feeding levels of Stud Performer 12 on farm to feed up to a maximum of 2,4% of bodyweight (85% of total DM diet) with separate ad lib availability of roughage for stud cattle. Feeding levels will be determined by targeted animal performance levels that need to be achieved and can be adjusted accordingly.

5. Always check the manure (not too loose or too firm; ideal is 1,5cm-2cm thick stool with rings in the middle – no splashing when falling on the ground) to determine whether additional roughage may be required and/or whether animals have adapted properly to the feed, before withdrawing additional roughage completely.

6. The rumen of stud animals needs to remain healthy while trying to achieve maximum performance. Therefore, try to prevent any rumen acidotic conditions with too little roughage.

3. Bull Fertility 20: (Contains 20% CP and 9.6Mj/Kg)

A quality and economical supplementary feed for maintaining mature breeding bulls in a productive state.

Feeding and Management Recommendations

1. Supports animals on veldt grazing to ingest sufficient nutrients to fully maintain normal body functions and improve body condition without requiring any additional winter or summer licks.

2. Intake can be limited according to recommendations (typically up to a maximum of 30% of the diet – ±0,4-0,7% of body weight), depending on the quality of the grazing, as well as the production goals that need to be met and/or state of the animals.

4. Calf Starter & Grower 18: Contains (18% and 10.8Mj/Kg)

Feeding and Management Recommendations

A high-quality protein and energy complete feed that can be fed ad libitum to young dairy calves together with good to high-quality roughage separately or as a creep feed to beef calves.

5. Heifer 17: Contains (17% CP and 9.5Mj/Kg)

A quality and economical supplementary feed for the sufficient growth of dairy and beef heifers to reach the ideal age of first breeding targets.

Feeding and Management Recommendations

1. Intake can be limited according to recommendations (typically up to a maximum of 40% of the total DM diet; ±0,8-1,1% of body weight for dairy and ±0,6-1,0% of body weight for beef heifers), depending on the quality of the grazing and/or other roughage sources (e.g. silage/haylage), as well as the production goals that need to be met.

6. Winter Maintenance Lick/ Block 45: Contains 45% CP, Urea 13% and ME 5Mj/Kg

A quality and economical supplementary maintenance lick/ block for maintaining or limiting body condition loss of animals in a state of maintenance during drier periods with sufficient lower quality grazing.

Feeding and Management Recommendations

1. Supports animals to utilise natural lower quality drier veldt grazing more effectively and ingest sufficient nutrients to fully maintain normal body functions.

2. Intake should be limited to recommendations of 450-550g per animal per day, depending on the quality of the grazing, as well as the body condition of the animals.

7. Grazing Guard 10:

A quality, complete, and economical supplementary feed for cattle during drought, when there is a shortage of roughage.

Feeding and Management Recommendations

- Supports animals on the veldt to ingest sufficient nutrients to fully maintain normal body functions without requiring any additional winter or summer licks.

- Intake can be limited or fed up to ad libitum levels, depending on the quality and availability of the grazing, as well as the production goals that need to be met.

8. Feedlot 36 High Protein Concentrate: Contains 36% CP

and 7.5Mj/Kg

A high protein concentrate to economically produce a feedlot grower/finisher diet (e.g., Feedlot Performer 11) when mixed with on-farm grain, grain byproducts / molasses, and roughage sources. The feed is for the serious and larger feedlotters.

Feeding and Management Recommendations

1. Mix and feed strictly according to recommendations as described for Feedlot Performer 11.

2. Can typically be mixed as per table below for a feedlot grower/finisher TMR diet (e.g., Feedlot Performer 11) at a 15% inclusion with 60-67% grain or grain byproducts, 6-10% molasses and 10-13% dry roughage (or separate grazing) once animals have been fully adapted for 14-21 days with additional roughage (±15-20% roughage of total TMR during adaptation phase – replace equal amount of grain portion in diet below).

3. Grain ingredient levels can be increased to maximum levels (67%) and roughage to minimum levels (10%) during the last 30 days of the finisher period.

Mixing Ratios	HPC 36 (TMR)		
Mix (with on-farm sources)	**50 Kg**	**1,000 Kg**	**1,000 Kg**
Grain/snap corn/ grain cereals by-products (high starch)	35	650	680
Roughage (milled ±2 – 2.5 cm length)	3	120	120
Molasses (liquid)	4	80	50
Feedlot HPC 36	8	150	150
Total	**50**	**1,000**	**1,000**
Feed as Feedlot performer 11 at the rate of 11 – 14 kg per animal per day.			

3. Manure characteristics (not too loose or too firm) will be the guidance for replacing roughage levels 1:1 with grain ingredients throughout the feedlot period during the different feedlot phases.

4. Contact the Feedmix technical team for custom-made formulas for the different feedlot phases (starter to finisher) with specific on-farm produced or purchased roughage sources (e.g. dry hay, silage, haylage, etc), and/or grain/grain milling byproducts, and molasses.

9. Studmix 30 HPC:

Feeding and Management Recommendations

1. A high-quality protein concentrate to economically produce a grower/finisher (e.g., performance testing) diet for stud cattle (e.g., Stud Performer 12) when mixed with on-farm grain, grain byproducts /molasses, and roughage sources.

2. Ideal for performance testing of younger bulls.

3. Mix and feed strictly according to recommendations as recommended for Stud Performer 12.

Can typically be mixed as per the table below for a stud animal grower/finisher TMR diet (e.g., Stud Performer 12) at a 20% inclusion with 55-63% grain or grain byproducts, 5-10% molasses, and 12-20% dry roughage (or separate grazing).

4. Manure characteristics (not too loose or too firm) will be the guidance for replacing roughage levels 1:1 with grain ingredients at any time during the feeding period, especially if maximum performance is targeted.

5. The rumen of stud animals needs to remain healthy while trying to achieve maximum performance. Therefore, try to prevent any rumen acidotic conditions with too little roughage.

Mixing Ratios	HPC 30 (TMR)		
Mix (with on-farm sources)	**50 Kg**	**1,000Kg**	**1,000Kg**
Grain/Snap Corn/ Maize Milling by-product (high starch)	30	600	650
Roughage (milled ± 2- 2.5 cm length)	7	150	100
Molasses	3	50	50
Studmix HPC 30	10	200	200
TOTAL	**50**	**1,000**	**1,000**
Intake of each mix after 14 -21 days of adaptation. Ad lib feed at 2.5 to 3.2% of Body Weight			

10. Summer Production Lick 60 HPC:

A high protein concentrate to economically produce a Summer Production lick when mixed with on-farm grain or grain byproducts / molasses sources.

Feeding and Management Recommendations

1. Mix and feed strictly according to recommendations as recommended for Summer Production 18 lick.

Notes:

a. Adjust salt levels up or down depending on targeted intake levels and replace 1:1 with grain or grain byproducts.

b. 5% molasses can replace 5% grain or grain byproducts in the mixes if available.

It is recommended to contact our sales and technical team if you need specific assistance with product use and on-farm ingredient availability near you, especially for custom mixing ratios between concentrates and on-

	HPC 60 (Summer Production Lick 18)	
Mix (with on-farm sources)	**50-kg bag**	**Kg**
Grain/Maize milling byproduct (high starch)	13	650
Salt	3	150
Summer Production Lick 60 HPC	4	200
Total	**20**	**1000**
Intake of each mix, g/day	**1000-1800**	

farm feed sources that differ from the general recommendations above.

Contact the following for more information and guidelines:

Technical Sales Manager:

- 0771 681 344
- email: techsales@feedmix.co.zw

Technical Sales Mashonaland East

- 0785 403 865
- email: techsales5@feedmix.co.zw

Technical Sales Midlands

- 0785 898 339
- email: techsales1@feedmix.co.zw

Technical Sales Manicaland

- 0785 600 084
- email: techsales2@feedmix.co.zw

Dr Hinner Köster:

Ruminant Feed Consultant:

- email: hhkos1704@gmail.com,
- +27 82 855 5453

Strengthening Market Linkages:

Zimbabwe's horticulture sector stands at a turning point. With fertile soils, favourable climates, and skilled farmers, the country has all the ingredients to become a regional leader in fresh produce.

Demand is strong both locally and abroad, yet challenges of coordination, market access, and inconsistent supply continue to hold the sector back.

The industry currently runs on two tracks. The formal market comprising exports, supermarkets, and structured supply chains demands consistency, high volumes, and adherence to strict quality standards.

This market is lucrative but often inaccessible to smaller farmers who struggle with certification and infrastructure requirements. On the other hand, the informal market made up of local vendors and direct sales remains more flexible and accessible, offering vital income for thousands of households.

However, it lacks stability and often traps farmers in low-value chains. This disconnect comes at a cost. Imports continue to fill supermarket shelves with produce that Zimbabwe can grow, draining foreign exchange and bypassing local farmers.

At the same time, smallholders miss out on opportunities to supply larger markets, while buyers face shortages of consistent, reliable volumes. The solution lies in stronger coordination and market linkages.

Success in horticulture depends not only on good farming practices, but also on aligning production with market demand. Quality, consistency, and strong buyer relationships are just as critical as seeds, soil, and irrigation.

To address these challenges, the Horticultural Development Council (HDC) has developed the Hub and Spoke Model. In this approach, established exporters, aggregators, packhouses, and processing facilities serve as hubs, linking farmers the rim and tyre of the wheel to reliable and profitable markets.

The spokes represent the support services farmers need: technical training, access to finance, extension advice, group organisation, and secure payments. The benefits are twofold. Buyers gain reliable supply to meet large orders, while producers particularly smallholders gain guaranteed markets, access to inputs, and knowledge transfer.

It is a system built on partnership, designed to unlock Zimbabwe's full production potential. Import substitution is another strategic priority. Every tonne of fruit or vegetables produced locally instead of imported not only saves scarce foreign currency but also creates jobs, builds skills, and strengthens food security.

However, this opportunity requires farmers to meet the same quality standards demanded by export markets. Encouragingly, this means that farmers preparing for local supply chains are simultaneously building the capacity to compete internationally.

Looking to the future, the HDC highlights four critical areas: Expanding infrastructure through more packhouses, aggregation centres, and processing facilities across the country.

- Farmer education and organisation, ensuring producers understand quality standards, seasonal planning, and market requirements.
- Stronger market information systems to guide farmers on what to grow, when to harvest, and where to sell.
- Deeper regional trade linkages, tapping into Southern Africa's growing demand for fresh produce and positioning Zimbabwe as a competitive supplier.

Zimbabwe has the climate, soil, and human capital to become a horticultural powerhouse. What is required is coordination, investment, and commitment to quality at every stage of the value chain.

The HDC provides the framework, but success depends on collective effort—farmers embracing new approaches, private sector players investing in infrastructure, and supportive government policies that enable growth.

The future of horticulture does not lie in choosing between local and export markets, but in building integrated systems that serve both effectively.

With the right structures in place, Zimbabwe's horticulture can evolve into a dynamic, competitive, and inclusive industry that creates wealth, food security, and opportunities for all.

INTRODUCTION

In order to operate a successful goat production enterprise every goat should be managed in the most appropriate and productive way. Genetically inferior goats require the same inputs as those that are superior and therefore a key focus of a goat enterprise should be selecting and breeding the most productive animals available.

Selection and breeding influences the genetic make-up of the goat flock, which, when done properly, enhances efficiency and the profitability of a goat enterprise.

Improved goat genetics and breed selection will contribute to the overall growth and development of goat value chains in the country.

BREEDS AND CHARACTERISTICS

A goat breed is defined as a group of goats sharing a common ancestry that have distinguishable, fixed characteristics who when mated with a member of the same breed will produce offspring with the same characteristics.

Genetics of a goat plays an important role in determining performance that is growth rate, feed conversion efficiency, carcass quality and yield.

Matabele Goat

The Matabele goat is found in the South and Western part of Zimbabwe.

The breed is large as compared to the Small East African goat.

The Matabele goat is white, black, brown

Mature bucks weigh up to 40- 65 kg and does up to 30-45 kg.

The height at maturity is up to 70 cm at the shoulders for males and 65 cm for females.

This breed survives well in dry climates. spotted and have ears that are long and lopped with turned up tips, but they are rarely horizontal.

The Small East African goat (Mashona)

The Small East African goats are found in East and Southern Africa.

Coat colour range from pure white to pure black with various intermixes of roan and speckled brown.

They have tassels (toggles) which occur in up to 30 % of the goats.

Mature bucks weigh up to 30- 40 kg and does up to 25-30 kg.

The height at maturity is up to 64 cm at the shoulders.

Both sexes of the goat have horns that arc backwards and are regularly curled up at the end. Average birth weights of kids range from 1.5-3 kg.

The breed is well adapted to most environments in Zimbabwe.

Boer Goat

The Boer goat is an improved imported breed with some infusion of European, Angora and Indian goat

genes. It is primarily a meat goat.

The breed is horned with long, pendulous, lop ears and a variety of color patterns mainly white and brown.

The goat has good browsing ability. Boer goat doe is a low maintenance animal that produces milk which is adequate to rear an early maturing kid.

Weaning rates are in excess of 160 %. They are very hardy and can adapt to different weather and climate.

The breed is well-known for being fast growing and docile.

A mature buck weighs about 110-135 kg and a mature doe weighs about 90-100 kg.

The Kalahari Red Goat

The Kalahari Red goat is a meat breed with their name derived from the red coat and the Kalahari Desert.

The breed has resemblances in appearances with the Boer goat although it has extra advantages to the original Boer goat.

The Kalahari Red goat is enhanced in terms of survivability of the animal and produces tender meat.

It is a large breed of goat with red colored coat (white or light shades of red are not desirable).

Their skin is completely pigmented, which protects from heat. They have loose skin in their neck area and long, floppy ears. The horns are of moderate size and are slanted.

The does have large and well attached udders and teats.

The goat can be used for Average mature body weight for crossbreeding purposes in order to increase hardiness and carcass yield bucks ranges from 110-120 and between

55-75 kg for does.

GENETICS AND SELECTION OF BREEDING STOCK

Selection of breeding doe/ doeling

A doe must be feminine, which includes good structural conformation including good feet and legs. Limping does should be removed from the breeding flock.

The vulva must not be small with a tuff of hair which is a sign of intersexuality. The length of the upper jaw should be equal with the lower teeth touching the superior dental pad. Mouth malformation will provoke bad bites and will prevent the animal from eating efficiently.

This genetic defect can also be transmitted to the offspring. The goat must have a higher average daily weight gain during development in comparison to their contemporary group. Remove does that fail to maintain adequate body condition.

It is essential to keep does that kid every year, have udders that are firm and well-shaped. Cull does with poor conformation of the udder and teats. Does with poor conformation of the udder and teats prevent kids from suckling adequately.

Does infected by mastitis, an inflammation of the mammary gland should be sold or culled. Eliminate does that have poor or lower milk production and are incapable of rearing kids to weaning unassisted. Cull does with poor fertility rates, such as older does and those that require several services per conception.

Selection of breeding buck

A herd buck is the most important animal in the flock because it contributes 50 % of the genetic makeup of every kid born and determines overall pregnancy rate of the flock.

A replacement herd buckling can be selected from the group at weaning (3-4 months of age) based on weaning weight and post-weaning growth (6 to 8 months of age).

A good buck must present masculinity, adequate muscling, conformation of the head and neck, and standard buck vocalization. Breeding soundness evaluation on the buck should reflect firm consistency, elasticity at palpation, good mobility in the scrotal sac, and have oval-shaped testicles.

Castrate buckling from the flock that displays poor conformation such as cryptorchidism, a genetic malformation where only one or no testicles descends in the scrotum.

Mature bucks should have a scrotal circumference of 34 cm from 18 months of age.

A buckling with hypoplasia or undeveloped testicles should be eliminated. Bucks with good feet and legs should be selected. Limping bucks should be culled. A buck must be dominant and display mating behavior, including a good libido or sexual interest throughout the breeding season.

Horticultural
Development Council

WHY JOIN THE HDC?

Whether you're a farmer or part of the agriculture value chain, joining Horticultural Development Council (HDC) comes with great benefits that help your operations grow. Here are the benefits of being part of HDC:

Are you a farmer?

> Access market trends and connect directly with buyers
> Receive training to grow your skills
> Gain support in accessing finance and credit
> Expert support to improve your yields
> Be part of a network of growers
> Make your voice heard on key policies

Are you an aggregator or transporter?

> Reach a wide network of farmers and suppliers through HDC platforms
> Opportunity for shared logistics
> Get training and access to information on finance
> Gain support on regulatory issues

Are you an input supplier?

> Reach more farmers and boost your sales
> Get market access and connect with aggregators
>Access training, finance, and advocacy
> Join a growing network of serious industry players

Join HDC today and be part of a thriving, professional horticulture network.

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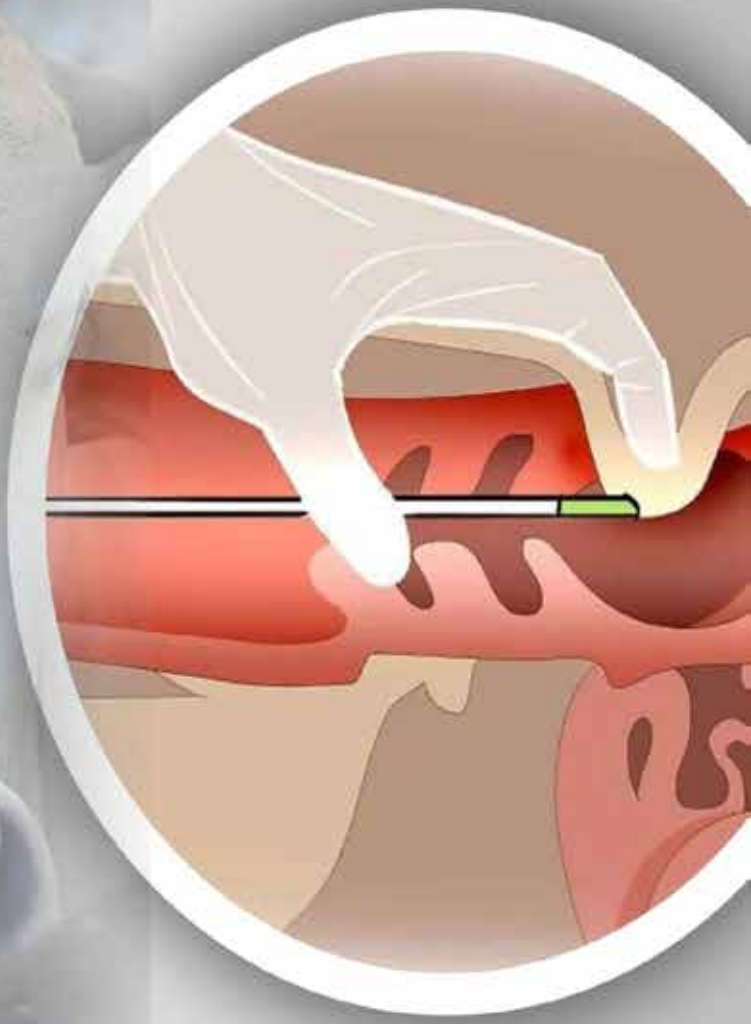

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