SOGA

The second Assistant Veterinary Surgeon, Jotello Festiri Soga MRCVS, was appointed in April 1888.

He described briefly, in his 1891 Annual Report, how he followed instructions by Duncan Hutcheon to proceed to Jansenville district (Eastern Cape) in July 1890 to investigate a disease called ‘Ncenta’. He stated that he had verified that a plant, Cotyledon ventricosa, caused ‘Ncenta’ in goats. The plant was identified by MacOwan.

The seven lines in the Annual Report was fortunately expanded in an article “Disease “Nenta” in Goats” in the Agricultural Journal of 29th January 1891. This increased the public awareness of his research.

Soga credited a Mr C Weyer of Darlington, Somerset East, for drawing attention to the plant Cotyledon ventricosa and providing experimental healthy goats.

In this article Soga listed a number of “farmer” remedies but concluded that the only preventative was uprooting and destroying the plant.

Despite the proof MacOwan questioned the toxicity of this plant and was corrected by Mr Weyer in 1892, who had previously sent the plant to MacOwan. MacOwan contended that Soga was wrong and reasserted his claim that Lessertia annularis was the culprit as he had claimed in 1877. MacOwan acknowledged that the plant Weyers had sent in for identification was Cotyledon ventricosa.

Soga, September 1892, repeated that he was “thoroughly” satisfied that C. ventricosa was the cause of nenta.

This plant was shown to farmers at Swartruggens by the Agricultural Officer MacDonald. Many farmers stated that they had never seen this plant which was countered by Soga that it was difficult to see from horseback.

Henning 1932 lists further research and support of Soga’s claim by e.g. Borthwick, Tomlinson and Dixon.

Despite all the incrimination of this plant, it was not universally accepted as the causal factor but that e.g. it carried some infectious or parasitic agent thus causing an infectious disease.

Hutcheon concluded that Cotyledon ventricosa is at least one of the plants which induce the disease known as nenta or krimpsiekte in goats.