

MRDP update

A photographic update on Msinga and the summer we are having –

Normally this is what Msinga looks like at this time of the year



On the face of it just browner



We have had the lowest rainfall this year since we arrived in 1975 – so far 60 mm this summer altogether



On the ground you can see how start it is though – there really is no grass at all



The river is is even lower than winter levels and is full of water weed that usually gets washed out by floods



Its also a bit of a soup as all the starving animals eventually get to the river and drink and then die – so the locals push them into the water to stop the stink – in our 4 klms of waterfront we’ve had over 20 cattle die in the water.



The bush stinks of dead cattle – our farmers are reporting between 50 and 70 percent herd die offs of cattle



Farmers will sometimes skin the cattle to at least get R50 from the skins – off a R8000 animal its all they get



Even shockingly donkeys are dying – goats are still alright



Farmers in the garden plots cut grass and weeds on the verges to feed goats at home like this lady.



Boreholes are drying out so water tankers deliver water once a week

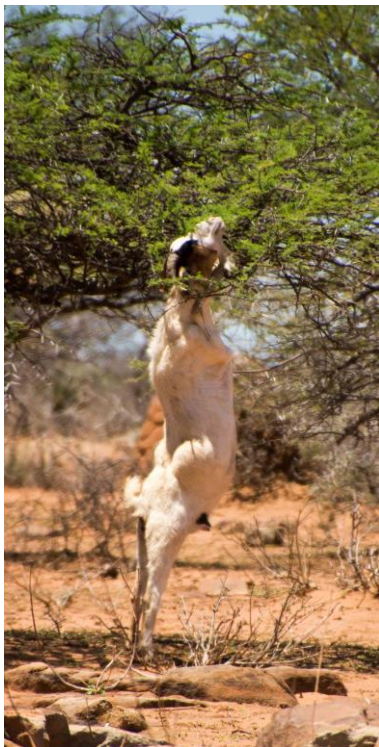


Government billboards in Msinga

There are sandstorms with dry thunderclouds



So much so that there's enough sand to be worth collecting to mix cement to build



The state has declared the province a disaster zone and is trying to find a way to preserve some farmer's livestock. The problem they face is that in the whole of South Africa there is no feed to be sourced for any price for such a big area. About 2 million cattle face starvation in the province and some estimates say about 400 000 have already died meaning an income loss of R3.2 billion rand already. Aid of millions of rand is being dispensed but there is little chance it will have an impact.

MRDP is trying to implement its proposed role but this is ever harder to do with these massive die offs and farmer's desperation.

With the support of the state we have fast tracked a system of employing youth to create food supplements to at least keep the goats alive as they are able to browse the trees and bushes which have survived a bit better.

This system is setting up young people to buy ingredients to mix blocks of nutritional supplement which is then sold to goat farmers to give to their goats and keep them productive of this terrible period.



A community animal health worker readying a supplement mix



Goats and the block



Farmers in Msinga at discussion on goat interventions



Mixing a demonstration block on stage for the minister of agriculture.