

## SUMMARY: Cattle were very important page 120

### New words

loyal	dutiful
lobola	the price of a bride
ancestors	the spirits of those who have died
symbol	sign

The cattle kraal was in the centre of the homestead. This was a sign of the importance of cattle. Cattle were important to the farmers and were a symbol of wealth.

Cattle were a very important part of African farming life. They were important for the following reasons:

- Cattle were a source of meat, milk and leather. Cattle hides (skins) were made into clothes which were made by the men.
- Owning cattle was a sign of wealth and status in the community.
- Cattle were only slaughtered for important events, such as slaughtering a cow at a wedding or a funeral, and at ceremonies that involved the ancestors. Like the San and Khoikhoi, the farmers also hunted wild game for their daily meat supply.

Cattle were also used for two other important customs.

- **The Mafisa System:** cattle were valuable because they could be loaned to a poor man who would then have milk products, and eventually some calves for himself. The owner could take back their cattle whenever they wanted to. The owner could also ask for the milk from their cow. Men who had large numbers of cattle showed their power by lending cattle. The men who borrowed the cattle had to give respect or loyalty to the people they borrowed cattle from.
- **Bride-wealth or Lobola:** This was when a bridegroom made a payment to the bride's family before the wedding. This was usually paid in cattle. This payment made the marriage official. If a man had lots of cattle, he could marry many wives. Wives would give him children who could then help the man with his cattle and other jobs. A man who had lots of cattle made a man more powerful over others. Today people still pay Lobola as a sign of respect.



### Answer these questions

1. Who looked after the cattle?
2. What were cattle seen as a symbol of?
3. Write a short **paragraph** on the importance of cattle to the early African farmers. Include the following words in your paragraph in ANY order: **meat, milk, hides, loyalty, lobola, symbols**. Please underline these words in your paragraph. (You may also use a coloured pen rather than underline the words if you wish.)