

Environmental Report

Those of you who were on the farm over the Christmas period would have noticed the balls of white foam in the branches over hanging the water down at the dam. These are the nests of the **Foam Nest Frog**.

Before laying her eggs the mating female secretes a fluid which is churned into a stiff froth by continuous movement of the hind legs of the mating pair. They are joined by several other males, who jostle for positions close to the female. After about 15 minutes the female releases the first batch of eggs and they are fertilized by her mating partner as well as the other males nearby. As the eggs are laid, all of the frogs churn them into the foam. The process lasts all night with the female periodically leaving the nest to rehydrate herself in the water below and frequently changing partners on her return. The following night she sometimes returns alone to add more foam to the outside of the nest. In sunlight the outer surface of the nest hardens into a crust. The foam protects the eggs from aquatic predators and functions as an insulator, allowing the eggs to develop at an even temperature. After about five days the developing tadpoles work their way to the bottom of the nest. They break through the crust and drop into the water below, where they complete their metamorphosis.

Frogs and Toads.

What is the difference between Frogs and Toads? Very little really.

Toads have lumpy skin and a knob behind the eyes which is the parotid gland. They lay their eggs in long strings in the water. The Red Toad is common on the farm.

Frogs on the other hand, have smooth skin and lay their eggs in a mass in the water. They have big back legs for jumping and are used for frog jumping competitions. This athletic sport was revived in South Africa in the 1970's. The doyen of the sport was Piem Fourie of Elsburg. Teams of Cape River Frogs were sent to Calaveras County in California to compete. But it was at the Maroela Spa in the small town of Paulpietersburg on 21 May 1977 that history was made when 'Santjie' the Sharp-nosed Grass Frog set the standing world record of 10.3m which is listed in the Guinness Book of Records.

Carruthers V. 2001. Frogs and Frogging in Southern Africa. Struik Publishers