

Out of Africa, into Somerset

SMALLHOLDERS in Mozambique have been taught how to care for cows, thanks to training from a group of British vets.

Peter Edmondson, coordinator of the XLVets FarmSkills Africa programme, said: "The largest dairy herd in our vet practice has more than 1,000 milking cows, which is more than the total number of dairy cows in the whole of Mozambique," he said. "I was tutoring smallholders whose aspiration was to manage one cow; five cows is considered a commercial herd there."

To get on to the programme, smallholders have to display a huge level of commitment to looking after a herd. Once accepted, they have to

build a corral by their house, cut and store forage to last at least six months and then attend the 10-day XLVets training course.

Once qualified, the smallholders get an in-calf Jersey heifer, which they calve and milk. They also have to cut the forage, ferry water and supply concentrates.

The second phase of the project saw three local trainers taught by XLVets to train smallholders. The three men – Arnaldo Gomes, Isidro Araujo and Acio Muteque – were intensively trained in cow management, and learned in Somerset and Gloucestershire, where several veterinary practices and farmers pitched in. The project is sponsored by Novartis.



Left to right: Arnaldo Gomes; Oliver Tilling, Shepton Veterinary group; Isidro Araujo; Peter Edmondson, Shepton Veterinary Group; Acio Muteque; and Simon Wheeler, Novartis Animal Health.

