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Draft white paper on conservation

On 9 September, Predation Management South Africa (PMSA) brought the following comments to the attention of the Director General of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE). The necessary citations were provided to give clarity to the recommendations.

1. Fences are essential structures for mediating the biological exchange between the “natural” and “human-modified” domains (Du Plessis, 2013). Fencing in southern Africa is perceived primarily as disease control measure; the human-wildlife conflict threats posed to conservation goals are relegated more to secondary management focus (Ferguson, 2012). This is evident on the western boundary fence of the Kruger National Park, which is demarcated as a fence designed to contain foot-and-mouth disease in the park. Biosecurity carries a higher risk in transfrontier conservation areas where conservation and policing have insufficient resources and limited jurisdiction. Foot-and-mouth disease cost South Africa about R700 million in 2019 (MG, 2022).

The draft White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity No 46687:

- a) ***does not fully acknowledge the importance of fence protection against the harvesting of endangered species and overutilisation of rangelands and natural resources (fuelwood) in the protected areas***
- b) ***is not clear on how small-scale and emerging farmers are to be equipped to manage park predators and biosecurity***

2. **Goal 7: Biodiversity Economy Transformation** does not fully explain how the transformation will affect existing agricultural and socio-economic systems dependent on the biodiversity economy. According to section ranger Andrew Desmet (WNA, 2013), the removal of the fences between the Kruger National Park and Mozambique has exacerbated problems associated with poaching supported by local communities.

In agriculture, fences play a vital role in protecting surrounding farmland from park predators. The black-backed jackals are opportunistic predators occupying a variety of protected areas. They can move between protected areas and surrounding “human-modified” domains where they are susceptible to persecution rates (Pardo *et al.*, 2021).

These predators are problematic for small-scale farmers, commercial farmers, and the wildlife ranching industry, of which livestock predation costs South Africa over R1 billion per year (Kerley *et al.*, 2019). Recent research on black-backed jackals at the Maria Moroka Nature Reserve shows them using springbok as a primary food source, which peaks when springbok lamb. These periods do not only coincide with the black-backed jackal pupping and dispersal seasons but also with sheep lambing seasons (Avenant & Morwe, 2021).

3. **With reference to Section 11.5, it is not clear how this draft White Paper Goals will be funded sustainably.** South Africa is struggling to manage existing protected spaces; any expansion of the protected areas or new biosecurity programmes requiring more resources would be unrealistic.



This draft White Paper does not:

- a) show enough evidence-based research to support the removal of fencing in and around the main protected areas; or
- b) recognise the importance of fence management and how the lack of fence boundaries could adversely impact:
 - disease control;
 - biosecurity;
 - meat and wool exports;
 - increased cruelty in predation control;
 - community-supported poaching;
 - rural farming economies; and
 - tourism.

More livestock predation research needs to be done and applied before this White Paper can be accepted as a guideline for biodiversity.

3.1 Predation research

3.1.1 Livestock and Predation Management Programme

PMSA is the custodian of this programme, which has established itself as the longest predator research and monitored project in Africa's history. It has been running for 14 years, with findings and formulated results on 27 monitor farms, situated across six provinces, covering a total area of 136 214 hectares.

Niël Viljoen's programme originated in 2008 when he started monitor farms to assess management tools to support predation management training in South Africa. This comprehensive data and the success of monitor farms has drawn the attention of universities. It also forms the basis of research projects involving international interest.

3.1.2 Livestock Predation and its Management in South Africa: A Scientific Assessment (Centre for African Conservation Ecology, Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth)

This is a historic first (nationally and globally) for a scientific assessment covering the topic of predation on livestock in South Africa. The departments of Environmental Affairs and Agriculture are being offered a single document containing detailed and current knowledge on this complex subject as a basis for considering policy development. It sets the stage for improved policy formulation and management of livestock predation in South Africa, to reduce the conflict around this issue and help sustain agricultural production and biodiversity. The assessment was endorsed by both the Ministers of Environmental Affairs and of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in 2018.

3.1.3 Predation Management Centre (PMC) (University of the Free State, Bloemfontein)

The PMC aims to extract valuable information from reliable sources and provide a platform where people can access such information and help make predation management effective in South Africa. Quinette Kruger is the centre manager for this coordinated research platform.



4. National Parks

Agricultural producers neighbouring and near to national parks experience losses due to predators and other wildlife escaping from these parks. Livestock losses due to predators and damage to crops due to other wildlife (i.e. bush pigs) escaping from these parks (i.e. the Karoo National Park, Square Kilometer Array (SKA), Namaqua and Garden Route National Parks) are examples.

Proper structures should be put in place for

- liaison;
- consultation;
- management;
- development of strategies to prevent/limit these losses; and
- effective management of damage-causing animals on private land and land belonging to national parks and conservation areas.

These liaison structures should be representative of all affected parties. Legislation that manages predators and damage-causing animals on National Parks property needs to be clarified. There should not be a blanket approach to prevent certain management interventions without considering the conditions and threat posed.

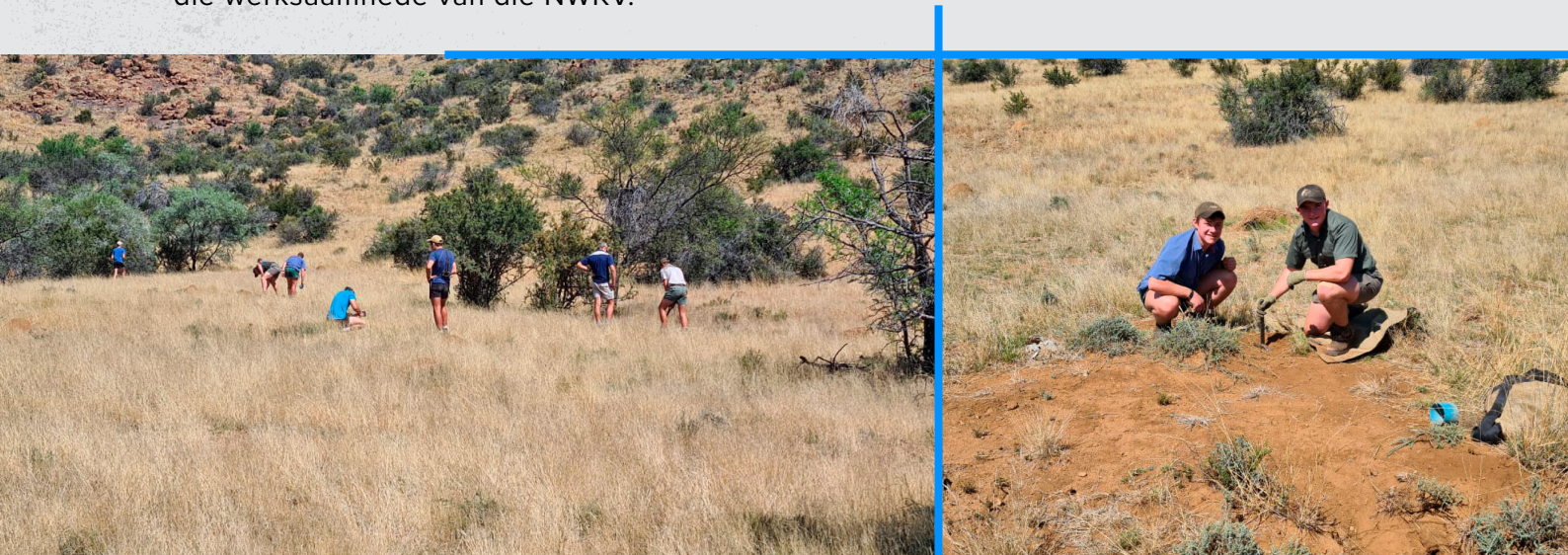
More uniform standards on efficient fencing of National Parks should receive attention as well.

Predasieopleiding vir landboustudente

Predasiespesialis Niël Viljoen het sy kennis oor geïntegreerde predasiebestuur aan studente van Marlow Landbouskool oorgedra. Willie Ferreira het sy plaas, Poortjie, 30 km buite Cradock, as leerskool vir die 6-dagkursus aangebied en die omgewing was heeltemal geskik vir die praktiese aspek van die kursus.

'n Kombinasie van algehele predasiebestuur tesame met veebestuur is met die studente behandel.

Juan Venter, produksieadviseur van die Nasionale Wolkwekers Vereniging (NWKV) Oos-Kaap, het die laaste dag van die kursus bygewoon en 'n kort inligtingssessie aangebied oor die werksaamhede van die NWKV.



Lead ammunition – serious concern for conservation



During the past Predation Management Forum meeting, Lizanne Nel, Manager Conservation for SA Hunters, presented an address on the negative impacts of lead on wildlife.

She aims to sensitise people to the potential risks as many farmers use lead-based ammunition in predation management and PMSA has a role to play to inform people of the associated risks.

People often assume that if an animal dies of a headshot, the rest of the carcass is safe. This is not necessarily the case as radiographs confirmed that in some instances fragments of lead migrate along the spine to settle in other areas of the carcass.

Where are the risks to wildlife in farming, wildlife management and hunting practices?

- a) Sick animals may be shot with lead-based ammunition, and carcasses made available to scavengers or vulture restaurants, thus unknowingly exposing them to lead fragments.
- b) Hunters using lead-based ammunition, who leave bloodied meat in the veld or donate carcasses to vulture restaurants, also pose a risk.
- c) Lethal methods of predation control or wildlife management where carcasses are left in the veld, create a risk for scavenging wildlife.

The conservation status of many vulture species in South Africa are already critically endangered, with population trends in a negative spiral. Like vultures, ground-hornbills are also very sensitive to lead exposure.

There is a growing realisation of the harm caused by lead poisoning to wildlife, and increasing emphasis on lead in several multi-lateral environmental instruments and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The South African government established the Lead Task Team in 2019, with 24 members and 16 organisations, including conservation





NGOs, government and organisations representing hunting and angling. The approach being followed is to move away from polarised discussions and to foster an integrated approach of collaboration between the relevant role players to find meaningful solutions.

Currently, there are international processes underway looking at the phasing out of lead-based ammunition where it can potentially harm wildlife. However, the approach followed in South Africa is to focus on raising awareness and obtaining collaboration from the relevant sectors rather than using uninformed bans with unintended consequences. The cost of lead-free rifle ammunition for some calibres is not that much higher than lead options. However, alternatives are not available for all calibres, and almost non-existing for lead shot in South Africa.

What can we do?

- Make informed bullet choices. Use fit-for-the-purpose lead-free alternatives where available and affordable.
- Risk management when using lead-based ammunition – gut piles/remains should not be left in the veld. Rather burn or bury in dedicated safe areas where scavengers cannot access it.
- Do not donate to vulture restaurants when using lead ammunition.
- Use alternatives, as increased demand could improve supply.
- Government can assist by developing incentives, e.g. reduced taxes for import of alternative ammunition components.
- Include information in training programmes.
- Raise awareness.

Boer saam met die natuur

Die Cape Leopard Trust, in samewerking met Cape Nature, het 'n reeks werksinkels saamgestel oor roofdierkonflikverligting en boerderybestuursmetodes wat die natuur beskerm en volhoubaarheid en produktiwiteit aanspreek.

September se twee werksinkels het gehandel oor holistiese predasiebestuur en is bygewoon deur 'n paar boere en grondeienaars, Noord-Kaap Natuurbewaring (ou DENC), EWT, Landbou, Elsenburg (Langgewens) en Landcare. Hierdie 3-dagwerksinkels is aangebied by Montagu en Langgewens Navorsingsplaas

Oktober se tema is *Toegepaste Holistiese Agri-ekologiese Bestuur* en word op 5 Oktober by Langgewens en 19 Oktober by Montagu aangebied.

Kontak Chavoux Luyt met enige navrae by e-pos
communityoutreach@capeleopard.org.za of WhatsApp 082 791 1384.





Deel u bestuurs- praktyk met ons!

Daar is menige boere wat predatore doeltreffend bestuur en daarom wil ons graag sulke suksesstories aanhoor en deel met medeboere. U geslaagde bestuurspraktyk sal in die maandelikse PMF- nuusbriëf verskyn en ook op die webtuiste geplaas word. Skakel Bonita Francis by (041) 365 5030 of per e-pos by nwga@nwga.co.za.



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