



## PLAASLIKE NUUS | LOCAL NEWS

### Principles of conservancies to address predation

At the forthcoming meeting of PMSA, the Conservancies Management Association has been invited to inform the meeting on the principles of conservancies as a tool to address predation management.

The Conservancies Management Association was established over the past two years, as a representative body on behalf of the executives of private conservancies, and to support them with the development of their management plans, as required by the various provincial regulating authorities.



### RMIS's 2025 focus on small stock: The year of the sheep

In a strategic move to bolster South Africa's red meat sector, Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS) has designated 2025 as "The year of the sheep". This initiative underscores the pivotal role of the sheep industry in the nation's general agricultural landscape, focusing on enhancing lamb and mutton production, upholding rigorous standards, and fostering collaborative efforts to address industry challenges.

A key aspect of this initiative is collaboration. The RMIS is working closely with the Red Meat Producers Organisation (RPO), the National Wool Growers Association (NWGA), and hopefully, Predation Management South Africa (PMSA), to address industry challenges collectively.

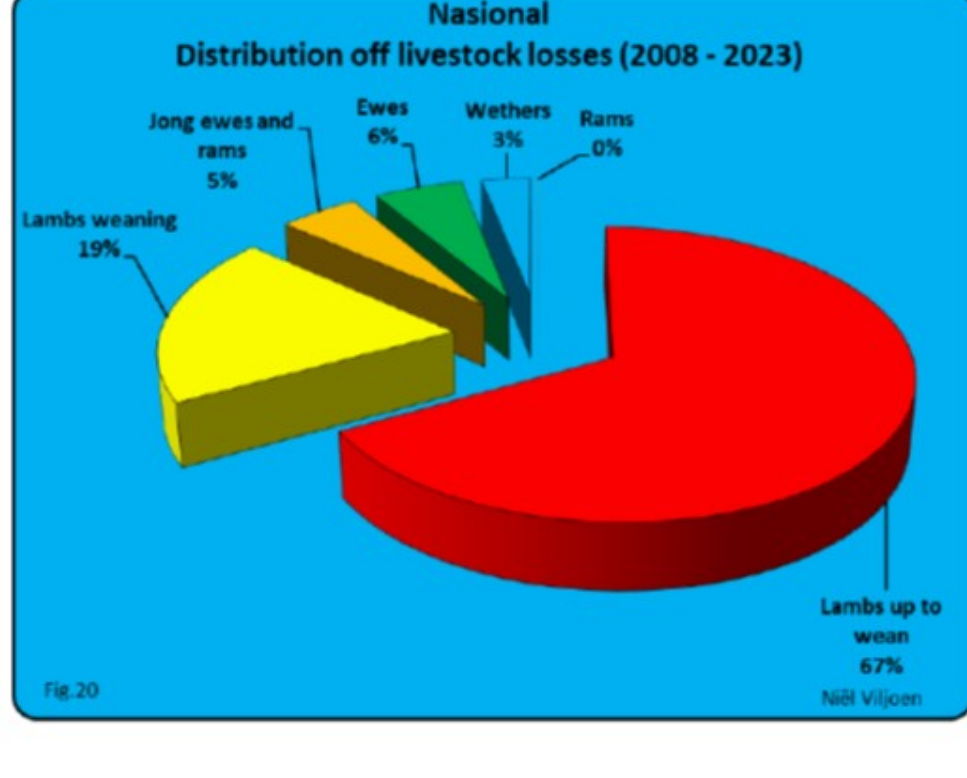
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### Predation monitor farms

From the latest Livestock and Predation Management Report from Niel Viljoen, the diagram shows the livestock preference of the two main damage causing predators, black-backed jackal and caracal, as analysed on 27 monitor farms nationwide.

Newborn lambs, up to a weight of approximately thirty-five kilograms, are the most vulnerable to these two predators, as 67% of all livestock losses fall within this category. As lambs grow bigger and heavier, the tendency to fall prey decrease, although weaners do stand second in line with 19% losses. The diagram confirms that lamb losses up to wean is 67%, adding weaned lamb losses of 19%, equates to 86% losses of young sheep due to predators.



### Data from the Free Roaming Cheetah Census project benefit landowners



The Free Roaming Cheetah Census (FRCC) project was initiated by Cheetah Outreach Trust and partner organisation, Ashia Cheetah Conservation, to assist the Cheetah Outreach Trust to expand their efforts across the landscape where cheetah occur on farmlands (which is enormous). The survey is taking place over a fixed schedule of three years with regular and summary feedback to landowners and partners.

Stellenbosch University and Groningen University, with PhD students, were brought on board to deal with the mass of incoming data and formalise the outputs from the work. The FRCC is the biggest and most comprehensive survey of cheetah presence and associated predation costs to landowners across all free-roaming cheetah range in South Africa ever done.

With adequate support and resources to see it through properly, the status of the free-roaming cheetah in South Africa can be scientifically determined across the natural range. And conservation-focused policies, taking into consideration the co-existence needs of the farming communities, can be developed to ensure the long-term conservation of cheetah on farmlands in South Africa.

There is currently not enough information available about the status of cheetah on farmlands, and previous studies only provided a rough estimate of what is thought to be the status of free-roaming cheetahs in South Africa. Very little scientifically based data is available, highlighting the impact these cheetahs have on farming practices. Once again, this is part of what the FRCC is aiming to address.

The FRCC is now two-thirds completed and with the results obtained, the Cheetah Outreach Trust will have a much stronger relationship with landowners for the conflict mitigation and intervention work, and will have adequate data to lobby policy change with conservation authorities where required.

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### The impact of solar energy on the environment: What you need to know



Southern Africa is rapidly expanding its solar energy sector to meet growing electricity demands and combat climate change. Some species might benefit from new habitats created by solar infrastructure, e.g. perching and nesting places, shade and shelter in areas with little trees, travel corridors, and evaporation ponds. However, poorly designed or managed ponds can pose risks to birds, creating hazards like drowning or attracting predators that were not frequenting the area before. If normal prey species are not available as a result of them being killed or displaced by the solar plant, it might lead to predators changing their diet to include more livestock or poultry, leading to human conflict. While the positive impacts of solar energy are clear, as with all energy sources, solar power can have unintended consequences for local wildlife (Jenkins et al. 2017).

Direct impacts include bird fatalities from collisions with photovoltaic (PV) panels (that absorb sunlight), reflective concentrated solar power (CSP) heliostats, or the parabolic mirrors. Waterbirds sometimes mistake large solar arrays for a waterbody and 'dive into' it, thus colliding with the panels. Birds can also fly into power lines, towers, or other associated infrastructure. In CSP facilities, where mirrors are used to focus sunlight onto a single point to generate heat, birds flying through the concentrated solar flux may suffer burns or even incineration. Objects near the receiving unit, are exposed to solar flux that is equivalent to temperatures of >800°C.



Indirect impacts arise from the physical footprint of solar developments. The top ten solar power plants in South Africa are listed by Ndlovo (2024) – the largest one being 850 000m<sup>2</sup> and the parabolic trough collectors (made of curved mirrors that track the sun) used, are 7.5m wide, 150m long and 3m high. The huge areas required for solar facilities, result in the removal of vegetation, which can be harmful to species with specific habitat needs, displace species and disrupt breeding, foraging, and migration behaviour. The construction and maintenance of substations, power lines, servitudes and roadways cause both temporary and permanent habitat destruction. Additionally, CSP plants use significant amounts of water, which may deplete local water resources and disturb nearby habitats. Other possible impacts, include air and water pollution resulting from use of dust suppressants, and large amounts of wastewater produced.

The rapid increase in solar energy projects in South Africa – over 500 proposals in the last ten years – has raised concerns about the lack of comprehensive data regarding their impact. While studies done in California indicated bird mortality rates of between 16 200 and 59 400 per year associated with solar power plants, the situation in South Africa remains poorly understood. The variety of technologies used and differing impacts of each, make it challenging to create a one-size-fits-all solution for mitigation. To address this, BirdLife South Africa advocates for gathering project-specific data that will help identify and mitigate potential threats to birds, ensuring that solar energy can be developed sustainably.

There are several general mitigation strategies, such as smart site selection (avoiding ecologically sensitive areas, migratory flyways, and areas with high biodiversity), design considerations (place PV arrays in configurations that reduce reflections or glare), habitat restoration in surrounding areas, and continuous monitoring that can assist developers to adjust operations and infrastructure in future and identify new risks. By adopting a precautionary approach and integrating wildlife conservation into solar energy projects, we can minimise the potential negative impacts while maximizing the environmental benefits of solar power.

This article was written by Dr Beánóiri Janecke of the Predation Management Centre at the University of the Free State. For a full list of references or more information, please send an email to [JaneckBB@ufs.ac.za](mailto:JaneckBB@ufs.ac.za)

## TEGNIËSE ARTIKELS | TECHNICAL ARTICLES

### Predasie neem nuwe afmetings aan

Veeplaas Tydskrif het met die voorsitter van die Noord-Kaapse Predasieforum (PMF NK), Theroux Kemp, gesels oor die onbegonne taak waarmee boere jare al besig is en min gevorder het, naamlik om probleemdiere uit te roei.

In die Karoo bly jakkalse en rooikatte steeds veeprodusente se grootste probleem en ondanks volgehoue pogings om dié ongediende te beheer, lyk dit asof hul getalle verder gestyg het nadat die droogte deur goeie reëns gebreek is. As goed-gekoördineerde beheermaatreëls nie nou slaag nie, kan dit boere na ander boerderyvertakings of van die plase af dwing.



[LEES MEER](#)

### Predation takes on new dimensions

Jackals and caracals remain Karoo livestock producers' greatest concern. Despite sustained efforts to keep them in check, their numbers appear to have increased since rain broke the drought in parts of this region. If well-co-ordinated control measures were to fail, it could force producers to opt for different farming activities or, worse yet, to suspend their farming operations.

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