

Funding Predation Management: A Crucial Step Towards a Sustainable Red Meat Industry

By Dewald Olivier, CEO of the Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS)

Predation is one of the oldest and most persistent challenges facing the livestock industry. For wool and meat producers alike, the impact of predators on profitability, sustainability, and animal welfare remains significant, particularly in extensive sheep and goat farming systems. Recognising this, **Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS)** has proudly committed to funding the core budget for **Predation Management South Africa (PMSA)** for the current financial year.

This strategic investment is more than just a line item in a budget, it is a clear signal that sustainability, producer support, and long-term resilience in the red meat value chain are fundamental pillars of RMIS's mission.

The Role of PMSA in Protecting Livelihoods and Sustainability

PMSA, operating under the broader umbrella of the **Predation Management Forum**, serves as a collaborative hub for coordination, research, extension, and policy support related to predation control in South Africa. It plays a vital role in equipping producers with tools, training, and shared knowledge to manage predator impacts in an ethical, evidence-based, and environmentally responsible way.

By financing PMSA's operational requirements, RMIS ensures continuity in this critical function, especially as more producers seek solutions that balance ecological stewardship with economic necessity. This support allows PMSA to continue its role in extension services, awareness campaigns, and fostering a culture of adaptive, integrated management practices.

In a country like South Africa, where livestock farming takes place across diverse geographies and climatic zones, predation management must be locally informed, scientifically supported, and nationally coordinated. That is what PMSA delivers.

Why Predation Management Matters: Insights from the 2024 Industry Report

Our **December 2024 Red Meat Industry Report** provides sobering context for why investment in sustainability, particularly in small stock production, is vital.

Despite a forecasted increase in sheep meat production from 98 700 tons in 2024 to 100 000 tons by 2026, and slaughter volumes expected to exceed 5 million head in 2025, several factors continue to undermine productivity and profitability. These include high input costs, climate volatility, animal disease outbreaks, and, crucially, **livestock losses due to predation**.

The report underscores how vulnerable producers remain in a system where external pressures such as stock theft and predator attacks significantly reduce flock sizes, often during critical phases like lambing. Notably, South Africa's average slaughter weight for sheep in 2024 is the lowest in over a decade at 20.3kg, exacerbating economic pressure on producers.

This is where PMSA's role becomes so valuable. Through research-backed predation control and community engagement, the organisation helps farmers reduce losses, safeguard animal welfare, and ultimately improve the viability of their production systems.

Beyond Economics: The Strategic Imperative for Sustainability

The impact of predation is not only felt on the bottom line, it affects producer morale, long-term planning, and succession in the sector. Farmers who repeatedly suffer losses due to predation are more likely to exit the industry or shift to less vulnerable livestock types, reducing diversity and resilience in the agricultural landscape.

More broadly, ensuring sustainability in the red meat value chain is a shared national responsibility. RMIS's strategic support of PMSA must therefore be seen as part of a larger commitment to the **Red Meat Industry 2030 Strategy**, which prioritises ecological stewardship, food security, and rural development.

As outlined in our report, the industry is undergoing shifts in both domestic consumption and international trade. Domestic sheep meat prices have shown recovery since mid-2024, following a 14.5% increase in A-grade carcass prices, and international demand remains strong, especially in niche, high-value markets like the Middle East.

However, to fully capitalise on these opportunities, South Africa must ensure consistent supply and quality something impossible without sustained investment in **biosecurity, animal welfare, and sustainable production systems**.

What the Industry Needs: Collaboration, Consistency, Commitment

The success of PMSA, and by extension the success of small stock production in South Africa, relies on more than just funding. It requires collaboration across industry bodies, research institutions, producer organisations, and government.

NWGA, RPO, WRSA and Mohair SA members are key players in this space. Your experience, your knowledge, and your daily interaction with the realities of predation are what ground national strategy in local truth. We encourage continued engagement with PMSA, whether through participating in regional discussions, sharing data, or trialling new methods of control.

We also call on all stakeholders to adopt a shared language around sustainability, one that recognises the economic, environmental, and social pillars of livestock production. Whether the conversation is about biodiversity conservation, trade access, or rural employment, sustainability is the thread that connects them all.

Conclusion: Looking Forward Together

Funding the operations of Predation Management South Africa is not an isolated act, it is a strategic investment in the future of our industry. At RMIS, we believe that **sustainable red meat production starts on the farm**, where predators roam and producers carry the weight of ensuring both productivity and environmental responsibility.

As we work together to build a resilient red meat sector, we invite the NWGA, RPO, WRSA Mohair SA and its members to stand with us in support of PMSA. Let us continue to develop practical, evidence-based solutions that protect our flocks, our farmers, and the future of livestock farming in South Africa.

Because when we safeguard the producer, we safeguard the product. And when we fund sustainability, we finance our shared future.