



LOCAL NEWS | PLAASLIKE NUUS

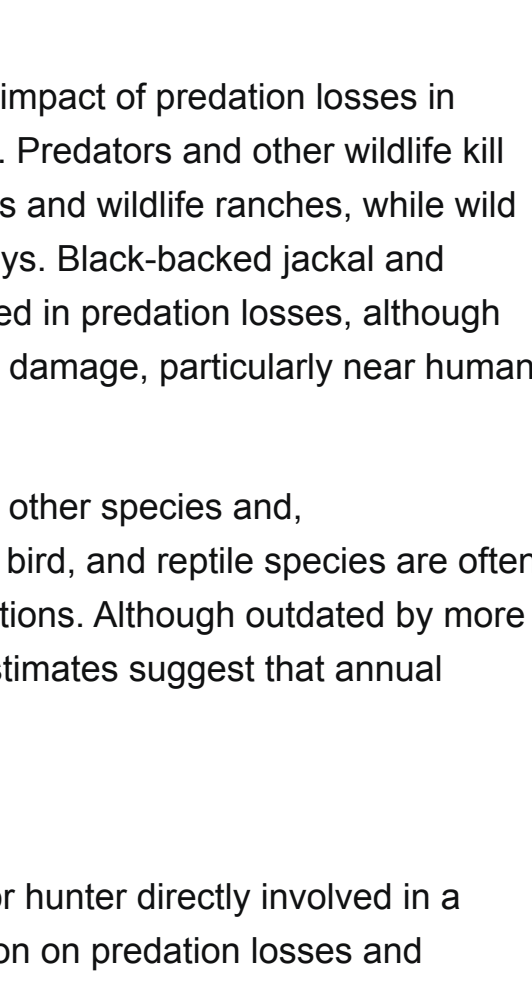
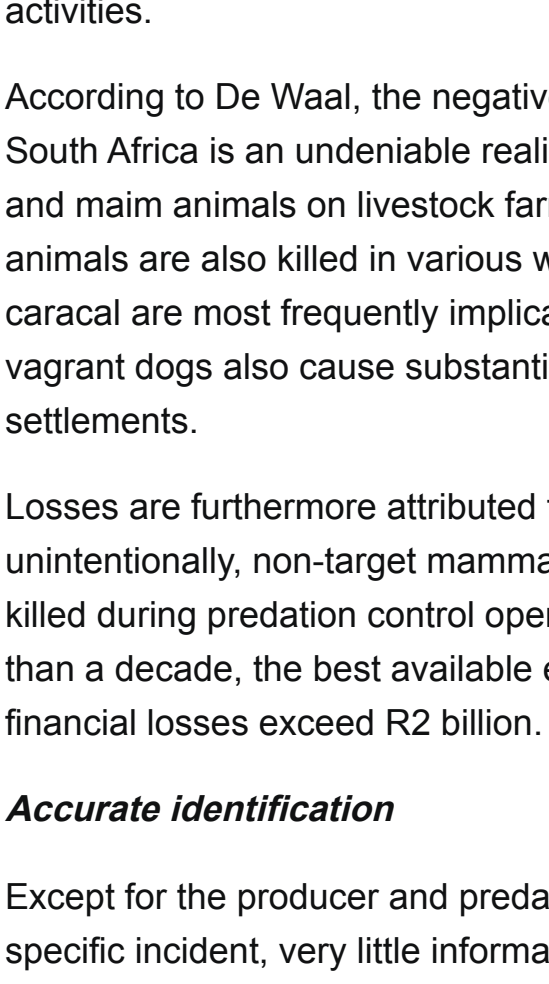
Exciting research ahead: From science to reliable data



A national research programme investigating predator abundance, behaviour, and the economic impacts on livestock and wildlife production systems was presented at the recent Predation Management South Africa (PMSA) meeting. Predation specialist Niël Viljoen, in collaboration with South African universities, research institutes, and policy partners, outlined a framework that will generate the first national dataset on predators in production landscapes across South Africa.

Through accurate measurement of livestock losses, identification of predator-related patterns, and integration of ecological and economic data, the programme's primary objective is to quantify the economic impact of predators and generate robust scientific evidence to inform effective management strategies and national policy.

Quantifying the extent and location of predation



Prof HO de Waal, a retired animal scientist who remains actively involved with the African Large Predator Research Unit (Alpru) and the Canis-Caracal Programme (CCP), continues to be deeply committed to large African predators and predation management activities.

According to De Waal, the negative impact of predation losses in South Africa is an undeniable reality. Predators and other wildlife kill and maim animals on livestock farms and wildlife ranches, while wild animals are also killed in various ways. Black-backed jackals and caracal are most frequently implicated in predation losses, although vagrant dogs also cause substantial damage, particularly near human settlements.

Losses are furthermore attributed to other species and, unintentionally, non-target mammal, bird, and reptile species are often killed during predation control operations. Although outdated by more than a decade, the best available estimates suggest that annual financial losses exceed R2 billion.

Accurate identification

Except for the producer and predator hunter directly involved in a specific incident, very little information on predation losses and predators killed is formally recorded. As a result, predation hotspots, implicated predator species, and the number of livestock and wildlife lost cannot be accurately identified.

In this context, the Red Meat Producers' Organisation (RPO) Northern Cape is commended for collecting data over a two-year period to determine the extent of predation (as reported in *PMSA Newsletter* February 2026). Livestock farming in the arid Northern Cape province is characterised by challenging environmental conditions. The RPO Northern Cape report concluded that while predation will not disappear, improved knowledge and stronger partnerships could be the difference between managing losses effectively and merely enduring them.

The data further revealed that producers are far from passive in addressing the problem, as approximately 82% of farms are protected by jackal-proof or electric fencing, and a substantial proportion of producers employ additional deterrents such as sound and light systems. Despite these investments, around 77.5% of producers reported experiencing an emotional impact, while approximately 70% indicated that predation losses are undermining farm profitability.

Producers and hunters can play a crucial role in addressing existing information gaps. The objective is not simply to record the number of predators killed, but rather to identify hotspots, accurately identify predator species, document the methods (toolkits) used to manage predation, and, most importantly, establish whether predation was successfully mitigated.

Detailed data

A report by Prof De Waal presents the results of a coordinated effort to collect the proposed detailed data. Producers and specialist predator hunters were guided and trained online to collect and submit critical information. Data for 918 black-backed jackals, submitted by 51 participating producers and hunters, were recorded, spanning locations from the southern tip of South Africa deep into Namibia. Comparable data were also submitted for caracal.

All data points were captured using GPS coordinates, allowing for the generation of spatial maps to profile predation activity and identify hotspots. Given limited resources, prioritising and directing interventions towards these hotspots is essential to achieving the greatest possible impact.

The protocol for participation and data submission will be communicated in a future issue of *PMSA Newsletter*.

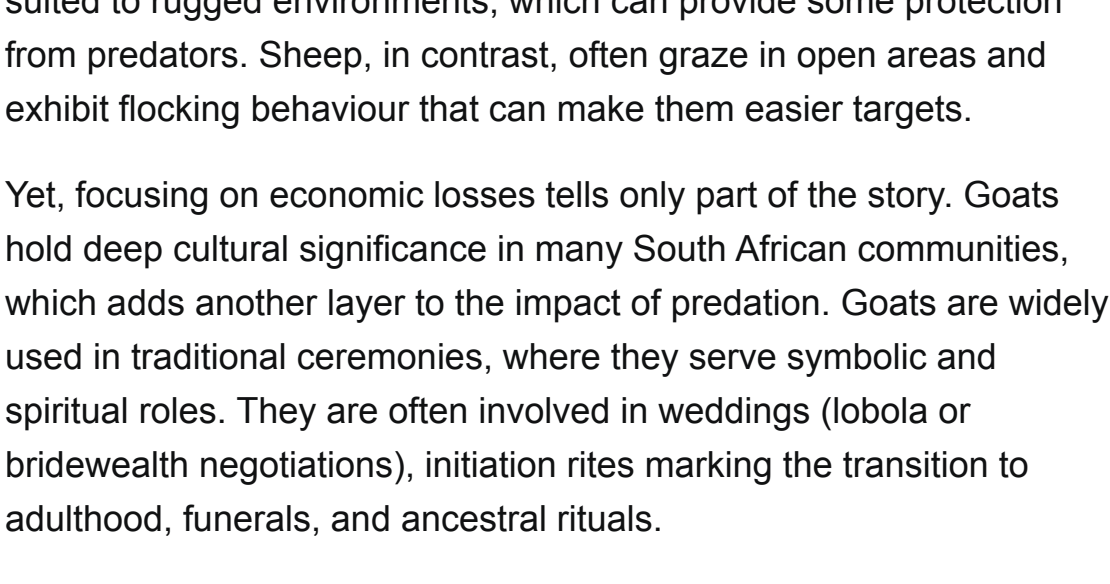
[Click here for the full report.](#)

Problemdierbeheerkursus in Kirkwood

Sowat 15 produsente en hul plaaswerkers uit die Kirkwood-, Jansenville- en Glenconner-distrikte het 'n predasiekursus wat deur Taffie Mulder aangebied is, bygewoon. Die eendagkursus het uit twee teoretiese sessies bestaan, waartydens gedragpatrone en identifisering van predatore bespreek is.



Die teoretiese sessie het baie insiggewende vrae ontlok. Tydens die praktiese komponent is kursusgangers na voetpaie, engtes en klowe geneem waar hulle voetspore moes identifiseer. Moontlike stelplekke vir vanghokke is uitgewys.



Not just livestock: Why goat losses through predation cut deeper



Goat farming is an essential component of South Africa's agricultural landscape, supporting food security, income generation, and cultural practices – especially in rural and communal areas. However, predation continues to pose a serious challenge to producers.

While both goats and sheep are affected, important differences exist in how predation impacts these two species. Research indicates that sheep farmers generally experience higher predation losses than goat farmers, both in terms of percentage and economic value. *Table 1* highlights key differences.

Table 1: Comparison of goat vs sheep predation in South Africa.

| Factor | Goats | Sheep |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Average annual predation rate | 3,1% | 5,4% |
| Maximum reported losses | Up to 10% (extreme conditions) | Often higher in extensive systems |
| Economic losses (annual) | R5,7-R8,6 million | R48 to R57 million |
| Vulnerability of the young | Kids highly vulnerable | Lambs highly vulnerable |
| Behaviour under threat | Agile, alert, independent | Flock tightly, panic easily |
| Habitat preference | Rugged, bushy terrain | Open grazing areas |
| Overall risk level | Moderate | High |

These differences are largely explained by behaviour and management practices. Goats are typically more agile and better suited to rugged environments, which can provide some protection from predators. Sheep, in contrast, often graze in open areas and exhibit flocking behaviour that can make them easier targets.

Yet, focusing on economic losses tells only part of the story. Goats hold deep cultural significance in many South African communities, which adds another layer to the impact of predation. Goats are widely used in traditional ceremonies, where they serve symbolic and spiritual roles. They are often involved in weddings (lobola or bridewealth negotiations), initiation rites marking the transition to adulthood, funerals, and ancestral rituals.

More than just money

In these contexts, the slaughtering of a goat is not merely for consumption but forms part of a meaningful ritual process. It is often accompanied by customs, prayers, and community gatherings, reinforcing social bonds and cultural identity. This highlights that predation affects not only livelihoods but also the cultural fabric of rural communities.

The loss of a goat to predation is therefore not just a financial setback. It can also mean:

- The loss of an animal intended for an important ceremony.
- Disruption of cultural or family events.
- Emotional and social consequences for households.

Although sheep experience higher overall predation losses, goats remain highly vulnerable – particularly young kids (baby goats) and animals in poorly protected systems. Combined, small livestock predation costs South Africa's agricultural sector over R1 billion annually, underlining the scale of the issue.

Addressing predation requires more than simple control measures. Improved management practices such as night kraaling, better fencing, and the use of herders and guardian animals, can help reduce losses. Sustainable solutions must balance livestock protection with ecological considerations, while also recognising the cultural importance of animals like goats. – *Baneleli Janecke, Predation Management Centre, University of the Free State*

Lions on the loose: Pienaar residents cautioned after cow killed

Just a day after elephants were spotted grazing near the N4 at the Lebombo Border, reports emerged of at least six lions roaming through Pienaar's residential areas.

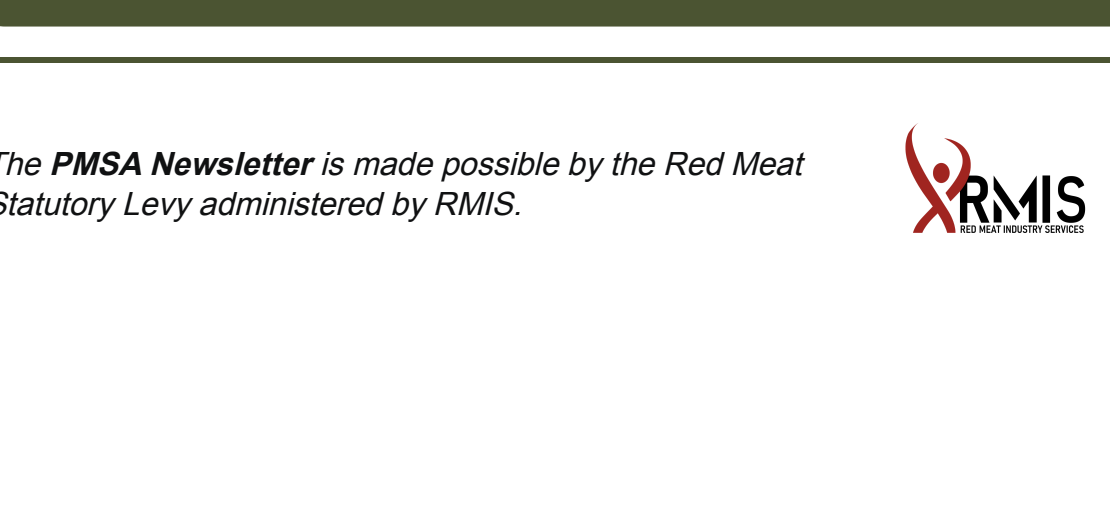
In a video taken on Tuesday, 7 April, showing the carcass of a cow believed to have been killed and partially eaten, a resident can be heard warning people – especially those who exercise along nearby roads – to be wary of a pride of lions in the area. "Please be safe and look out for yourselves. There are six lions roaming around our residential area, especially in the bushes near the road in Siceloseftu, Daantjie. To all the joggers who use that route, be careful – even a cow was attacked by these lions. Stay safe," said the unidentified resident.

The Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) dispatched a team to engage with the community and investigate the reports. "We have received information about lions being heard in parts of the Pienaar residential area. As we prioritise the safety of the community and livestock, a team has been sent to investigate the possible presence of lions," said MTPA spokesperson Simphiwe Shungube.

Meanwhile, Shungube confirmed that the elephants spotted grazing near the N4 towards the Lebombo Port of Entry on Wednesday, 8 April, were successfully pushed back into the Kruger National Park. – *Lowvelder*

INTERNATIONAL NEWS | INTERNASIONALE NUUS

Botswana: Smarter cattle herding can save lions



The lions that roamed the plains of northern Botswana were dying. One by one, the big cats were succumbing to poisoned bait planted by exasperated villagers. The lions had been poisoning away at their livelihood, feasting on the cattle that they left to graze along the Okavango Delta. By the end of 2013, around 30 lions – more than half of the northern Okavango population – had been killed in just one year.

More than a decade later, the situation is radically different. The lion population has rebounded. Cub survival rate is up. And cattle losses are dramatically down. It's the result of years of hard work: restoring traditional herding practices, collaring and tracking lions, and, most recently, establishing a market for 'wildlife-friendly beef.' This serves as a model, wildlife advocates say, for other parts of southern Africa where modern grazing practices have collided with big cats' appetites.

"It can be adapted to just about anywhere," said Andrew Stein, the founder of Communities Living Sustainably Among Wildlife (CLAWS) Conservancy, which is based in Botswana.

In the last 25 years, more than half the lions have vanished from the plains of Africa, largely due to conflicts with communities. As human populations have expanded, the animal's range has shrunk, leaving remnant isolated groups. Today, there are fewer than 25,000 lions left across the continent. But in southern Africa, one large continuous population still roams the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA), the world's largest transnational land-based protected area, which runs across Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. – *Mongabay*

[Click here to read the full article.](#)

Mountain lion killed after pet, livestock attacks

A mountain lion that had killed at least two dogs and a goat in the US state of Colorado, was trapped and killed on 29 March. The decision to trap the lion came after the goat was killed. It was the ninth confirmed incident since early January, most in the Deer Creek/Pleasant Park area east of Highway 285, said Colorado Parks and Wildlife district manager Jake Sonberg.

"The state's liable for damage caused to agriculture, which includes livestock," Sonberg said. "So when livestock degradation occurred, that allowed me to set the trap to target that area."

Lions can be killed when necessary to protect livestock, human life, or property, according to CPW's Nuisance Wildlife policy. CPW also compensates livestock owners at fair market value for losses caused by grey wolves, bears, mountain lions, and other big game species. – *Caryon Courier*

Kenya's big cats under cattle pressure

A new study shows that large numbers of cattle are pushing lions out of their habitats in Kenya. This affects both the ecosystem balance and the nature-based tourism on which many Maasai communities in Kenya depend. The paper is published in the journal *Biological Conservation*.

The work was led by Niels Mogensen, a PhD student at the Department of Biology at Aarhus University. Together with local collaborators, Mogensen recorded different groups of animals – lions, other predators, and grazing livestock – in the Maasai Mara Conservancies, a conservation area in southwestern Kenya. The area is known for its high lion densities and the annual wildebeest migration.

Nearly 70% of Kenya's wildlife now lives outside national parks, often in the same areas that local communities use for grazing their cattle. In the community-run Maasai Mara conservancies, the goal is for wildlife, tourism, and livestock farming to coexist. But finding that balance is difficult, says Mogensen.

"Even though lions and cattle are not on the grasslands at the same time, our data show that lions avoid areas where cattle graze. It is very rare for people to kill lions or directly threaten them in the conservancies. Nevertheless, human use of the landscape has created areas that lions are afraid to enter," he says.

The consequence is that lions have less space to move, creating new problems. "Lions may be pushed into unsuitable habitats, their ability to reproduce may be affected, and they may be driven into the territories of other lion prides. At the same time, the risk increases that lion prides move closer to villages, creating insecurity." – *Phys.org*

Livestock carcass removal can help keep predators at bay

Grizzlies and wolves sometimes wander through the Big Hole Valley and elsewhere in the Big Hole River watershed in Montana. They share the territory with cattle ranches and bovines by the thousands. Some of the cows and calves inevitably buy the farm. That's especially true during spring calving season, when the Big Hole Valley's notoriously unpredictable weather can be one contributor to mortality.

For ranchers, it's a formula for conflict with apex predators. Enter Eric Lewis, conflict reduction coordinator for the Big Hole Watershed Committee. Lewis, a state forester in his day job, responds as soon as he can when a rancher reports a dead animal and summons help through the committee's Livestock Carcass Removal & Composting Service.

The rancher helps load the animal in Lewis' side-dump trailer and Lewis hauls the carcass to a cow composting site adjacent to a Montana Department of Transportation facility near Wisdom. Which raises a relevant question: How do you compost a cow? And another: Do you call a dead cow livestock? Start with a carcass. Add a mix of wood chips (donated by Tash T Diamond Post & Pole). Spray with water. Lewis said it takes about a year for a cow to go from flesh-and-bone to bone and compost.

The Big Hole Watershed Committee offers carcass removal services to agricultural producers at no cost. Since the program's start it has picked up and hauled 1 089 carcasses. – *The Livingstone Enterprise*

