

POSITION PAPER ON INTENSIVE BREEDING AND THE BREEDING OF COLOUR VARIANTS IN THE WILDLIFE INDUSTRY

PHASA rejects any notion or claim that the breeding of colour variants or excessive horn lengths are necessary to fulfil a demand from trophy hunters or to replenish a depleted gene pool as a result of trophy hunting.

BACKGROUND

This position paper has been created in the light of the following developments in the South African wildlife industry:

- The significant increase in the intensive breeding of game
- The significant increase in the breeding of colour variants of species
- The significant increase in the variety of colour variants, some of which are largely unknown or have been uncommon in the past
- A significant increase on the emphasis on horn size in intensive breeding operations and live game auction sales.
- A significant increase in the price of both “common species” (eg nyala, wildebeest, blesbuck, impala etc) and stud animals of “scarce species” (eg sable, roan, buffalo etc).

PRIVATE OWNERSHIP OF GAME AND THE FREE MARKET SYSTEM

PHASA respects the concept and the practice of private ownership and the free market system, believing these to have contributed significantly to South Africa’s conservation success and the establishment of its wildlife industry. PHASA, therefore, acknowledges the right of breeders to engage in activities that will result in higher returns on investments, provided that these activities are carried out legally, responsibly and sustainably. PHASA does not at this stage have an informed opinion on the long-term economic viability of the colour variants and stud breeding markets.

IMPACT OF THESE BREEDING PRACTICES ON CONSERVATION

From a scientific and legislative perspective regarding these breeding practices, PHASA’s position is informed by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) (*see document attached*), namely:

- “It is highly unlikely, however, that animals selectively bred for the expression of a rare coat colour would have any significant effect on a natural population should they escape, as the homozygous recessive genes would clearly have little effect in an overwhelmingly heterozygous population.
- “...the Scientific Authority currently views this as a low risk threat to the species that are likely to be affected and therefore does not recommend that it be legislated against.”

That said, PHASA takes note of the following cautionary notes and recommendations by SANBI, namely:

- “*Depending on the scale*, such practices *could* be construed as a form of genetic manipulation.” (our emphasis)
- “The breeding of genetically inferior recessive colour morphs does not further the conservation of South Africa’s *wild* biodiversity...” (our emphasis)
- “Selectively breeding for rare colour morphs should be discouraged or disincentivised as an undesirable practice...”

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CONCERNS OF THESE PRACTICES FROM A PROFESSIONAL HUNTING PERSPECTIVE

PHASA notes increased concern among its members regarding the upward pressure on prices of common species and the potential negative effect it may have on the South African professional hunting industry.

PHASA also notes increased concern among its members' international clients that these colour variants are seemingly being bred for the overseas market. PHASA is also aware of misperceptions and confusion among wildlife stakeholders that these animals are being hunted *in* intensive breeding systems/areas and that these breeding practices are aimed at increasing horn length specifically because trophy hunting depleted the gene pool.

It is PHASA's view that these breeding practices exist to satisfy demand from live game sales auctions and not trophy hunting. To say otherwise is both misinformed and damaging to the professional hunting industry.

PHASA REJECTS THE FOLLOWING...

- ***The hunting of animals in any area other than an “extensive wildlife system” as defined in the Threatened and Protected Species (TOPS) Regulations issued i.t.o Act 10 of 2004.***
- ***Any notion or claim that colour variants are bred to satisfy a significant demand in the trophy hunting market.***
- ***Any notion or claim that breeding practice aimed at increasing horn size is necessary because trophy hunting depleted the gene pool.***
- ***Any notion or claim that the breeding of animals with abnormally large horn length lengths is driven by a significant demand in the trophy hunting market.***
- ***Highly controversial practices such as artificial insemination, cloning, genetic manipulation and any procedure that produces artificial colour variants.***
- ***The inclusion of any further colour variants in trophy hunting record books.***
- ***Any form of “catalogue marketing” of individual wild animals or groups of wild animals for hunting purposes.***

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PHASA respects the concept of private ownership and the free market system but urges breeders to approach such practices with the highest levels of due consideration for South Africa's biodiversity.

PHASA acknowledges that the impact of such breeding practices present a low risk to South Africa's wild biodiversity but believes that potential risks need to be monitored and, if necessary, managed in a responsible manner and in consultation with fellow industry stakeholders.

PHASA is committed to continued constructive dialogue with all industry stakeholders in respect of the matters contained in this position paper. As such, this position paper may be amended from time to time following such discussions.

We are happy to field any queries concerning this position paper and can be reached by email at ceo@phasa.co.za or telephonically on +27 12 667 2048/

Hermann Meyeridricks
President

Adri Kitshoff
Chief executive