

MEDIA RELEASE BY THE SA HUNTERS AND GAME CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

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SA Hunters welcome IUCN motion on commercial wildlife breeding practices

The South African Hunters and Game Conservation Association (SA Hunters) has welcomed recommendations by the International Union for Conservation and Nature (IUCN) that call for better management and regulation of selective and intensive breeding of large wild animals for commercial purposes. This includes popular wildlife mammals such as sable, kudu, eland, roan, blue wildebeest, buffalo, impala, and springbok.

The motion defines large wild mammals as "individuals of wildlife species regardless of the number of generations that they have been in captivity. This excludes individuals that have been bred in captivity for the main purposes of domestication. Animals bred for domestication are not considered "wild animals" and should not be used for re-stocking, reintroduction or introduction of wild populations."

The IUCN motion refers to current trends in the breeding practices of wildlife for commercial purposes to produce animals with specific traits that may involve "hybridisation across species, subspecies or other recognised evolutionary boundaries", and the possibility that some animals might escape, or be released into the wild.

Governments of countries where selective breeding of wildlife occur are asked to:

- a. adopt a risk-averse strategy in permitting establishment or expansion of this practice;
- b. prohibit intentional hybridisation of large wild mammals across species, subspecies or other recognised evolutionary boundaries;
- c. prohibit release of selectively bred animals into the wild until the risks are understood and can be managed;
- d. evaluate the need to develop domestic legal frameworks to regulate, monitor and mitigate impacts associated with these practices;
- e. require assessments of project-specific and cumulative impacts prior to considering the permitting of such activities;
- f. develop and implement norms and standards for husbandry practices of intensively bred species;
- g. strengthen capacity building for monitoring, educating and enforcing;
- h. establish monitoring systems to document the extent and impact of these activities, and support research to provide more information to anticipate and manage risks; and
- i. develop and implement certification systems for wildlife operations to ensure transparency so that end users know the origin of the animals they are using and/or buying;

The IUCN also encourages the wildlife ranching industry to acknowledge the potential risks associated with these practices; and to work with government and other stakeholders, as appropriate, to manage and minimise the risks associated with these activities.

Lizanne Nel, conservation manager at SA Hunters and Game Conservation Association (SA Hunters), who attended the Congress, said the Association welcomes the adoption of this motion. "SA Hunters raised concern about certain intensive breeding practices two years ago. Although various industry roleplayers, including the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA), have discussed the potential negative impact of certain wildlife breeding practices on at least two occasions since 2014, we are not aware of any official government policies in this regard."

SA Hunters approached DEA for comment on the adoption of the IUCN motion, but have not yet received feedback at the time of releasing this press statement.

The Association is also still waiting for a clarification from the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) and DEA following the addition of twelve wildlife species to the list of tame and domesticated animals regulated under the Animal Improvement Act (No. 62 of 1998). The notice pertaining to that amendment was published on 10 June 2016. This Act falls under the auspices of DAFF, while DEA is responsible for wildlife legislation.

The Animal Improvement Act allows genetic manipulation and crossbreeding of cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, horses and poultry to obtain animals with specific characteristics for agricultural purposes. The inclusion of game species under this Act has raised concern that the same breeding practices might be allowed for the twelve antelope species included in the regulations. This would be in conflict with the IUCN motion adopted at its Congress in September 2016.

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