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Conseil International de la Chasse et de la Conservation du Gibier
Internationaler Rat zur Erhaltung des Wildes und der Jagd
International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation
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Special Information

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2nd SOUTH AFRICAN STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP ON INTENSIVE AND SELECTIVE BREEDING

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The Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) held the 2nd workshop on the intensive and selective breeding of color variants in game in Pretoria on 2 December 2015¹. Presentations were made by scientists, local and international conservation organizations, government, local and international hunting organizations and game breeders².

Despite requests from some experts in the field of hunting and conservation to present for the first time, they were initially not included on the program, while game breeders were allowed a second opportunity after the previous stakeholder engagement in Durban. After enquiry from South African Hunters and Game Conservation Association (SAHGCA) to clarify the terms of reference of the stakeholder engagement, some speakers like Dr. Gerhard Verdoorn, director of the Griffon Poison Information Centre and President of the South African Hunters and Game Conservation Association, as well as Peter Flack, lawyer, world famous hunter and producer of the award winning film, "[The South African Conservation Success Story](#)" were initially included on the program, but were informed at the last minute, that they would not be allowed to present³.

After clarification was once again sought from DEA by SAHGCA as to the reasons for this decision, some individuals were informed the day before the stakeholder engagement session that they would be allowed to present, but their presentations were now limited to ten minutes at most. Several presenters however declined these last minute proposals as they had then already cancelled previously made travel arrangements.

At the beginning of the workshop, the facilitator, Ms Khungeka Njobe from Kay-Ann Consulting, indicated that the purpose of the workshops was, amongst other things, to obtain a better understanding of the practice of selective and intensive breeding of color variants; to facilitate dialogue between role players/stakeholders; to identify key issues/challenges and to make recommendations to the Minister.

¹ [THE SECOND NATIONAL DIALOGUE WORKSHOP ON THE INTENSIVE AND SELECTIVE BREEDING OF COLOR VARIANTS](#) 2 December 2015 Terms of Reference & Recap of the 1st National Dialogue Workshop (Durban)

² [PRESENTERS AT THE 2ND NATIONAL DIALOGUE WORKSHOP](#): Jeanetta Selier (Scientific Authority, SANBI), Ian Rushworth (EKZNW), Dr. Petri Viljoen (IUCN Antelope Specialist Group), Andrew Taylor and Dr Harriet Davies-Mostert (EWT), Prof A J Buys (NACSSA), Dr. Philip Desmet, Barry York (WRSA), Jacques Senekal (PHASA), John Boretsky (SCI), Lizanne Nel (SAHGCA), Mike Gcabo (WRSA), Dr Peter Oberem (WRSA), Richard York (WRSA), Prof. Louw Hofmann (Stellenbosch University), Dr Gert Dry (WRSA),

³ Peter Flack "*The effects of the intensive breeding of unnatural colour variations and animals with exaggerated horn lengths, combined with canned killings, on the hunting industry*" and Dr. Gerhard Verdoorn "*Impacts of parasite mismanagement and poison misuse in intensive breeding of particular genetic traits in South African wildlife*". .

Scientists highlighted that natural variation in wild populations of game helped retain genetic diversity and provided populations with adaptive potential in the face of environmental change. It was, however, highlighted that selective and intensive breeding of color variations, of which some are known to occur naturally in low frequencies in nature, and the practices associated with this breeding, posed risks to biodiversity. These risks were not just genetic risks associated with inbreeding and line breeding, but included the misuse of chemicals, predator persecution and animal welfare matters.

Dr Phil Desmet discussed a study being conducted by SAHGCA on the impact of high density and electrified fences of the small camps erected for intensive breeding on fragmentation of the landscape. Preliminary results indicated that changes in the landscape were extensive and that there was loss of landscape connectivity in critical biodiversity landscapes⁴.

Dr Petri Viljoen from the Antelope Specialist Group of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) stated that, although the IUCN supported sustainable use of wildlife, they opposed the intentional genetic modification of antelope to produce color variants or enlarged horns for commercial purposes⁵.

Prof. Andre Buys from the National Association of Conservancies and Stewardship in South Africa, which represents 750 conservancies in South Africa, echoed the concerns raised by scientists. He further referred to the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' position statement that intentional breeding to achieve rare color-morphs has been clearly linked to various abnormal, debilitating and, at times, lethal, external and internal conditions and characteristics⁶.

Prof. John Donaldson explained that the national Scientific Authority is in the process of reviewing its 2010 position that stated that "*breeding of genetically inferior recessive color morphs does not further conservation...and breeding for rare color morphs should be discouraged or disincentivized*". The 2010 recommendation⁷ that the practice should not be regulated was based on the assessment of genetic risks associated with the assumption that large scale mixing of recessive color morphs into natural populations was "highly unlikely" to occur. The Minister was, however, advised that the potential threat that could result from this type of practice and the risks associated therewith should be monitored and evaluated. Towards this end, the Scientific Authority recommended that all breeders be registered with DEA and that they report annually on the number of animals leaving their facilities, as well as their destination. These recommendations were not implemented. Since then, there has been substantial growth in intensive breeding of wildlife and, in a report by ABSA released earlier in 2015, it was stated that 14% of game farmers in the study on "Game Ranch Profitability in South Africa"⁸, bred color variations, while almost a quarter of game farmers (23%), indicated they were considering investing in color and morphological variants^{9 10 11}.

⁴ Download Dr. Desmet's presentation [ARE THERE POTENTIAL LANDSCAPE AND ECOSYSTEM IMPACTS AND WHEN DO THEY ARISE? "THE LANDSCAPE ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF INTENSIVE GAME BREEDING, SPECIFICALLY THE ROLE THAT FENCES PLAY IN FRAGMENTING NATURAL LANDSCAPES](#)

⁵ Download Dr. Viljoen's presentation [CONSERVATION - POSITION STATEMENT ON INTENTIONAL COLOR VARIATION MANIPULATION](#)) and review the IUCN Antelope Specialist Group's position on the Intentional Genetic Manipulation of Antelopes dated 26 May 2015 [ASG POSITION STATEMENT ON THE INTENTIONAL GENETIC MANIPULATION OF ANTELOPES](#)

⁶ Download Prof. Buys' presentation [NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVANCIES\STEWARDSHIP SOUTH AFRICA \(NACSSA\)'S POLICY ON THE BREEDING OF COLOUR VARIANTS OF WILDLIFE](#) and review the [NACSSA POSITION PAPER ON THE BREEDING OF COLOR VARIANTS IN THE WILDLIFE INDUSTRY](#) dated 15th November 2015

⁷ You can download the SANBI 2010 letter at http://www.phasa.co.za/downloads/item/download/246_1f44f148fe7067fad32947fe8de8497.html

⁸ Cloete, P.C., et al. 2015. GAME RANCHING PROFITABILITY in South Africa, ABSA & Barclays

⁹ Download the presentation by Jeanetta Selier of the Scientific Authority [PROCESS TO REVIEW OPINION ON RISKS AND CONTROLS ASSOCIATED WITH COLOUR VARIANTS AND INTENSIVE BREEDING IN THE GAME INDUSTRY](#)

If this trend continues, it will have significantly negative implications for wildlife in South Africa, if not regulated. In addition to the biodiversity risks identified, local and international hunting organizations present, with the exception of the Confederation of Hunting Associations of South Africa (CHASA), indicated that they opposed the intentional manipulation and intensive breeding of color variants and enlarged horns for the hunting industry.¹²

John Boretsky from Safari Club International (SCI) summarized the SCI Record Book Committee's position on artificial breeding practices whereby the committee would only consider reviewing and adding new species and subspecies to the record book based on scientific evidence of its occurrence and no new provisions would be made for color variants¹³. He further mentioned that the Outfitters & Professional Hunters Associations of Africa (OPHAA) had declared at a recent meeting that they were against the artificial breeding of animals for the hunting industry and concerned about the line-breeding for color variants and horn growth. Although the declaration was generally accepted, some of the members of OPHAA still needed to refer it to their individual member Associations for comment.

The Professional Hunting Association of South Africa (PHASA) rejected any notion or claims that breeding of abnormally large horn lengths, genetic manipulation and any procedure that produced artificial color variants were to satisfy a significant demand in the trophy hunting market¹⁴.

SAHGCA referred to the policy positions of other major hunting associations in North America and Europe that have come out publicly against these practices¹⁵ – the Boone & Crockett Club¹⁶, the Nordic Safari Club and the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation CIC¹⁷.

SAHGCA further explained the economic and reputational risks for both hunting and eco-tourism, especially in the light of the recent public outcry against canned hunting and the growing demand for “responsible” tourism¹⁸.

¹⁰ The National Council of Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Position [NSPCA's FORMAL STANCE ON THE SELECTIVE BREEDING OF WILD ANIMALS FOR COLOUR MUTATIONS](#)

¹¹ Association of Zoos & Aquariums Position statement June 2011 [WELFARE AND CONSERVATION IMPLICATIONS OF INTENTIONAL BREEDING FOR THE EXPRESSION OF RARE RECESSIVE ALLELES](#)

¹² See also the article “MORE PROBLEMS THAN SOLUTIONS” by Lynette van Hoven in [Game & Hunt](#) Vol 22/02 (pages 112 to 114), as well as well as the article “CHASA PRESENTS A BALANCED STANDPOINT” (page 127). CHASA had a clear policy on selective breeding expressed in an undated policy paper “CHASA Policy on Wildlife Conservation”. This position paper is not available anymore on the CHASA website, but you can read it [HERE](#). Prof. Pieter van Niekerk, current president of CHASA confirmed by email on 12th February that the position is under review and will be discussed at the CHASA board meeting on 20th February.

¹³ Rowland Ward – the oldest Record Book for African Game – announced repeatedly that color variants will not be listed. See also the interview in African Indaba 14-1 with Ludo Wurfbain who represents the new owners of Rowland Ward.

¹⁴ [PHASA POSITION PAPER ON INTENSIVE BREEDING AND THE BREEDING OF COLOUR VARIANTS IN THE WILDLIFE INDUSTRY](#) – this paper says in the preamble “PHASA rejects any notion or claim that the breeding of color 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.”

¹⁵ Germany's leading hunting show “Jagd und Hund” in Dortmund also indicated in a communication to exhibitors for the 2016 event that the organizers “will no longer allow advertising or selling of canned hunts, including species bred as unnatural color variations such as golden wildebeest”.

¹⁶ Download the position statements of the Boone & Crockett Club on the topic of genetic manipulation and related matters at http://www.boone-crockett.org/huntingEthics/ethics_cannedshoot.asp?area=huntingEthics

¹⁷ Download the CIC Recommendation of November 2011 [RECOMMENDATION CIC COUNCIL 2 2011.REC01Wildlife and Commercially-Bred Formerly Wild Animals Madrid 2011](#))

¹⁸ Download Lizanne Nel's presentation [INTENSIVE AND SELECTIVE BREEDING OF COLOUR VARIANTS: SHOULD WE REGULATE?](#) and review the SAHGCA paper [RISKS AND IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH INTENSIVE AND SELECTIVE BREEDING OF INDIGENOUS GAME FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES](#) compiled by E J Nel in March 2015

During the workshop, the question was posed to WRSA, “*What is the consumer market for color variants, considering the opposition of major hunting organizations?*” The question remained unanswered.

There are clear indications that South Africa is losing market share as a preferred wildlife-based tourism destination to countries like Namibia. According to figures published by the DEA, the number of hunts by overseas recreational hunters visiting the country has shown a steady decrease since 2011 (9,138 hunters visited) to 7,405 visiting hunters in 2014.

According to a presentation by Peter Flack that could not be made at the workshop, “research published in the December 2014 edition of *Game & Hunt* by North-West University, indicates that the average overseas hunter spends R 138,200 per hunting trip or roughly 4.4 times the average annual spend of the South African consumptive hunter of R 31,471. This represents a loss of nearly R 240 million per annum to the country.”¹⁹

While the number of hunts by overseas hunters visiting South Africa has declined since 2007 when it hit 16,394 to 7,405 in 2014, the corresponding number of overseas recreational hunters visiting Namibia, as supplied by the Ministry of the Environment and Tourism, reached 23,768 last year, including 6,985 from North America and 13,730 from Europe. The Namibian Sun reported that the Minister of Environment and Tourism of Namibia, Pohamba Shifeta, in his official speech at the 42nd Annual General Meeting of the Namibia Professional Hunting Association (NAPHA), said “*that those who bred domesticated wildlife and put wildlife that was manipulated and bred intensively in captivity up for sale, were putting hunting and conservation at risk*”²⁰.

The positive contribution of extensive game farmers to conservation and the economy was emphasized by SAHGCA, WRSA and other presenters^{21 22 23}. SAHGCA however warned that, if the perceived trend of disinvestment in extensive game farms and investment in intensive breeding camps continued the contribution of the private sector to national conservation targets and ecosystem services which form the cornerstone of the economy may decrease substantially. This would result in government having to increase its budget in order to achieve these targets, to fulfil their constitutional mandate as Trustee and to facilitate justifiable socio-economic development. Recommendations made by SAHGCA included

- a Strategic Environmental Assessment to be conducted for the growing game breeding industry to consider cumulative impacts; regulations to limit identified impacts;
- different land use categories, distinguishing between extensive game farms and intensive game breeding operations, linked to a certification system so that consumers such as hunters could make informed choices between intensively bred wildlife and those from extensively managed game farms; and
- incentives for extensive game farms that contributed to conservation targets, ecosystem services and broad-based socio-economic growth.

as well as the SAHGCA [POLICY POSITION: INTENSIVE AND SELECTIVE BREEDING TO ENHANCE OR ALTER GENETIC CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIGENOUS GAME SPECIES FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES](#)

¹⁹ Download Peter Flack’s presentation [COLOR VARIANTS AND CANNED KILLING](#)

²⁰ See also [MINISTER SHIFETA SPEAKS AT THE 2015 NAPHA AGM IN WINDHOEK](#) (AFRICAN INDABA DECEMBER 2015, VOLUME 13-6)

²¹ Download the presentation of the Endangered Wildlife Trust presented by Dr. Andrew Taylor EWT Wildlife Trade and Ranching Projects & Dr. Harriet Davies-Mostert, Head of EWT Conservation Science [AN ESTIMATE OF THE SCALE OF SELECTIVE BREEDING OF HIGH VALUE SPECIES AND COLOUR VARIANTS ON PRIVATE WILDLIFE RANCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA, INCLUDING ESTIMATES OF THE LEVELS OF INTENSIFICATION](#)). See also Taylor, W.A., Lindsey, P.A. & Davies-Mostert, H. 2015. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CONSERVATION VALUE OF THE WILDLIFE RANCHING INDUSTRY AND ITS POTENTIAL TO SUPPORT THE GREEN ECONOMY IN SOUTH AFRICA. The Endangered Wildlife Trust, Johannesburg.

²² Download the presentation of Dr Gert Dry, Past-President, Wildlife Ranching South Africa, [THE CASE FOR GAME RANCHING – A BIODIVERSITY ECONOMY IMPERATIVE](#)

²³ Download the presentation of Dr. Peter Oberem, Wildlife Ranching South Africa, [DIFFERENTLY COLOURED ANIMALS IN PERSPECTIVE](#)

It is not certain how DEA intends to process information from the “dialogue” and data collected during the two days, and align that with the views of the public at large and DEA’s responsibility as trustee of the RSA’s biodiversity heritage. The way the two days of dialogue were organized and structured, was insufficient with respect to both public consultation as well as in-depth evaluation of relevant issues.

What is clear though is that there are growing concerns and evidence from various sectors regarding the potential cumulative impacts of intensive and selective breeding of game for the commercial benefit by game breeders and how this may impact on the broader wildlife industry as well as the wildlife heritage of the broader public and future generations.

The following presentations were not available as downloads:

- *Economic perspective: what are the trends on market demand for color variants? (Barry York, WRSA)*
- *Are there current and potential reputational risks for the country and the wildlife industry associated with the issue of color variants? (Jacques Senekal PHASA)*
- *The Wildlife Ranching Contribution to Transformation, current and future (Mike Gcabo WRSA)*
- *Public response by WRSA to public criticism (Richard York WRSA)*
- *Game meat, the potential of this uniquely South African industry and a place for color-variants (Prof. Louw Hofmann Stellenbosch University)*

Relevant African Indaba Articles 2014 and 2015

- [SHRINKING INTO CONVALESCENCE](#) OCTOBER 2015, VOLUME 13-5. Author: Kai-Uwe Denker
- [ANTELOPES AND RELATIVES, GAME FARMING, SOUTH AFRICA, SUSTAINABLE USE - DORRINGTON ON HUNTING AND GAME BREEDING](#) JUNE 2015, VOLUME 13-3. Author: Stewart Dorrington
- [THE DEBATE ON HUNTING AND GAME BREEDING IN SOUTH AFRICA](#) APRIL 2015, VOLUME 13-2. Author: Gerhard R Damm
- [SAHGCA CALLS FOR REGULATION OF INTENSIVE COMMERCIAL GAME BREEDING PRACTICES](#) APRIL 2015, VOLUME 13-2. Author: SAHGCA
- [RESPONSE FROM WILDLIFE RANCHING SA PRESIDENT DR PETER OBEREM TO SA HUNTERS](#) APRIL 2015, VOLUME 13-2. Author: WRSA Press Release (formatted for space reasons by AI editor)
- [EULOGY OF OPPORTUNITIES MISSED](#) APRIL 2015, VOLUME 13-2. Author: Paul Stones
- [HONOR AND RESPECT](#) APRIL 2015, VOLUME 13-2. Author: Daniel A Pedrotti, Boone & Crockett Club
- [GAME INDUSTRY – QUO VADIS?](#) DECEMBER 2014, VOLUME 12-6. Author: Koos Barnard, Editor, SA Jagter/Hunter

- [CANNED KILLINGS AND OTHER UNNATURAL BEHAVIOR IN THE GAME RANCHING INDUSTRY](#) OCTOBER 2014, VOLUME 12-5-II. Author: Peter Flack
- [OPINION: DR. GERHARD VERDOORN ON GAME RANCHING IN SOUTH AFRICA](#) OCTOBER 2014, VOLUME 12-5-II. Author: Gerhard Verdoorn
- [OPINION: N F ALBERTS ON GAME BREEDING IN SOUTH AFRICA](#) OCTOBER 2014, VOLUME 12-5-II. Author N. F. Alberts
- [RUNAWAY GAME PRICES – AN ECONOMIC BUBBLE WITH MAJOR CONSERVATION RISKS?](#) JULY 2014, VOLUME 12-4. Author Chris Niehaus