



## **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of CONSERVANCIES/ STEWARDSHIP SOUTH AFRICA**

**23 November 2015**

### **POSITION PAPER ON THE BREEDING OF COLOUR VARIANTS IN THE WILDLIFE INDUSTRY**

#### **BACKGROUND**

ACKNOWLEDGING that NACSSA has the responsibility to

- i) Promote environmental sustainability and the conservation of South Africa's biodiversity and environmental goods and services in conjunction with all land-users;
- ii) Comment on and take part in all aspects related to the development of our environmental legislation;
- iii) Liaise and assist (if possible) conservancy bodies (and organisations with a similar focus and aim) in other countries;

RE-ENFORCING NACSSA's commitment to section 24 of the Constitution of South Africa and South Africa's environmental management legislation;

RESERVES the right to enter into dialogue with any government department who proposes laws concerning the agricultural, game ranching, breeding and hunting industries, which may directly or indirectly have a deleterious effect on the environment;

APPRECIATING that many of our country's farmers are indeed good conservationists;

OBSERVING the significant increase in the intensive breeding of colour variant game, such as white, black and copper-coloured springbok, "golden" oryx and wildebeest, by members of the wildlife industry;

COGNISANT of the substantial body of scientific evidence surrounding the detrimental consequences of line breeding of animals, such as inbreeding depression, loss of genetic diversity and various debilitating conditions and characteristics as a result thereof;

CONCERNED that exploitation and deliberate selective breeding for specific traits in indigenous wild animals, if uncontrolled, can negatively impact on our biophysical environment through the process of "genetic pollution" which is believed to substantially weaken the genetic resource with an increased likelihood of pollution of pure bred wild populations;

NOTING the following:

- The SA Scientific Authority's advice to Government on 10 September 2010 that:
  - *"Due to the fact that the founder population is very small and often made up of closely related individuals, evidence of inbreeding depression is often seen within a few generations. Depending on the scale, such practices could be construed as a form of genetic manipulation".*
  - *"The breeding of genetically inferior recessive colour morphs does not further the conservation of South Africa's wild biodiversity and therefore cannot be supported. However, 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. The Scientific Authority would however like to recommend the following: 1. Selectively breeding for rare colour morphs should be discouraged or disincentivized as an undesirable practice and game farmers who wish to manage their farms and animals using sound ecological principals should be incentivized".*
- The Association of Zoos and Aquariums' statements that (White Paper of June 2011):
  - *"Breeding practices that increase the physical expression of single rare alleles (i.e., rare genetic traits) through intentional inbreeding, for example intentional breeding to achieve rare color-morphs been clearly linked with various abnormal, debilitating, and, at times, lethal, external and internal conditions and characteristics".*
  - *"Selection for specific traits will hasten a population's loss of gene diversity, lead to higher inbreeding levels more quickly, and create a domesticated form of the species that no longer represents or resembles the wild population".*
  - *"Occasional expression of a rare and deleterious allele may occur by chance, but should not be 'forced'; rather, these traits should be allowed to appear at their naturally occurring frequencies. Retaining all alleles at their naturally occurring frequencies helps retain genetic diversity and provides populations with adaptive potential in the face of environmental change".*
- The International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC) Council's resolution dated 8 November 2011 that it:
  - *"Opposes artificial and unnatural manipulations of wildlife including the enhancement or alteration of a specie's genetic characteristics (e. g. pelage colour, body size, horn or antler size) in particular through the use of domestic livestock breeding methods like, but not limited to, flow cytometry or genetic testing, and controlled or unnatural breeding programs".*
  - *"Encourages all Governments to (i) embrace purpose and intent of the cited IUCN position statements, policies and guidelines in the national legislation; (ii) institute adequate control mechanisms for the supervision of commercial breeding and production operations which deal with formerly wild animals; (iii) regulate breeding, production, movement and use of such animals in the legal provisions for agriculture and livestock. (iv) develop enforceable policies and establish relevant guidelines in their national wildlife conservation models".*
- The SA Hunters and Game Conservation Association's opposition to the artificial and unnatural manipulation of wildlife to enhance or alter species' genetic and phenotypic characteristics (e.g. coat colour) in particular through the use of domestic livestock breeding methods such as, but not limited to, line breeding, controlled or unnatural breeding programs and the intentional breeding of indigenous wild animals in intensive- or highly altered semi-intensive production systems for purely commercial purposes (SAHGCA's Policy Position statement of 28 November 2014).

- The national Confederation of Hunters Associations of South Africa's (CHASA) opposition to the deliberate and unnatural breeding of scarce genetic variations of certain species (CHASA policy on Wildlife Conservation).
- The animal welfare concerns as highlighted in the NSPCA's Formal Stance on the Selective Breeding of Wild Animals for Colour Mutations, issued on 26 February 2015.
- The rejection of any notion or claim that the breeding of colour variants are necessary to fulfil a demand from trophy hunters or to replenish a depleted gene pool as a result of trophy hunting as elucidated in the Professional Hunters Association of South Africa's Position Paper on Intensive Breeding and the Breeding of Colour Variants in the Wildlife Industry, issued on 12 March 2015.
- SA Hunters and Game Conservation Association's report of March 2015, titled "Risks and Impacts Associated with Intensive and Selective Breeding of Indigenous Game for Commercial Purposes".
- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Antelope Specialist Group's views that (Position Statement of 30 April 2015):
  - *"Considers that intentional genetic manipulation (IGM) of antelopes incorporates many risks and ignores the precautionary principle;*
  - *States that IGM of antelopes for commercial or amenity purposes makes no contribution to the conservation of biodiversity at global, regional, national and local levels;*
  - *Opposes all IGM of antelopes for commercial or amenity purposes, with particular reference to (i) hybridization of different species, (ii) crossing of different subspecies and (iii) selective inbreeding of a population".*
- Gauteng Directorate Nature Conservation's Policy:
  - *"The present heavy demand by game farmers for white blesbok, yellow springbok and various other hues, is also a threat to wild stock. The antelope displaying such colourfulness, specially forms of albinism, are invariably the weakest of the stock. If we pamper them and encourage their breeding, then we shall have to accept that the whole stock will weaken and will gradually degenerate".*
  - *"No permits are issued for importing or distributing game of a different hue, such as for instance whites, yellows, blacks, et cetera".*

## **POLICY STATEMENTS**

NACSSA REAFFIRMS its Agriculture Policy, accepted and ratified on 17 November 2005 (Last Revised: August 2015), that all naturally occurring wildlife on farms should be conserved and properly managed by refraining from selecting aberrant forms of wildlife for breeding purposes (e.g. colour variants);

URGES all conservancies to comply with its Agriculture Policy;

OPPOSES the selection of aberrant forms of wildlife for breeding purposes (e.g. colour variants);

EXPRESSES NACSSA's full commitment to strive to create a communicative platform where the respective interests of nature conservation and agriculture can find common ground and progress in a meaningful partnership.

*J. Wesom*

Chairman