



21/11/2023

**The Chair Lion Task Team**

**Mr K Chetty**

## **STRATEGY TO “CLEAN,” REGULATE AND MANAGE THE LION INDUSTRY IN SOUTH AFRICA**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The private game ranching industry in South Africa presents a distinctive model for wildlife conservation globally. Seventy five percent of the country's wildlife resides on privately owned land, governed by legislation recognizing private ownership of the wildlife on that land. This legal framework has revolutionized wildlife conservation in South Africa, leading to an unparalleled industry worldwide.

The primary objective of this legislation is to safeguard wildlife populations, including predators, in South Africa. Additionally, it establishes guidelines for legal trade and the sustainable management of species. However, within this landscape emerged the captive lion industry. Remarkably, this legislation has fostered the growth of a captive lion population in South Africa, currently managing the largest lion population globally, estimated at 8,000-8,500 individuals.

Despite its biological and ecological achievements, the impact of the private game farming industry extends beyond conservation. Social, economic, and cultural dimensions play crucial roles. With approximately three hundred captive lion breeding and hunting operations, the industry contributed an estimated R500 million annually to the South African economy, supporting estimated 1700 jobs and more in the supply chain it creates, primarily in remote rural areas.

The success and sustainability of the private game industry hinge on creating opportunities for legal trade, including live sales and hunting. However, recent negative publicity and international pressure have cast a shadow over the industry, jeopardizing its future.

The High-Level Panel was established, and instructed by the South African government to review policies, regulatory measures, practices, and policy positions related to hunting, trade, captive keeping, management, and handling of elephant, lion, leopard, and rhinoceros. The report was released on May 2, 2021, and reviewed policies and regulations on hunting, trade, captive keeping, management, and handling of elephant, lion, leopard, and rhinos. The appointment of the panel's members was elected by the Portfolio Committee on Environmental Affairs in August 2018, following a Colloquium on Captive Lion Breeding, which was attended by a range of national and international organizations who gave evidence to the committee. The report of the Portfolio Committee, was presented and adopted by Parliament, stated that the captive lion breeding industry did not contribute to

conservation and was doing damage to South Africa's conservation and tourism reputation. Unfortunately, these findings were based on assumptions and not science.

The South African government established the Ministerial Task Team to work on the phase-out of the captive lion breeding industry. The task team terms of reference were to identify and recommend voluntary exit options and pathways for the captive lion industry. The committee asked for the Lion Task Team to be inclusive and involve captive lion breeders, lion protection associations, veterans, and non-governmental organizations (NGO'S). The task team's objective is to ensure that the phase-out is both effective and humane. It is imperative that individuals from animal welfare organizations are on this task team. One of the NGO'S identified as a stakeholder is the South African Predator Association. In April, the LTT committed to engage with various stakeholders to assess the industry and propose workable solutions to phase out the industry, one of the objectives was to approach the industry and propose a withdrawal plan. In the two engagements it was clear that no resources were available to promote the strategy. A "voluntary exit strategy" was proposed, and stakeholders interested in this option, were invited to contact the LTT to discuss their exit. No data is available on the quantum that want to follow this strategy.

In the wake of the Minister's resolute decision to phase out the captive lion breeding industry, the Lion Task Team emerges as a visionary force, diligently working towards a harmonious transition.

The South African Predator Association requested a meeting with the LTT to present a strategy that will assist with the "cleaning" of the industry and their "voluntary exit strategy".

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November, the South African Predator Association (SAPA) and Dr Paul Booyens engaged with three members of the LTT to discuss and alternative strategy/option that can be an alternative to the ending of the industry.

Various challenges, options and alternatives were discussed, with no immediate outcome.

The LTT through Mrs Carla van der Vyver invited SAPA on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 2023 to submit a framework on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November on their proposal to address these challenges, the formalization of the captive lion industry into an organized sector collaboration with the Government. Please note, this proposal for discussion purposes. SAPA's rights remain strictly reserved, which rights inter alia includes the right to make further submissions or comment on any further action, decision, or policies adopted by the Department.

The proposal will be presented and discussed by SAPA members on their AGM on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December 2023.

## Background

The South African Predator Association (SAPA), established in 2008, plays a pivotal role in representing and uniting the industry. SAPA aims to promote ethical management, breeding, animal welfare and hunting practices, fostering a united front against challenges.

Recognizing captive lions as a separate population, the Biodiversity Management Plan for the African Lion (2015) falls short in addressing specific challenges facing the captive lion industry. In response, SAPA publicly committed in 2016 to represent the captive lion industry and develop a Management Plan to address industry challenges and emphasize conservation and socio-economic benefits.

The plan that included Norms and Standards was drafted and approved in 2017 by SAPA board and presented to Government.

This Management Plan will serve as a basis for our proposal to establish a nationally and internationally recognized strategy for captive bred lions, demonstrating their contribution to wild lion conservation. Anticipated outcomes include the industry's conservation value, directing contributions to socio-economic benefits, and providing guidelines to address concerns about captive lion welfare.

By implementing strategic changes outlined in this proposal, the captive lion industry aims to enhance its credibility, ensuring long-term sustainable existence and continued support for lion conservation.

**The strategy comprises of 3 Phases:**

- 1 Set the Table
- 2 Regulate and administer.
- 3 Develop long term sustainable industry.

**Phase 1**

Set the table for “cleaning” the industry:

With the requirements of NEMBA on the issuing and renewal of standing permit the goal to “clean” the industry can achieved within **5 years**.

To achieve this objective the following is necessary.

## Year 1

Objective	Action	Outcome
Management Control Systems	Develop and implement Norms and Standards for the industry. Develop and implement a Lion Biodiversity Management Plan	Setting an industry standard that the operation of any facility can be determined.
Traceability	Develop and implement a platform to capture data on every animal – compulsory	will assist in managing, regulating the industry. will ensure tracing animal from cradle to grave. Non-compliance – no permits
Accreditation	Minister needs to give administration rights to SAPA. Self-regulation of the industry through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Accreditation / certification</li><li>o Norms and Standards</li><li>o Training</li><li>o Audit system</li></ul>	Accredited facilities following Norms and Standards and LMBP

### Phase 2: - (year 2 -6)

Once LMBP and Norms and Standards have been agreed, implemented on National level and Administration rights given to SAPA, this phase will ensure that all stakeholders work towards the standard that was set and agreed upon.

With a new or renewal permit application received, SAPA will assess and ensure it meets all requirements, before the permit can be issued. If a new or existing facility does not comply with set standards, no permit will be issued.

Legislation determine that a standing permit needs to be re-issued every 3 years.

Non-compliance= voluntary exit from industry (owner choose not to comply)

Non-compliance will result in all permits withheld after an amnesty period of 18 months. A further 6 months for compliance, if still non-compliant, facility will be closed, and owner assisted to trade out his animals. This is voluntary exit.

### Phase 3 (year 6---)

Only facilities that is accredited bay SAPA will proceed to phase 3.

**Objectives:** Implement all norms and Standards and Biodiversity plan on National level  
Assist in reaching 2030 vision by using larger areas for breeding facilities.

Assist in rewilding projects i.e.: 1% offspring of every facility to be donated to rewilding projects.

Initiate rewilding projects

Determine quantum needed and only breed for demand – reduce numbers and facilities.

Determine bone quota for industry: hunting, export, export, compromised (old)

Ongoing research and educational program

Transformation in the industry – donate animals and educate individuals willing to enter the industry.

Develop long term sustainable industry.

Conclusion:

**Sapa is committed to collaborate with Government to achieve:**

**National and International Recognition:**

Develop and present a comprehensive national strategy for captive bred lions that will gain recognition both within South Africa and on the international stage.

**Contribution to Wild Lion Conservation:**

Proof the industry's role in actively contributing to the conservation of wild lions, emphasizing its impact not only in South Africa but also on a global scale.

**Conservation Value of Captive Bred Lions:**

Highlight the considerable conservation value of captive bred lions by demonstrating their significant contribution to broader conservation objectives, emphasizing their role in maintaining healthy wild lion populations.

**Socio-Economic Contribution:**

Direct the captive lion industry towards making substantial contributions to socio-economic benefits in South Africa, proofing its positive impact on local economies and employment opportunities.

**Guidelines for Welfare Standards:**

Assist industry stakeholders by providing comprehensive Norms and Standards (Appendix A) as guidelines and regulations. Address specific concerns related to the welfare of captive lions to ensure ethical and humane treatment.

**Management Principles for International Cooperation:**

Establish and promote transparent management principles and ethics within the captive lion industry. This includes developing practices that align with international standards, working

towards convincing organizations like the USFWS to lift the ban on the importation of trophies of captive-bred lions from South Africa.

I trust we can work towards creating a solution that will ensure the creation of a sustainable model for the lions.

Yours Faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Hannes Wessels', is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

Hannes Wessels

President South African Predator Association