

## Farmers for Cheetah Hunting in Zimbabwe

The Wildlife Producers' Association of Zimbabwe has proposed that hunting of cheetah should be permitted in areas where they have been proved to be a problem, and it should be included in the trophy schedule for safari operators.

Several ranchers said they suffered high cattle losses from cheetah and one estimated his loss at ZW\$6,000 (US\$3,000) in one year. It was stated that cheetah were hard to find during the day, but were active at night, and, since they only eat fresh meat, one cheetah could kill up to three animals in one week.

As an alternative to hunting, it was suggested that cheetah be captured and translocated to areas in Zimbabwe where they are rare, and that a captive breeding programme be initiated. However, one farmer said that the situation was so acute in some areas that farmers were already illegally killing cheetah and hiding the carcasses.

Viv Wilson, Chairman of the Parks and Wildlife Board and a member of the Cat Specialist Group, commented: "I have completed my two -year study of the cheetah in the southeast

lowveld, Midlands and the whole of the northwest part of Zimbabwe and a report has been submitted to the Parks Board. We are still awaiting the second part of the survey, which was being carried out by Gary Sharp in the southeast lowveld."

Wilson pointed out that ranchers experiencing losses could always obtain a licence to shoot cheetah. He said it was his personal opinion that certain areas should be set aside where the cheetah would be protected at all cost, for example, in Hwange National Park and the Matetsi area. However, he believed that in the lowveld, where ranchers were experiencing very real problems, a very few cheetah could be shot on licence by high-paying, foreign-currency-earning international hunters.

Wilson said the Parks and Wildlife Board and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management would meet within the coming months to consider the status of all endangered species in Zimbabwe.

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