



environmental affairs

Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ref:02/1/5/2

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 2564 {NW2868E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 31 of 2017

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 01 September 2017

Mr N Singh (IFP) to ask the Minister of Environmental Affairs:

What are the full details of (a) the exact scientific rationale that informed the South African National Biodiversity Institute's decision, justification and recommendation for the quota of 800 lion bone export per annum and (b) the steps that her department has put in place to ensure that the quota does not in fact exacerbate the tiger and lion poaching in South Africa?

NW2868E

2564. THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS REPLIES:

(a)

1. African lion (*Panthera leo*) is included on Appendix II to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). In 2016 at the 17th Conference of the Parties to CITES, the Parties adopted an annotation to this listing in relation to the growing international trade in lion bones:

"A zero annual export quota is established for specimens of bones, bone pieces, bone products, claws, skeletons, skulls and teeth removed from the wild and traded for commercial purposes. Annual export quotas for trade in bones, bone pieces, bone products, claws, skeletons, skulls and teeth for commercial purposes, derived from captive breeding operations in South Africa, will be established and communicated annually to the CITES Secretariat".

---ooOoo---



environmental affairs

Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ref:02/1/5/2

2. The South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), in its role as the scientific co-ordinator of South Africa's CITES Scientific Authority was requested to advise the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) on the setting of this quota. The problem statement was formulated as the following question: "What is the current annual sustainable supply of lion bone from captive breeding operations?"

3. In setting the quota, the following issues were considered:
 - a. The need to avoid the creation of a monopoly in the supply of lion bones to Asia;
 - b. the need to incentivise compliance with the quota and avoid stimulating illegal trade;
 - c. the need to anticipate any unintended consequences;
 - d. possible confounding effects of the United States of America's (USA) January 2016 listing of *Panthera leo* as threatened on the Endangered Species Act;
 - e. the fact that South Africa has a healthy wild lion population of approximately 3 500 individuals which is currently experiencing no major threats and persists alongside a large captive population of approximately 7 000 individuals in around 260 lion breeding/captive facilities in South Africa. Within this context, illegal use and/or trade in wild lion in South Africa is considered small to negligible based on available information;
 - f. the existing trade in lion bone between South Africa and eastern and south-eastern Asia which emerged in 2008 and has since shown an increasing trend. The supply of Felidae bones and skeletons from the Southern African Development Community region is sourced mostly from captive produced lions from South Africa as a by-product of the lion trophy hunting industry; and
 - g. submissions from a public consultation process managed by the Department of Environmental Affairs in which various parties argued for a zero quota whereas representatives of captive lion facilities argued that far greater numbers could be sustainably harvested and this would reduce demand for bones from wild lion. Despite claims of positive or negative impacts associated with trade, there is considerable uncertainty about the outcomes of either approach or very little objective evidence to guide decision making. Outcomes of past prohibitions or forced limitations in the supply

---ooOoo---



environmental affairs

Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ref:02/1/5/2

of wildlife products to Asian markets is the subject of considerable debate both nationally and internationally, as demonstrated in three case studies below:

- i. The increased poaching of rhinos in South Africa and potential links to the domestic moratorium on the trade in rhino horn;
- ii. the increased poaching of elephants in Africa which some commentators have ascribed to the one off sales of ivory permitted by CITES whereas others have ascribed to perceived future scarcity of ivory because of the 2007 CITES moratorium on ivory sales; and
- iii. the switch to the utilisation of and trade in lion bones and bones of other felids subsequent to the 2007 CITES Decision to phase out tiger farms.

The uncertainty regarding the impact (on wild lion) of a trade ban for lion bone derived from captive bred animals partly informed the annotation adopted at the 17th Conference of the Parties (CoP17) to CITES. It should also be noted that the annotation formed part of a broader set of Decisions (17.241 – 17.245) that focused on lion conservation in general and the need to obtain additional information on legal and illegal trade and the effects of international trade on lion population trends.

4. In advising the Department of Environmental Affairs on the current annual sustainable supply of lion bone from captive breeding operations in South Africa, it was recognised that there is at present insufficient data to determine sustainable production of lions in all lion breeding facilities throughout South Africa. The export records for captive produced lion trophies were therefore interrogated on the assumption that lion breeding operations would have been managed wisely in order to ensure the sustainable production of adult trophy lions.
5. In 2016, SANBI collaborated with the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) to undertake an analysis of CITES trade in the SADC countries between 2005 and 2014. In relation to the export of *Panthera leo* trophies from SADC, the following was established and formed the basis for the recommended quota of 800 skeletons per year:

---ooOoo---



environmental affairs

Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ref:02/1/5/2

- On average 1 080 lion trophies were exported from SADC every year; and
 - of these, 80% were direct exports from South Africa (864 individuals per year) and were comprised of predominantly captive produced lion trophies (less than 10 wild lion were hunted per year over this time period).
6. The recommended quota accords well with a study conducted by WildCRU (Oxford University, UK) and TRAFFIC (July 2015) which estimated that the skeleton resource base from trophy hunting was up to 833 skeletons per year over the period 2008 to 2010. Information provided by DEA indicated that 651 lion skeletons and 69 sets of bones were legally exported from South Africa between October 2015 and September 2016 which is consistent with the numbers estimated by UNEP-WCMC and the WildCRU/TRAFFIC report.
7. The rationale for setting the lion bone export quota was discussed at the 13th meeting of the South African Scientific Authority held in February 2017. Based on the issues outlined in section 3 (above) the Scientific Authority reasoned that the correct approach would be to establish a quota based on the best estimates of current supply and to immediately initiate studies to address some of the uncertainties so that future quotas can be informed by better evidence. As a result, the recommended quota of 800 skeletons was approved for submission to me and SANBI was requested to initiate the required studies as budget permitted (see under Part (b) below).

(b)

1. It should be noted that there are no wild tigers in South Africa and lion poaching in South Africa has been and is currently negligible. There has been some recent reports of captive lions being killed for traditional purposes (medicine or for bones in divination sets).
2. The South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) has initiated a three-year collaborative project with the University of the Witwatersrand, Oxford University and the University of Kent entitled "Analysing and monitoring the lion bone trade in South Africa".

---ooOoo---



environmental affairs

Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ref:02/1/5/2

The aims of the project are to:

- a) increase our understanding of the captive lion breeding industry and the lion bone trade in South Africa;
 - b) investigate how the trade in captive produced lion bone under a quota system affects wild lion populations; and
 - c) strengthen the evidence base for the annual review of the quota in order to ensure it is sustainable and not detrimental to wild populations.
3. This project will form the basis of an adaptive management approach towards the lion bone export quota. Should poaching of wild lion occur as a direct result of the trade in captive produced lion skeletons, the quota will be adjusted accordingly.
4. A system involving random testing of DNA samples collected from lion skeletons at ports of exits has been devised to ensure skeletons originate from captive breeding operations and also to verify that no tiger skeletons are being exported.

---ooOoo---