



PHASA

Professional Hunters' Association
of South Africa

TELECONFERENCE WITH MINISTER CREECY: 17 APRIL

Participants:

Minister Creecy

WRSA: Tebogo Mogashoa; Jacques Malan; Adri Kitshoff-Botha

CHASA (HAWASA): Stephen Palos

PHASA: Dries Van Coller

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE TELECON:

Minister Creecy started the telecon by mentioning that there has been interaction with a range of different sectors on the impact of the lockdown on the various sectors, and specifically the areas where there might be requests for the possible easing of regulations.

She emphasized the need for all to understand, following Prof Karim's input last weekend, that we are in this for a long haul; with no immediate solution for the situation we find ourselves in.

There are many sectors which are heavily impacted, and she thinks that the wildlife sector is one of those, as we are heavily dependent on aspects of the tourism industry.

She said that we need to understand that, even if there will be an easing of certain aspects, the question of international and domestic movement will remain to be severely constrained for a period in time to come.

The telecon is an opportunity for industry to raise concerns and for the Minister, within the context of the broader work being done in government, to give some perspective what may, or may not, be able to be addressed.

Adri thanked the Minister for the opportunity and introduced the participants to the telecon.

2. MATTERS RAISED BY THE INDUSTRY, WITH THE MINISTER'S COMMENTS THERETO:

Minister Creecy allowed for all matters to be raised, whereafter she commented to all. For the purpose of these notes, the Minister's comments are included after each section.

a. RENEWAL OF PERMITS THAT EXPIRED DURING COVID-19 PERIOD:

Certificates of Adequate Enclosure:

Adri mentioned that WRSA was informed before lockdown that North West and Western Cape, will extend the expiry dates of CoAE's, until after lockdown has been lifted. In the meantime, after a request by WRSA, Limpopo followed suit and issued a notice this morning to the effect that the expiry date will be extended until 30 days after lockdown has been lifted.

Adri requested whether the Department assist with a notice to all provinces to introduce extension periods. Due to the back logs expected and due to the officials who are responsible for visiting the farms will also have other responsibilities, she proposed that consideration should be given to making all permits (expiring) to be valid until the end of 2020.

i. Professional Hunter permits:

Dries echoed that the backlog is expected to be astronomical and mentioned that, with PH permits expiring, it will take a considerable amount of time to have it renewed, which will have a negative impact on the ability of professional hunters to proceed with business.



ii. **Shipping of hunting trophies by freight companies:**

Adri mentioned that hunting trophies of international clients are crated and ready to be shipped. In many instances, permits are being issued by importing countries, which also have expiry dates. The shipping companies therefore need the provincial authorities to attest the permits for these trophies to be shipped through the available air cargo spaces.

The despatching of hunting trophies, to international hunters who hunted in South Africa, forms part of the full value chain of wildlife management, once again with hunting as a wildlife management tool.

Adri requested that, if all provinces cannot actively issue permits during lockdown period, or attest to these permits, that relief is given during the lockdown process in order to continue with shipping the trophies?

iii. **Minister's reply:**

The department to attend to the permit issues, to provide the industry with feedback within seven days.

b. **WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT: MOVEMENT OF BUFFALO WHERE TEST RESULTS ARE ALREADY KNOWN:**

- i. Tebogo mentioned that this proposal pertains specifically to animal welfare, where movement of buffalo normally requires that animals must be isolated and quarantined before translocation. At the time that the lockdown took place, there were about 28 farms where buffalo were isolated, which are now subjected to the regulations prevailing. There is an understanding that movement of animals during this time, somewhat restricted, giving rise to situation where movement restriction must be balance, as against the animal welfare – which now necessitate that the tests would expire - it becomes impractical to reintegrate animals to where they would have come. The buffalo industry therefore need movement of those animals as a critical and essential nature. There are currently 175 buffalo in bona om 28 farms.

Jacques thanked the Minister for listing wildlife management as essential service. From WRSA side, we made a survey of how many buffalo in boma before lockdown. At this stage, 258 buffalo. WRSA would like to use this this information when approaching Dr Maja from Veterinary Service to convince her to allow the movement of buffalo where test results are known, and need Minister's support.

With buffalo already on bomas already since January, missing breeding cycle as it can't get to the destination to breeding herds and cows will not able to calf. Some cows in bomas are pregnant already, which is not ideal. There are also lots of injuries because of the prolonged time. It normally stands in boma for 4-6 weeks. The sustainability of the whole buffalo production will suffer. There are also costs involved, which a game farmer can handle only up to a point. Therefor the sooner it can be moved from small pen areas into new wildlife habitat, the better it would be. Would like support to Dr Maja office.

ii. **Minister' reply:**



It is important to understand that fundamental way to prevent the spread of the pandemic: Prevent human movement.

Minister indicated she would be happy to discuss the buffalo issue with NETJOINTS, but don't expect a positive response. They have been working extensively in the fishing industry. Where dealing with movement **within** a province, it seems easier. Once crossing a provincial boundary, it is a different story. They had food trucks for fish (essential product and serve), stuck at interprovincial roadblocks. Trucks with timer going into Eswatini was stuck for up to four days.

Minister cautioned that, even where formal permission is obtained, that trucks might be held up at roadblocks with commanding officers not necessarily understanding the essential movement of buffalo. Industry need to think about that. It would therefore be necessary to calculate situation where animals are being moved, with significant welfare risks, eg. Animals to die at a roadblock.

Because of the constrained number of buffalo and legislation, Minister will try her best to motivate the movement of buffalo, especially internal provincial movement from one farm to another in same district under wildlife management provisions. However, she expect it to be exceptionally difficult to get approval for cross-provincial movement.

Minister would need the details of the specific animals to be moved from point A to point B (details) (farm to farm), in table format. She also requested that industry take note of her caution for where things might go wrong.

c. ESSENTIAL MOVEMENT OF WILDLIFE, SUPPORTED BY GUIDELINES:

- i. Jacques mentioned the importance, as a wildlife management tool, of the replacement of certain breeding bulls/rams this time of year (breeding time), to introduce new bulls/rams with animals which were passively captured. Although this might not be a "big deal" issue, industry could provide guidelines as to when it could be understood as being essential.

ii. Minister's Reply:

Minister emphasized that it is important for industry to understand the dangers that this disease poses, particularly in poorer communities and rural areas where we don't have that health facilities, effective ambulance services, ventilators, etc. Because thereof, health and security officers will be very strict. Once again, the risk of roadblocks. It is not about the animals (spreading the disease), but about the driver and the people working with the animals.

d. INFORMATION RE WRSA HELICOPTER GUIDELINES, ALIGNING TO REGULATIONS AND CAA REQUIREMENTS

Adri mentioned for the Minister's information, that WRSA received enquiries from members regarding the use of helicopters in wildlife management. WRSA drafted guidelines, which align with the specifications in the Regulations and after consultation with CAA, as a service



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to wildlife ranchers who did not necessarily know how to interpret the regulations

e. HUNTING:

- i. Stephen mentioned that for hunting to be allowed, will probably be a technical call and will require a lot of thought and cooperation. The most important factor would be looking at the harvesting of annual production on game farms. Hunting itself, is an activity that takes place during winter months, commencing now. It looks like, even if there would be a staged reduction in lockdown, it is expected to be a long haul, especially regarding the lockdown on domestic and international movement. However, harvesting has to occur and we do believe that there are some potential guidelines to be developed.

Stephen said that he would like to know if there are thoughts from government's side on how to open hunting. We have heard that tourism is one of the hardest areas to re-open. However, with hunting specifically regulated, and all involved being part and parcel of stakeholder groups who can guide our members re protocols, how it could be done.

Regarding the essential necessity, the management on a game farm cannot be looked at differently than any other livestock farm. Specific harvesting per year is essential with the complexity that specific animals must be removed based on a ratio of gender, ets. Should one miss one year, it would not only have a financial impact, but it will upset the balance for years to come.

The industry will draft a more complex document in this regard, but need guidance on what government contemplate, should the lifting of the lockdown period be staged in. The industry only have May-August to do most of this and know it will be difficult times during COVID scenario.

A critical factor is also the rural areas, where hunting keep lifelines going: 1.5 to 2m livelihoods.

DRIES: Adri note: unfortunately my computer "froze" for a short while, and I missed these notes.

ii. Minister's reply:

No movement will be allowed across provinces, from metropolises (epi centres) to rural areas. At the moment they find better outcomes in rural areas, because all influx of tourists was stopped, whereas they don't find such good outcomes in urban areas, because of the density of populations. Therefore, no suggestions of movement between metropolises and rural areas will be considered.

What we have to accept, is that we will not have a hunting season this year. A game farmer might have a hunter from the farm next door, but any concept of recreational activities from main urban areas to rural areas, will not happen. The Health authorities are serious about managing the movement and spreading of the diseases; they do not want to re-infect areas where there are no infection at the moment.



f. SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION OPPORTUNITY; GAME MEAT:

- i. Adri mentioned that discussions will take place with Mr Motsepe Matlala, president of NAFU and chairperson of one of the three committees appointed by the NETJOINTS; he is dealing with social issues about the possibility of getting game meat to people who need food, especially protein, through government social grant system. Especially with the lost hunting opportunities, to have the animals harvested and supplied, thereby assisting the game farmers as well as people the poor / hungry.

With the game meat regulations being outstanding for such a long time, this could create the ideal opportunity to speed it up.

ii. Minister's reply:

Minister suggested that we do have to entertain the game management strategy and obviously meat as an essential commodity (food). Should we have to cull to sell meat, that would be fine, based on wildlife management and food production grounds.

Regarding the social contribution, Minister advised that where we want to engage in distress relief in communities surrounding farms, to go ahead and do that. However, government's general approach is to move away from distribution of food, to either providing monetary vouchers or grants. They find that, at the moment, the distribution of food is very difficult and not working.

Regarding the regulations, it will not be possible in this environment, to go into extensive regulatory processes because of public participation and so forth. But within the confines of the existing regulations, the industry can deal with providing game meat as food.

3. CLOSING:

Tebogo thanked the Minister for the opportunity and said that the industry understands the unprecedented situation and that we will work through the rules and regulations of the state of National Disaster and that with passing of time, more clarity will be available about the way forward.

The Minister thanked everybody and gave her assurance that they will do the best they can. It is necessary to accept that 2020 will not be a normal year with normal outcomes. There lies a big storm ahead of us and government must focus its energy on the tragedy yet to come. What to do, is to be mindful that terrible consequences of the pandemic is still coming. Where can give some assistance, government will do that. However, all to be mindful that the fundamental issue we are dealing with, is a pandemic that killed tens of thousands of people across the world. She made a plea for industry to understand that although government will see how and where they can help and support industries to weather the storm, to understand that there are just things that cannot be done.

Tebogo thanked the Minister and welcomed her interventions.