



South Africa suggests new export quota for captive-bred lion skeletons, putting wild lions at risk and supporting the canned lion industry

EMS Foundation, Captured in Africa Foundation, and global conservation groups call on South Africa to halt all captive-bred exports pending outcome of robust studies

JOHANNESBURG (31 January 2017) - The Department of Environmental Affairs is proposing an annual commercial export quota of 800 skeletons from captive-bred lions.

The *EMS Charitable Foundation* and the *Captured in Africa Foundation*, with the backing of international animal protection organisations representing millions of people around the world, are calling on the Department to think again and to adopt a precautionary approach, instituting a zero export quota, given fears that exports could put the lives of wild lions across the continent at increased risk.

Michele Pickover, Director of the EMS Foundation said: *“The Department of Environmental Affairs appears to be setting an arbitrary quota, presumably under pressure from wildlife breeders, without considering what the wider impacts of such a trade will be on already struggling wild populations of lions and other big cats. A precautionary approach is needed, in order to allow time for studies on the impacts of this trade. Also, the captive-breeding industry is poorly-policed with many facilities operating ‘under the radar’, hardly a situation that inspires confidence that any quota system can be effectively managed. Simply because, prior to the CITES resolution, the South African government had given the canned predator industry free reign in terms of the lion bone trade, does not mean that it should be allowed to continue.”*

Drew Abrahamson, Director and Founder of Captured in Africa Foundation said: *“Considering that there is no scientific support for the lion bone trade, what is the South African government basing its decision on? The research that has been done by the likes of Karl Ammann, WildCRU, TRAFFIC, and IUCN, all assert that lion bone trade is a significant threat to wild lion populations. Further, there are uncanny similarities between rhino horn or ivory trade and lion bone trade, with all three resulting in illegal markets that CITES seeks to combat. Permitting continued legal lion bone trade only magnifies and confuses the work being done by CITES.”*

As few as 20,000 wild lions currently occupy just 8% of their historic range across Africa. Increasing international trade in lion body parts, particularly bones, was identified as a ‘main threat’ to lions by lion range States at a meeting in Entebbe (May 2016), alongside habitat loss, prey depletion and conflict with people. Recognising this threat, Parties to CITES agreed to ban international trade in bones and other body parts from wild lions at their meeting in Johannesburg in October 2016. The same meeting identified a need to study impacts of the bone trade on lion conservation and required South Africa to establish a quota for exports of bones and other products from captive-bred lions.

At a meeting held on the 18th January, the Department of Environmental Affairs itself recognised that the captive breeding industry was damaging “Brand South Africa”, and the need for further studies on the impacts of the bone trade on wild lions. However, despite this it also announced its intention to set a quota of 800 captive-bred lion skeletons, with or without skulls, and that export permits will be issued starting in March.

As many as 8,000 lions and other big cats are thought to exist across more than 200 captive breeding facilities across South Africa. This controversial industry is commercially driven and makes no contribution to wildlife conservation. The intensively-bred animals are used for tourism purposes, to supply lions for the ‘canned hunting’ industry, and to generate body parts and products for trade. In the ten years between 2006 and 2015, skeletons and skulls of an estimated 3,217 captive-bred African lions were traded from South Africa for personal, commercial, and hunting trophy purposes, primarily to Vietnam, Lao PDR, and the United States. Demand for lion bone is high in Southeast Asia where it is increasingly sought as a replacement for tiger bone in traditional medicines and tonics.

At the last minute the Department for Environmental Affairs has [invited](#) public comments on its proposed quota by 2nd February. Our organisations will be submitting input and urge all those who oppose the canned predator industry and the trade in skeletons of captive-bred lions to submit written comments to Mpho Tjiane at mtjiane@environment.gov.za

Supporting organisations:

Blood Lions

Ban Animal Trading

Wildlife Poisoning Prevention

Born Free Foundation

Humane Society International/Africa

FOUR PAWS

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

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