

SPCA responds to planned cull of rabbits on Robben Island

In response to the statement issued by Robben Island Museum on the planned humane cull and sterilization programme of European Rabbits on the island, the Cape of Good Hope SPCA is satisfied that all options have been carefully considered and that this is the most humane and rational approach.

Allan Perrins, CEO for the society said that the SPCA had not found it easy to support this approach, as a non-lethal solution for all the rabbits would have been ideal. However, due to the size of the rabbit population currently on the island and the regulatory framework which prohibits the relocation of any rabbits due to the negative conservation implications, the proposed solution has been accepted.

“We committed ourselves to finding the most humane and conservation worthy solution and had hoped that it would be a non-lethal one, but this is unfortunately not possible. As a result we will work closely with the Robben Island Museum and other partners to ensure that the removal is undertaken in the most humane way possible” said Perrins.

“We are pleased that at least a portion of the colony might be sterilized and allowed to live out their lives in a managed area on the island” he said.

Mr Perrins said the organization carefully considered a suggestion to surgically sterilize the entire colony which is estimated to be in the thousands. This however had to be dismissed due to the large numbers involved and serious concerns that the rabbits would be severely traumatized during the procedure and would probably not survive the surgery.

Final details for the operation are currently being worked out and as part of the SPCA’s monitoring role, it will ensure that animals are handled in a manner to limit stress and that rabbit warrens are also checked to ensure that off-spring are not abandoned.

Ends

SPCA on Robben Island to monitor rabbit cull

The Cape of Good Hope SPCA has sent four staff members to Robben Island to monitor the cull of rabbits which started on the 7 November. The team is comprised of the Senior Inspector, Wildlife Unit Manager, two Animal Welfare Assistants and one Animal Care Assistant.

Their mandate is to advise, monitor and if necessary assist to prevent animal suffering.

For media enquiries, please contact Shaun Davis, Robben Island Museum on 021 - 409 5178 /5149 or email ShaunD@robben-island.org.za