

Press Release
5 October 2009

SPCA and Robben Island

Representatives from the Cape of Good Hope (CoGH) SPCA met with senior management from Robben Island Museum on 5 October to review their *Draft Proposal for the management of damage causing animals on Robben Island*. The meeting provided an opportunity for the SPCA to further discuss various points of concern in the draft proposal, which sets out RIM's protocols for the eradication, via lethal shooting, of European rabbits, Helmeted guinea fowl, Fallow deer, feral cats and rats.

SPCA officials left the meeting significantly reassured that, notwithstanding the urgency for this eradication programme given the damage being caused to the World Heritage Site, there is real commitment from the new management team to understand and learn from the problems experienced during the previous culling operations.

Among the SPCA's concerns were that adequate veterinary support would be provided throughout the culling operation and that sufficient financial resources would be committed to the operation – to ensure that the effect of the culling is not negated by delays while funding is approved. The SPCA also raised concerns around the planned eradication of all the Fallow Deer and questioned whether there was not a non-lethal solution for at least some of the guinea fowl.

RIM's acting CEO, Professor Bredekamp confirmed that veterinary support would be in place and that further consideration would be given to finding non-lethal solutions for some of the Fallow deer and guinea fowl. On the issue of funding and resources, Professor Bredekamp assured the SPCA that he would personally seek a commitment for long-term funding over several years.

Allan Perrins, CoGH SPCA CEO said that due to the estimated size of the rabbit population (approximately 25 000), the proposed solution via shooting had been accepted as the only humane option.

“The island's vegetation cannot support such a huge rabbit population and unless drastic action is taken animals will begin starving to death. We are being compassionately pragmatic in accepting their proposal to eradicate the rabbits using sharp shooters”, said Perrins.

The CoGH SPCA will regularly deploy SPCA Inspectors to the island to monitor the culling operation and ensure that it is undertaken humanely.