

## **Press Release**

30 July 2008

### **SPCA committed to finding humane solution for non-endemic species on Robben Island**

Concern for the welfare of all wild animals on Robben Island remains a priority for the Cape of Good Hope SPCA (CoGH SPCA), which is committed to finding a humane and where possible non-lethal solution to the issue.

In April this year the organisation received reports that populations of non-endemic wildlife on Robben Island, including Fallow Deer, were thin and in a poor condition due to depletion of natural grazing areas. A meeting was immediately arranged with the Robben Island Museum (RIM) authorities, enabling the SPCA to adequately assess the condition and well-being of the animals and to make recommendations regarding the immediate plight of the animals. At the time, many of the animals risked starvation due to severe over-grazing as a result of over-population.

Following this meeting, the SPCA submitted a full report to the authorities with recommendations to prevent further avoidable suffering of any animal. These included the need for supplementary feeding, provision of water points and mineral licks, as well as parasite controls measures e.g. deworming.

RIM authorities, which had previously supplied supplementary feeding, agreed with SPCA recommendations and accepted relief aid in the form of supplementary feed from Mr Searle Derman. They also allowed him to explore the possibility of relocating the animals from the island to a suitable private reserve on the mainland, with approval from Cape Nature and other regional nature conservation authorities, as part of an action plan drawn up by RIM.

Since submitting their recommendations, the CoGH SPCA has had several follow-up meetings with the RIM authorities, Mr Derman and Cape Nature. Supplementary feeding of the animals is continuing, thus improving their condition and so preparing them for imminent future relocation to an approved sanctuary.

Phase two includes the building of capture bomas and allowing the animals to become accustomed to them. The CoGH will continue to provide input and advice on this aspect of the proposed operation.

Phase three would involve their relocation to a private sanctuary, with the acknowledgement and approval of all authorities. It would also include adherence to a set of animal welfare guidelines supplied by the SPCA, to ensure that the future well-being of these animals in a sanctuary or private nature reserve is legally protected.

More ...

2/2

The CoGH SPCA is scheduled to meet with RIM and Cape Nature representatives in the next week. The society shares concerns expressed by Cape Nature and other conservation bodies over the impact these non-endemic species are having on the biodiversity of the island and further endangering threatened populations of sea birds. It looks forward to contributing to discussions on the planned removal of the European rabbit population on the island, and remains committed to finding the most humane and conservation worthy solution.

Ends

**Notes to editor**

The Cape of Good Hope SPCA has been concerned for the welfare of non-endemic species on Robben Island for several years. Initially the organisation assisted the Robben Island Museum (RIM) authorities with the safe and humane trapping and relocation of feral cats. Over a three month period in 2006, an SPCA inspector was stationed daily on the island, with a SPCA vehicle to monitor to feral cat situation. During that time the condition of the other wildlife inhabiting the island was reported to be good.

In 2008 we were informed by the RIM authorities that they would seek our involvement in the safe removal and/or reduction of populations of other non-endemic animals on the island. They believe these animals, which include a large population of Fallow Deer (approximately 200) and rabbits (approximately 5000), are having a severe impact on the resident species, among them the threatened African Penguin, cormorants and Black Oyster Catcher.

**Issued by the Cape of Good Hope SPCA. For further information please contact Communications Manager Sarah Scarth on 021 700 4154 or 083 271 3768 or [sscarth@spca-ct.co.za](mailto:sscarth@spca-ct.co.za)**