

**Press statement
1 October 2009**

The Cape of Good Hope SPCA and Baboons in the Cape Peninsula

The Cape of Good Hope (CoGH) SPCA has been actively involved in the protection of baboons on the Cape Peninsula for many years. We believe that most of the human-baboon conflicts that have occurred have arisen as a result of baboons having been fed by ignorant and/or irresponsible members of the public and we, as humans, must thus bear much of the responsibility for the consequences of their learned disturbing and/or destructive behaviour.

In our opinion, ongoing housing developments, which encroach into the baboon's natural range, have accentuated the problems and resulted in human and baboon living areas overlapping. Despite various efforts to educate the public on responsible baboon interaction and observation, as well as formal baboon management measures, the result, sadly is that over time we have seen an increasingly antagonistic interaction between some residents and the baboons. We have also witnessed an increasing number of injuries, deliberately inflicted, such as gunshot wounds. The CoGH SPCA has committed and continues to commit valuable resources to helping and where necessary dealing directly with any sick or injured baboon by way of darting, capture, treatment, etc.

Baboon control measures

One of our functions is to ensure that the protocols employed by the baboon monitoring service provider does not result in any cruelty; that the baboons are treated humanely; and that any sick or injured baboon is managed appropriately, humanely and effectively.

The SPCA will ensure that any control measures used by the Baboon Monitors do not result in any cruelty and that the baboons are treated humanely. We acknowledge that the intention of the control measures (such as bull whips and "bear bangers") are employed with the objective of minimising conflict between the baboons and residents and thus ensuring the long term security and safety of the baboons and residents. We believe that if the baboon troops are not adequately controlled, there will inevitably be more baboons injured as a result of conflict with people, and thus accept that the use of all control measures has to be considered against this objective.

Recently the frightening effects from the noise of whips has been used as a control measure by the current service provider and their baboon monitors and "bear bangers" have also been used by a group of Simon's Town residents. Whilst it has been reported that these devices are only being used to produce a disturbing sound as an aid to control baboon movement, we are very concerned that the use of whips may suggest to some that they are being used to strike the baboons.

There is also the additional concern that the provision of a potentially harmful device could be abused by insufficiently trained and supervised staff. The CoGH SPCA is currently investigating whether an equally effective and safer alternative can be found. We will be monitoring the situation on an ongoing basis and any report of misuse of the whips or bear-bangers will be rigorously investigated by our Inspectorate.

We are also aware of the concerns raised by some that the noise will also negatively and potentially seriously impact on domestic pets and other wild animals and undertake to investigate carefully monitor any reports of such problems.

Ends