



forestry, fisheries & the environment

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ref: 02/1/5/2

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 2887 {NW3315E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 22 OF 2025

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 23 MAY 2025

Ms N Gantsho (ANC) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

Given the declining vulture population, increasing incidents of poisoning and the demand for vulture parts in traditional medicine, how has his department engaged with local communities to reduce the specified demand and report poisoning related to poaching?

2887. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

The DFFE established a National Vulture Task Force (NVTF) in 2018 which developed a Multi-Species Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP) in support of the adopted Multi-species Action Plan (MsAP) for the conservation of African-Eurasian vultures. The NVTF brings together all the representatives from relevant government departments, provinces and entities, and other stakeholders including the People and Parks which comprises of local communities especially those living adjacent to protected areas, traditional leaders, and traditional health practitioners for the benefit of vulture conservation.

In coordinating the implementation of the BMP, the NVTF established committees and Task Teams that contribute to the implementation of the BMP which serves as an extension to the work of the NVTF in reaching their constituents including local communities. The task teams and committees are:

- **The National Wildlife Poisoning Prevention Working Group (NWPPWG)** has been established to manage the risk of poisoning of wildlife in South Africa, which is supported by sub-groups, namely:

- **The Lead Task Team (LTT)** which comprises of representatives from various wildlife conservation sectors, government, and hunting communities. It aims to minimize the threats of lead poisoning to all wildlife.
- **The Agricultural Pesticides Task Team (APTT)** was established to provide evidence-based recommendations and to assist in addressing the exposure of wildlife to agricultural pesticides.
- **The Breeding Steering Committee (BSC)** has been established to give effect to objective 12 of the multi-species BMP which seek, in part, to restore vulture populations where they have become extinct and restock populations where there is a danger of extinction.
- **The Traditional Health Practitioners and Healers Committee (THPHC)**, which is established to give effect to Objective 2 of the Vulture BMP. Objective 2 has actions that set out to create a relationship with the healers and practitioners to curb the crisis that the vultures are facing.
- **The Bearded Vulture Task Force (BVTF)**, which consists of representatives of the government of South Africa, Lesotho, and NGOs as well as other stakeholders and volunteers from both countries. This was in support of the implementation of the Bearded Vulture BMP which was published in 2014 which incorporated the Biodiversity & Protected Area work plan of the Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA), with Lesotho taking an active part in the implementation of the programme.

Of the 13 objectives contained in the BMP, the below objectives pertain to the engagement of local communities:

- To reduce and eventually halt the practice of intentional poisoning of vultures and its impact.
- To work alongside traditional medicine practitioners to ensure the implementation of responsible and sustainable practices that will contribute to the conservation of the species.
- To ensure the critical ecosystem services and health benefits that vultures provide to society as a whole persist and to allow for a better understanding of the cultural value of vultures.

In addition, annually, South Africa through the DFFE joins nations across the globe in marking International Vulture Awareness Day (IVAD) which aims to raise awareness about the crucial role vultures play in our ecosystems and highlight the urgent need for their conservation. The IVAD is held

on the first Saturday in September. This annual awareness campaign reflects on the importance of vultures and the essential role they play in maintaining healthy ecosystems and highlights the important work being carried out by the world's vulture conservationists.

The previous IVAD commemorations, took the Endangered Wildlife Trust collaborating with SANParks, DFFE, Eskom, and traditional councils, authorities, and healers, in raising awareness in Vulture hot spot areas. September, also known as Heritage Month, has proven to be an opportune time to educate the public on vultures that are known to be utilized in traditional medicine and also threatened by the over utilization amongst other threats. The following are the key objectives of the IVAD:

- Raise awareness and promote vulture conservation for their value and importance, benefits to people, threats, conservation status, and impacts of the species loss;
- emphasize the role that communities play in vulture population conservation;
- raise awareness of the cultural value of vultures in South African communities;
- promote the implementation of responsible and sustainable practices that will contribute to the conservation of the species; and
- promote cooperative governance in mitigating the threats that vultures face

Regards



DR D T GEORGE, MP

MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

DATE: 3/6/2025