



**forestry, fisheries
& the environment**

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

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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
(For written reply)**

QUESTION NO. 2424 {NW2800E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 25 of 2021

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Mr D W Bryant (DA) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

With reference to the meeting with nongovernmental organisations on 22 May 2020, wherein she agreed that her department would investigate allegations of irregularities relating to the trade in wildlife and that the investigation would be complete within three months, (a) on what date will the results of the investigation be published, (b) what remedial action has been taken as a result of the investigation; and (c) what are the proposed amendments to the existing regulatory framework to make the South African wildlife trade more sustainable?

2424. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

(a) and (b) Investigations were undertaken by the department on the following specific allegations of unlawful activities set out in the Breaking Point Report (BPR). These allegations contained sufficient information to enable the department to initiate investigations:

- Export of cheetahs from a facility in Limpopo

The allegation in the BPR was that cheetahs were exported by Christa Saayman of Mystic Monkeys and Feathers Wildlife Park to Eastern Sunrise (Beijing) Wildlife Services. The

preliminary investigation determined that Mystic Monkeys applied for a CITES export permit to export 10 live cheetahs from Hoedspruit Endangered Species Centre (HESC) to China in 2018. The origin of the animals was indicated as HESC with the facility's CITES Captive Breeding Registration number namely A-ZA-502 on the permit. Mystic Monkeys was the exporter of the animals originating from HESC. Permit number 222192 was issued by the Limpopo Provincial Department on 2018/06/01 to export 10 live cheetahs in accordance with Article VII Paragraph 4 which states that "Specimens of an animal species included in Appendix I bred in captivity for commercial purposes, shall be deemed to be specimens of species included in Appendix II". The findings were that there was no contravention of the CITES Regulations and no irregularities in the issuing of the export permit.

- Export of Bengal tigers from South Africa to China

It was alleged in the BPR that during 2018, South Africa exported 23 Bengal Tigers to China and in 2019 another 22. The allegation was that Mystic Monkey and Feathers Wildlife Park and Eventiera Wildlife Park located in Limpopo Province were responsible for these exports. A preliminary investigation indicated that a CITES export permit, number 223900, was issued on 13 November 2017 to export 16 Bengal tigers to Vietnam. The export was done in compliance with the legal requirements, including endorsement of the CITES permit by DFFE officials prior to the export of the animals on 31 January 2018. According to the Limpopo Provincial Department they did not receive any application for the export of tigers from Eventiera Wildlife Park and no permits were issued to that facility. No further information could be provided that would raise a reasonable suspicion that any offences had been committed.

- Export of wild dogs

In the BPR it was alleged that during 2018, South Africa exported 7 African Wild Dogs to China and in 2019 exported another 28 dogs. The preliminary investigation found that an Integrated Ordinary TOPS permit, number 10163, to transport and export 8 African Wild Dogs to China was issued on 16 August 2017 to the Ann Van Dyk Breeding Centre and an import permit with reference number, AF 0017000160 was also issued by China. This facility has kept and bred wild dogs under a permit since 2011 and confirmed that they exported 7 (and not 8) wild dogs to China. Based on the findings of the preliminary investigation, no offence was committed in relation to the export of the 7 live African Wild Dogs from Ann van Dyk Breeding Centre and no irregularities found in the issuing of the export permit. A meeting was held with BAT and EMS Foundation regarding the allegation of the export of 28 wild dogs from Mafunyane and during

the meeting the officials were informed that the animals were not from Mafunyane but from another person in Vanderbyl Park, Gauteng. No evidence could be found during the preliminary investigation of an export of 28 African Wild Dogs from either Mafunyane nor from the person in Vanderbyl Park to China during the 2019 period.

- Export of 18 chimpanzees to China

The BPR alleged that the export of 18 chimpanzees to China in July 2019 from the Hartbeespoort Dam Snake and Animal Park in the North West Province. The preliminary investigation found that the export of the 18 chimpanzees was legally authorised. No evidence could be found of any criminal offences being committed in relation to the export of the chimpanzees and there were no irregularities in the issuing of the export permit. The shipment was inspected by Environmental Management Inspectors from the DFFE at OR Tambo International Airport and the permit was endorsed upon export. All CITES requirements for the issuance of the export permit as well as the shipment of the animals were found to be met. Department's Investigation Report was also submitted to the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). A letter was received back from the legal section accepting the Department's findings.

Provincial authorities, which are the relevant competent authorities were made aware of the allegations in the BPR and were asked to be vigilant when undertaking compliance inspections, especially pre-permit inspections, where information on the species to be exported is checked for compliance with provincial and national legislation. The information was also shared with the Compliance officials working at OR Tambo International Airport where compliance inspections are done on all wildlife exports and imports to ensure adherence to the Threatened or Protected Species (TOPS) regulations as well as all the requirements for species listed on the Appendices of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

The department has developed the CITES electronic permit system which will assist to reduce the margin of error on permits. Furthermore, the department anticipates to launch this system by the end of this financial year.

- (c) The following amendments to the existing policy and regulatory framework may have the overall effect to make the South African wildlife trade more sustainable:

- The department is currently busy with a review of its biodiversity policy, and the drafting of a White paper on Biodiversity Conservation, Ecologically Sustainable Use, and Equitable Beneficiation from Ecosystem Services
- Once the White Paper has been approved, the NEMBA Bill will be taken through the relevant approval process and published for comment. This Bill, once enacted, will bring considerable improvements to the current regulatory framework, especially in respect of flexibility and the reduction of unnecessary administrative burden.
- The welfare aspects are to some extent addressed in the National Environmental Management Laws Amendment Bill [14D-2017] (soon to be [14F-2017]), which is currently in the process of being finalised by the National Council of Provinces Select Committee;
- The following pieces of subordinate legislation will be published for implementation in due course and may directly or indirectly impact wildlife trade or perceptions that may affect trade:
 - the amended Threatened or Protected Species Regulations and species list;
 - norms and standards for the management of elephants in South Africa; and
 - norms and standards for the trophy hunting of leopard in South Africa.
- Once the White Paper has been approved, the department will also publish for public comment, amendments to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora Regulations, 2010, that will aim to strengthen the provisions relating to international trade.

Regards



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MS B D CREECY, MP
MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

DATE: 26/11/2021