

Short Note

Predation on Springbok Lambs

by

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PREDATION ON SPRINGBOK LAMBS

Springbok *Antidorcas marsupialis* generally lamb during the rainy season. During 1984/85 and 1985/86 a definite lambing peak was observed. This peak lasted approximately three weeks from the end of December to middle January.

During this period lions *Panthera leo*, spotted hyaenas *Crocuta crocuta* and black-backed jackals *Canis mesomelas* were observed hunting springbok neonates. This hunting showed a high degree of opportunism.

LION

Lions were observed to capture springbok neonates on twelve occasions during the two lambing periods. All twelve hunts were of opportunistic nature. Although lions in Etosha hunt primarily at night (Stander in press), six of the twelve observed kills were in broad daylight. Lions do not conceal themselves when hunting springbok lambs, which is normally the case with other prey animals (Stander in press). Lions tended to react spontaneously upon spotting a new born springbok.

SPOTTED HYAENA

During the lambing periods spotted hyaenas (hereafter hyaenas) were found amongst springbok herds on open plains in groups of up to seven ($x=4$), mainly at night. Hyaenas were observed running up and down amongst the springbok herds. Whenever a springbok lamb was spotted or disturbed from its hiding place, it was pursued for long distances, and on one occasion for approximately two kilometers. A group of five hyaenas were observed scavenging a lamb killed by a jackal. The same group then captured two more lambs within the period of an hour, and even after that continued hunting. It would appear that many springbok neonates are saved from predation by the protective nature of the dam. Female springbok were observed to distract the hyaenas by intercepting the chase and risking their own lives. On one occasion a female springbok successfully protected her day old lamb from three adult hyaena.

BLACK-BACKED JACKAL

Large numbers of jackal were found amongst springbok herds on the plains by day and by night during the lambing periods. Five lambs approximately one day old, were observed to be killed by jackal. Although hunting occurred by day and by night, more hunts were observed at night. Up to four jackal were observed to take part in a hunt, but in general jackals hunted singularly. Springbok lambs were captured due

to total exhaustion after persistent attacks. Jackals suffocate springbok lambs, by biting the neck and then persisting with the pressure. Female springbok and sometimes the whole herd will vigorously protect their young against jackal.

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REFERENCES

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