

Journal of African Elephants

SPOTLIGHTING THE PLIGHT OF AFRICA'S ELEPHANTS



NEWS

Outrage as South Africa law change could put elephants and giraffes on dinner table

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By [JOSH SAUNDERS](#) – Daily Express



SOUTH AFRICA is deliberating over a radical review of their Meat Safety Act that wildlife activists fear could “pave the way” for elephants, rhinos, giraffes and every animal listed for human consumption.

The [South African](#) government first announced the proposed amendment to Schedule 1 of the Meat Safety Act 2000 back in February, which is yet to be implemented. [Wildlife](#) campaigners and officials fear the law change could enable animals to be [eaten](#) by humans in the future. Some speculate it may be part of a broader plan to add more creatures to the menu and to launch a rare meat industry for international markets. The proposed amendment has been put out to the public for comment, a phase of the process that is due to close at the end of June. There are additional concerns that the suggested alterations could put endangered species at greater risk, cause additional problems for anti-poachers and in a worst case scenario potentially increase the risk of [zoonotic transmissions](#).

Questions have been raised about new proposals made for The Meat Safety Act due to potentially troubling wording that appears to suggest all animals – including endangered and threatened species – could be fit for human and animal consumption.

While the act presides over the “safety of animal products” with respect to abattoirs, import and exportation, and safety schemes, government officials and wildlife campaigners fear the worst.

They are concerned by the inclusion of 33 wild species – including rhinos, giraffes, elephants and hippopotamuses – that appears to make it “legal” for animal “slaughter, consumption, import, export and sale”.

It also stated that the act “applies to all other species of animals not mentioned including birds, fish and reptiles that may be slaughtered as food for human and animal consumption”.

In a clarification, the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development wrote on May 6, that if animals “are not listed” they may be “slaughtered without any regulatory oversight in terms of meat safety”.

They wrote: “The DALRRD and competent provincial authorities can therefore not enforce the legislation on animals not listed and therefore anyone can slaughter such an animal without conformity to any standards.”



They also stated that the act “does not make any decision on which animals are to be slaughtered” but if the listed animals “are to be slaughtered” then legislation and safety practices are in place.

In February, Angela Didiza, Minister of the DALRRD, invited institutions, organisations and individuals to [comment on the proposed amendments](#) – of which 24,252 people have participated so far.

The department reiterated to website Africa Check that the decision on which animals can be slaughtered “lies outside of the mandate of the Meat Safety Act” and their aims are to “allow the regulators to have more control”.

They added: “Listing an animal in the Schedule therefore does not encourage the slaughter of those listed animals.”

Despite this, senior politicians have questions why these animals have been included if there are no future plans for them to be considered as meat that can be consumed by humans and animals.

Hannah Sharmeema Winkler, DA Deputy Shadow Minister of Environmental Affairs, Forestry and Fisheries was “deeply concerned by the unilateral decision” proposed and vowed to fight for the “protection and responsible management of wildlife”.

She wrote: “What then is Minister Didiza’s aim in adding these iconic species to Schedule-1 of the Meat Safety Act, if indeed they will never be butchered in abattoirs and their meat and body parts never sold and exported?

“In the wake of the devastating global cost to life and economy brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, mitigating the risk of future zoonotic spillover should be of the highest governmental priority.

“Minister Didiza’s attempt to legalise the consumption of wild animals is unfathomable.”

Audrey Delsink of [Humane Society Internationally](#) also decried the potential changes of animals as dangerous in the wake of the [coronavirus](#) pandemic.

Wildlife campaigners have been trying to raise awareness of the proposals to encourage South Africans to voice their opinions on the act amendment



to the government.

Ms Delsink told [Express.co.uk](https://www.express.co.uk): "I think there has been an outcry and disbelief that endangered and iconic species are included, whether they are listed as threatened or not.

"The possibility that these animals will be included for consumption by humans or animals has opened people's eyes and left many concerned."

Public consultation will conclude on June 30 and Ms Delsink is concerned about how the government will consider comments from the public and whether they will be taken into account.

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1287202/south-africa-news-animal-meat-safety-act-food-plan-law-all-wildlife-wild-animals-menu-spt>

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