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By **Citizen Reporter**
Reporter

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Task team appointed to find ‘exit options’ for captive lion breeders

The task team will engage with stakeholders to find ways of culling the industry.



Lions kept in cramped cages to form part of the country's canned lion hunting industry. Picture: Roger and Pat de la Harpe/Blood Lions

A task team formed by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) will help captive lion breeders with a strategy to exit the industry.

In a statement released by DFFE Minister Barbara Creecy, the appointment of the eight-member ministerial task team follows recommendations made by a high-level panel (HLP) on the management, breeding, hunting, trade and handling of elephant, lion, leopard and rhino.

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Recommendations

Among the recommendations adopted by government are that South Africa no longer breed captive lions, keep them in captivity, or use their derivatives commercially.

The breeding of lions in captivity was [officially banned](#) in May last year.

The HLP recommended that existing captive lions be euthanised, and policies be put in place to halt the sale of lion bones from existing stockpiles and euthanised lions, and that hunting and petting captive-bred lions, be halted.

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Task team

The task team will be chaired by Kamalasen Chetty, and includes Obeid Katumba, Dr Louise de Waal, Carla van der Vyfer, Priscilla Stiglingh, Dr Peter Caldwell, Advocate Justice Mnisi, and Dr Kelly Marnewick.

“The task team is required to undertake a process of engagement with all stakeholders in the captive lion industry, the relevant issuing authorities and vulnerable workers,” Creecy explained.

“It is also required to plan and oversee an audit of existing captive and captive-bred facilities to confirm the number of lions, their age and sex, number of stockpiles of lion parts and derivatives, the practices and used within that facility, the number, level of employment and skills of workers and potential other land use options within the biodiversity economy,” the DFFE said.

Other focus areas include developing and overseeing the initial implementation of a voluntary exit strategy from the industry for stakeholders interested in pursuing this option, identifying and endorsing potential funding mechanisms to support the voluntary exit strategy, and providing advice to Creecy and the DFFE.

The team is expected to complete its work by 30 June 2023.

ALSO READ: [Blood Lions says Creecy's task team will help bring end to captive lion industry](#)

SA's contentious industry

When organisation Blood Lions conducted a survey on the amount of captive-bred facilities in South Africa, it came to well over 450, with an estimated 10 000 to 12 000 predators housed in them.

A [study](#) conducted in 2020 found a total of 63 pathogens in wild and captive lions, 56% of which were parasites, 17.2% viruses, and 11.17% bacteria. This had the potential to affect workers who were most exposed to the lions.

The world has lost 43% of its wild lions between 1995 and 2015, a figure that has increased sharply over the past five years. Lions face mass poaching, even in protected areas.

South Africa's tourism sector stood to lose \$2.8 billion (R42 billion) in tourism revenue over the next decade due to the concerns over wildlife management and captive lion breeding, Wildlife ACT conservation ecologist Dr Simon Morgan revealed in 2020.

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Compiled by Nica Richards.