

Proceedings of a Symposium on Cheetahs as Game Ranch Animals

Edited by B L Penzhorn

1998. South African Veterinary Association Wildlife Group, Onderstepoort, South Africa, 209 pp. Price R120.00 (R140.00 elsewhere if paid by bank draft in South African rand); US\$ 40.00. ISBN 1-875088-10-5.

A symposium entitled 'Cheetahs as Game Ranch Animals' was held at Onderstepoort on 23 and 24 October 1998 and the proceedings were made available at registration through the kind sponsorship of the De Wildt Cheetah and Wildlife Centre.

As quoted in the Foreword, 'This symposium is a further contribution to the SAVA Wildlife Group's series on various wildlife species as game ranch animals. The previous symposiums in this series were on African elephant (1991), sable antelope (1992), rhinos (1994), African buffalo (1996) and lions and leopards (1997). The aim of these symposiums is to bring together relevant information on the following topics: conservation status, ecology, behaviour, capture, handling facilities, management in captivity, reintroduction into conservation areas, reproduction, parasites, diseases and treatment, for each species.

'The objective is to have a manual available for field workers, biologists, game ranch managers, veterinarians and anybody interested in these species, thereby contributing to their conservation and utilisation on a sustained basis, not only in southern Africa, but throughout the African continent and wherever these animals are held in captivity.'

I believe that the proceedings of this cheetah symposium will achieve the above objectives, as the 57 carefully selected experts contributed 27 papers of a high standard to the proceedings. The papers cover a wide variety of issues relevant to cheetah, such as status in the wild on the African continent, ecology, behaviour, husbandry, nutrition in captivity, reproduction and breeding in

captive breeding centres, relocations and introductions of wild cheetah, and their importance in conserving the species and for the tourism industry. Various diseases and veterinary issues specific to cheetahs are also covered in detail.

It is evident from the symposium that cheetah populations have rapidly dwindled in certain areas in Africa owing mainly to competition for space with man. In some north African countries the status of the cheetah is unknown. Cheetahs require large territories, especially where there is competition from other predators such as lion and hyena. There are therefore few privately-owned areas in South Africa large enough for cheetahs to co-exist naturally with other predators at viable population levels, and so most cheetahs on private land in South Africa are managed in intensive captive breeding programmes. This emphasises the need for large protected areas in southern Africa or in Africa in general, such as the 'conservancy' concept as a possible example for the long-term conservation of this species.

The proceedings contain a comprehensive 'Bibliography of the Cheetah' of 1033 references compiled by B L Penzhorn, D G A Meltzer and M S G Mülders. At the end of the book there is a useful index of key words for easy referencing to pages in the text.

This useful book is highly recommended to anybody interested in the conservation or captive management of cheetahs.

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