



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM

Thursday, 04 March 2021

**RESPONSE BY HON. POHAMBA SHIFETA, MINISTER OF
ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM TO QUESTIONS NO.
24(2021/02/18) RAISED
BY HON. DUDU MURORUA (UDF)**

I thank you for the opportunity to address this august House on the detailed questions brought forward by Hon. Murorua on issues relating to Human Wildlife Conflict.

Hon. Speaker,

Before I answer the questions posed by Hon. Murorua, I would request your permission to first give some background to this subject matter and to clarify important issues surrounding this matter.

Namibia has adopted a number of innovative approaches to achieve biodiversity conservation, economic development and improved community livelihoods.

Due to the commitment shown by Namibians, there has been a remarkable recovery and increase of wildlife populations, including key predator species and internationally threatened or endangered species such as elephant and black rhinoceros.

Despite these successes, the Government recognizes that living with wildlife often carries a cost, with increased wildlife populations and expanded ranges into communal and freehold farming areas resulting in more frequent conflicts between people and wild animals, particularly elephants and predators in many areas.

This has resulted in livestock and crop losses, damage to water installations and, in some instances, loss of human lives. There is therefore an urgent need to reduce the impacts of Human-Wildlife Conflict on our most vulnerable citizens.

We also recognize that such conflicts have always existed where people and wildlife live together and may continue to do so in the future. This means that it will not be possible to eradicate all conflict, but that conflict has to be managed in the most effective and efficient ways possible.

It has thus far been impossible for the Government to pursue a policy of direct compensation to individual farmers because of the estimated cost of damage caused by wildlife across the country, and more importantly, the administrative problems that a compensation scheme presents. It should also be recognized that people and wildlife live in an interconnected and dynamic environment, that land use patterns are changing and that wildlife distribution patterns equally are changing, as populations recover and recolonize former parts of their distribution areas.

It is for these purposes that the National Policy on Human Wildlife Conflict Management was developed in 2009 to manage human wildlife conflict in a way that recognizes the rights and development needs of local communities while at the same time recognizing the need to promote biodiversity conservation. This policy has been revised and updated in 2018 to reflect changing circumstances, new thinking regarding HWC and the results of experience in addressing HWC management issues on the ground over the past years.

That being said, Hon. Speaker, allow me to respond in brief to the specific questions raised by Hon Murorua.

Question 1

How are the directly affected members of the Namibia society in both the communal and commercial farming sectors going to benefit from the sale of these elephants?

Answer:

The areas in which the elephants will be captured have been identified as critical hotspots with regard to Human Wildlife Conflict and these areas will see a definite reduction in elephant incursions that normally result in damages to water infrastructure equipment, buildings, fences, cattle posts and the destruction of crops.

Money generated from the sale of these elephants will be paid over to the Game Products Trust Fund (GPTF). This money would then be available through the Human Wildlife Conflict Self Reliance Scheme in order to offset for loss of life (funeral expenses and related costs), injuries to persons, livestock losses and crop damages caused by wild animals.

The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism has and will continue to support, through revenue generated from the sale of these elephants, provide affected farmers with the necessary relief in replacing and rehabilitating damaged infrastructure.

Additionally, the Ministry will continue to provide new infrastructure such as water tanks, construct protection walls, drilling and equipping new bore holes

and provide grain storage facilities in order to mitigate Human Wildlife Conflict (HWC) through the sale of these elephants.

Question 2

Is your Ministry ever doing assessments of damages made by elephants and the market related financial costs of such damages on infrastructure?

Answer:

Yes, the MEFT has procedures in place when investigations are conducted on Human Wildlife Conflict incidents. Staff conduct assessments of the damages and advise farmers on the required mitigation measures to be implemented.

It important to mention that the current Revised National Policy on Human Wildlife Conflict Management does not cover any related infrastructure damage caused by wild animals. However, the Ministry has in the past replaced and rehabilitated damaged infrastructure depending on funds availability.

Question 3

What is the total collective value in monetary terms of the damages done by elephants on infrastructure in both communal and commercial areas outside National Parks for the current financial year that is end next month?

Answer:

As mentioned, the Policy at this stage does not cater for infrastructure damage and very little information is available because such infrastructure damaged cannot be replaced by the Ministry. However, the Ministry will further explore possibilities for payment of damages to properties such as fences, water infrastructure, homesteads and other infrastructure damages caused by wild animals. This is highly dependent on the availability of funds.

Question 4

Your Ministry is paying to communal farmers as compensation N\$3000.00 for a cow and N\$500.00 for a goat to those communal farmers who loose livestock due to HWC. However, the reality on the ground is that large stock goes for ±N\$9000.00 and small stock for N\$1200.00, meaning that the poor communal farmers are not able to restock their livestock so as to maintain the living standard that they were having which means that there is no upliftment of the poor community members.

Answer:

It must be taken into account that it is not Government Policy to provide compensation to farmers for losses due to wild animals. Furthermore, compensation schemes implemented elsewhere have proved to be very problematic and open to abuse. There is a need to find other means to offset the losses caused by wildlife and at the same time build the self-reliance of farmers. However, there is a moral obligation by Government to assist farmers who incur losses as a result of wild animals. Government through the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism therefore has no compensation scheme for damages caused by wild animals. What is there, is the Human Wildlife Conflict Self Reliance Scheme, basically an offset system and not a compensation policy.

The Ministry has since 2018 adjusted the amounts (N\$) as follows:

	Previous amount	Current amount
Cattle (cow or bull)	1500.00	3000.00
Goat	200.00	500.00
Sheep	250.00	700.00
Horse	500.00	800.00
Donkey	250.00	500.00
Pig	250.00	700.00

The current Policy has also been updated to include loss of life (funeral expenses and related costs) to the amount of N\$100 000.00 and injuries that include injury with no loss of body part N\$10 000.00, injury with loss of body part N\$30 000.00 and disability to the amount of N\$50 000.00.

The Policy also makes provision for the Minister to adjust the amount for payment from time to time as may be deemed appropriate, in consultation with relevant stakeholders. This is also highly dependent on the availability of funds.

Question 5

Now, therefore Minister, I would like you to appraise this August House and the nation at large whether you could submit to Cabinet for a provision that the livestock losses that the communal farmers are suffering be compensated at a one on one basis from the government breeding station.

Answer:

This matter will have to be discussed with the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform in order to investigate the possibility of introducing a scheme of such magnitude. However, I would like to bring it under the attention of this August House that about 1350 head of livestock (including cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys and horses) were killed by predators during 2020 in conservancies and on non-conservancy areas on State Land and Resettlement farms. It is therefore doubtful that Government breeding stations would be able to sustain such numbers of livestock as compensation on a one on one basis.

I thank you all.