**Human-Predator Conflict on Game Farms in Botswana: How is Coexistence Possible?**

Translocated ‘problem’ cheetahs were fitted with GPS satellite collars to track their survival and movements post release. (in association with Cheetah Conservation Botswana)

Leopard passing a ‘swing gate’; one of the methods game ranchers can use to prevent predators from entering their game ranch. The photo was taken with a motion camera courtesy of Cheetah Conservation Botswana.

Predators and predation of livestock and stocked game are an emotive and continuous problem for farmers in Botswana. Botswana is one of the core areas for predator populations in Southern Africa, but large predators are often in conflict with livestock farmers and with the relatively new and developing game ranching industry. The game ranchers’ livelihood the stocked game, are the predator’s natural prey, therefore depredation can be substantial and difficult to prevent.

The introduction of the game ranching policy in Botswana in 2002 which allowed private ownership of game, has enabled the industry to grow from 17 ranches in 1999 to currently over 100 registered ranches. However, despite the potential benefits to vegetation and game populations, the relationship between game ranches and free ranging large predators is relatively unstudied.

Traditionally predators have been considered ‘vermin’ and up until the 1960’s attempts were made to eliminate them in national parks and reserves in order to protect the game. It is unknown to what extent this conflict still exists and with the rapid increase in the number of game ranches in Botswana there is an urgent need to mitigate conflict and encourage coexistence between game ranchers and large predators.

This project will conduct interviews with ranchers from around Botswana to discuss the extent and causes of conflict between commercial farmers and predators and the potential solutions to enable co-existence.

It is hoped the results will be incorporated into the national and regional predator management policies and will be used to develop and implement predator-friendly solutions to conflict on commercial farmland.

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For further information please contact **lboast@yahoo.co.uk**