

## NHSA POSITION ON THE HUNT

### NHSA Position Paper: NHSA ON THE MAIN ASPECTS OF THE HUNT

#### 1. THE HUNT

Since the term, **hunting**, has in uninformed short sightedness come to generally denote only the different actions to dispatch hunted quarry (i.e. that micro-second of pulling a trigger or of letting an arrow fly), NHSA prefers to use the term, **the Hunt**.

The NHSA understands the term, *the Hunt*, to represent the totality of all activities, actions, and values attached to hunting.

The term thus encompasses, everything from the necessary skills in firearm handling, firearm safety and accuracy; to selection of specific calibres for specific species; to methods of hunting; to intricate knowledge of the ecology of huntable species; to the values attached to how, where, when and why species are harvested; right up to the manner in which products of harvested species are utilised (i.e. skinning, carcass preparation, and preparation of game meat [feathered and furred]).

The term also denotes the milieu within which *the Hunt* takes place; the heritage attached to and proposed by the totality of the activity, as well as the values attached to the manner in which the activity is conducted.

In this respect one can thus easily concur with the world renowned philosopher, Jose Ortega y Gasset when he writes: "...To the hunter the death of the game is not what interests him; that is not his purpose. What interests him is everything that he had to do to achieve that death -- that is, the hunt. Therefore what was before only a means to an end is now an end in itself (thus he means the hunt has become the focus and not the death of an animal). Death is essential because without it there is no authentic hunting: the killing of the animal is the natural end of the hunt and that goal of hunting itself, not of the hunter. The hunter seeks this death because it is no less than the sign of reality for the whole hunting process. . . . one does not hunt in order to kill; on the contrary, one kills in order to have hunted...".

In the above context, and as it is meant in the stating of a position in this document, the term, **The Hunt**, thus carries a semantic which goes far beyond the act of pulling a trigger or of releasing an arrow to despatch a quarry for harvest.

#### 2. DEPARTURE

The NHSA's stance on **the Hunt** is embedded in its **Hunters' Code**. This Code serves as a continuous confirmation of the NHSA's conservation face as defined by its adherence to the principle of **conservation through sustainable use**. This principle is founded upon four core values, namely:

- **Respect for life:** for the harvested species and in execution of all related activities related to the Hunt;
- **Respect for nature:** for the totality of nature including harvested species' habitat and its ability to maintain and increase its numbers;
- **Respect for the Law:** for an adherence to the stipulations of relevant Acts, and all relevant Proclamations and Ordinances;
- **Respect for fellow hunters:** for the national and international hunting fraternity, with inclusion of all landowners upon who's land *the Hunt* takes place, and for their staff and that which they represent.

The NHSA's position on *the Hunt* is further strictly founded upon the internationally accepted principles of conservation through sustainable use as these are, *inter alia*, explained by the IUCN (*International Union for Conservation*) and by UNEP (*UN Environmental Programme*) in the following long standing and internationally recognised sets of documentation, namely:

- **World Conservation Strategy (IUCN 1980)** - acknowledgment of the direct link between sustainable use and sustainable development;
- **Our Common Future (UNEP 1987)** - report of the World Commission on Environment and Development;- "...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs";
- **Caring for the Earth (IUCN 1991)** - strategy for sustainable living through sustainable use;
- **Convention on Biological Diversity (UNEP 1992)** - "...the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources, including appropriate access, appropriate transfer of relevant technologies, and appropriate funding to implement these principles".

It is thus highly significant to take note of the IUCN's formal recognition that in Southern Africa, hunting is a major contributor to biodiversity conservation through sustainable use of renewable natural resources (IUCN; World Conservation Congress; Bangkok, Thailand, 2004).

The NHSA's founding principles on *the Hunt* is thus, implicitly and explicitly, clearly in line with an international conservation ethic promoted by the IUCN and by UNEP, which is as such, in turn, accepted and promoted by the international conservation community.

## 2.1 Undertaking

Against the above, the NHSA will, in the ultimate acknowledgement of its responsibility to maintain and further the international heritage of hunting in its most responsible and accountable form, endeavour to maintain a milieu within which it's members can execute their favoured pastime of responsible hunting as their heritage has given them the right to do.

## 3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The NHSA will evaluate its position towards all aspects implied by *the Hunt*, as well as all issues related thereto (present and future), against the following seven guiding principles (criteria):

Adherence to, and promotion of a principle of **"ethical hunting"** (see explanation below) delimited as a set of value-based criteria and actions contained in the NHSA's Hunters' Code, to which all members are expected to ascribe to in their execution of all aspects related to *the Hunt*;

Adherence to, and promotion of **an applicable and realistic principle of being fair in the chase** evaluated against the shared values of respect for life and for nature;

Adherence to, and promotion of a principle of **striving for the quick, most efficient and humane dispatch of harvested species** evaluated against the shared values of respect for life and for nature;

Adherence to, and promotion of a principle that **harvested off-take shall be utilised without wastage**;

Adherence to, and promotion of a focus on achieving **ecologically sustainable use** of renewable natural resources against a background of maintenance of **ecologically viable populations of indigenous species and the diversity of species' habitat**;

Adherence to all sets of **relevant legal requirements** related to *the Hunt* as prescribed on all levels of government, with subscription by all members to **appropriate disciplinary measures** if these are proven to have been disrespected or transgressed, and;

Adherence to, and promotion of **a hunting ethic** through members' acknowledgment of the fact that they act with **accountable responsibility as ambassadors in name of the national and international hunting fraternity** whenever they partake in, or execute *the Hunt*.

#### 4. SPECIFIC CONCEPTS & ISSUES RELATED TO THE HUNT

The NHSA upholds the following positions on the following concepts and issues related to *the Hunt*:

##### 4.1 Ethical hunting

The NHSA ascribes to the statement of Aldo Leopold, the father of wildlife management, namely that “...ethical behaviour is doing the right thing when no one else is watching - even when doing the wrong thing is legal...”.

However, the NHSA upholds the position that ethics are driven by culturally determined values, and that in a multi-cultural society such as is found in South Africa, no one set of ethics of one culture group can take preference over the ethics of another cultural group (or of one religious group over that of the another religious group).

Accordingly, the NHSA has compiled its Hunters’ Code, as a set of shared values, which describes the *Ethics of the Hunt* the NHSA ascribes to, and to which members of this NHSA are expected to ascribe to when conducting *the Hunt*. Hence there can be no misunderstanding or misinterpretation regarding the NHSA’s stance on “Ethics of the Hunt”, as the Hunters’ Code is not composed within the confines of only one culturally determined, or one religiously determined value system (i.e. the ethics promoted and adhered to by an Euro-American world and life view).

Irrespective of any code, however, there are two aspects of ethics which transcend any cultural adherence, namely:

- the responsibility of the hunter to conduct *the Hunt* only within the confines of the law (that which is legal)
- the responsibility of the hunter to conduct *the Hunt* only with hunting firearms of such power and calibre which are capable of putting down game animals per weight and size relevant to firearm calibre at practical ranges within the shooting ability of the hunter, in a quick, humane and efficient manner (one-shot), and;
- the responsibility of the hunter to conduct *the Hunt* with fairness and with due regard to his/her own physical capabilities, and with honest recognition of his/her limitations and responsibilities towards his/her hunting companions or hunting assistants.

It has also become an open discussion if the term, ethical hunting, should for the reasons described above, not be replaced by the term, Legal Hunting - as this leaves no option for different

interpretations - thus a strict adherence to the legal requirements of *the Hunt*.

## **4.2 Sustainable use**

The concept is understood to describe the usage (consumption) of renewable natural resources in such a manner that these resources will be afforded time to regenerate themselves up to the levels which will ideally be found in healthy ecosystems. The harvest should thus be repeatable on an annual basis without detriment to the population (be that animal or plant). Sustainable use thus also denotes the responsibility of humans in the management of off-take of renewable natural resources in an accountable manner.

Related concepts are understood to mean the following:

### **4.2.1 Natural resource:**

All animate and inanimate resources found in nature.

### **4.2.2 Renewable natural resource:**

All natural resources which can be regenerated, either by itself through procreation (i.e. mammals, fish, insect and plants), or by natural processes (i.e. water [rain] and soil [weathering of rock formations]).

### **4.2.3 Non-renewable natural resources:**

Natural resources which cannot renew itself, like coal, oil, earth gas, and which can be over-exploited by humans to the extent where these resources will eventually be totally depleted.

### **4.2.4 Sustainable off-take (harvest)**

Any piece of land has an ability to sustain a number of different species over a period of time which includes dry and wet spells. This ability is referred to as wildlife stocking densities (also carrying capacity, and / or grazing capacity) when reference is made to the number of animals (browsers and grazers) such a piece of land can support year on year.

Because all private and government properties on which wildlife is kept in this country are fenced, the area into which growing wildlife populations can extend onto, is limited to the borders of such properties. This means that wildlife owners have to either sell or take-off surplus animals through harvesting in order to ascertain the ecological sustainability of the habitat on such a piece of land or property.

Sustainable off-take thus denotes a situation where surplus individuals of species are harvested in order to maintain the ecological integrity (sustainable habitat management) of the property upon which wildlife is kept (i.e. game ranch or mixed cattle and game farm or mixed sheep and game farm), so that the species of animals and plants on such property can maintain natural growth and maintain ecological viable populations.

#### **4.4 Preservation (of nature and its resources)**

This term was coined by the 1916 Congressional Act in the USA, which founded the National Parks Service in that country, with its main function "*...the preservation of native animal life...*". This focus on the human management of natural processes was until the middle of the 1900s the concept under which the interaction between humans and nature was managed.

In short this meant that all natural processes had to be managed in the context of preservation with no human interference and / or use. Thus to keep and maintain in a pristine state or to try and re-establish the pristine state of nature.

#### **4.5 Conservation (of nature and its resources)**

Due to realities of the majority of the world's population being dependant on the use of renewable natural resources in order to survive, the principle of managing nature for the sake of trying to maintain it in its pristine state, came under severe pressure. At the same time the cost of management of nature in pristine form just became too high. The concept, conservation, then started to denote wise use of renewable natural resources, and introduced a more realistic manner of managing the interaction of humans and the natural environment (in both developed and developing countries).

In this context conservation becomes the action of managing natural resources in such a manner that they benefit both man and the natural environment, as an ethic of resource use, allocation, and protection. With the primary focus on maintaining the health of the natural world; its wildlife, fisheries, habitats and biological diversity (implicitly this denotes sustainable use).

#### **4.6 Putt-and-take**

The NHSA does not support the practice of buying in furred or feathered game species onto a property for the mere sake of having such animals immediately harvested.

The NHSA will, if necessary, comment and/or act upon any such practice which cannot be positively evaluated against the seven guiding principles stated above.

## 4.7 Canned hunting

Canned hunting is understood to mean; (a) the harvesting of an animal on a small and restricted section of land, which does not afford the animal adequate opportunity to successfully escape its pursuer(s) or; (b) when the animal is for whatever reason, under the influence of one or other tranquillising substance.

### 4.7.1 Tranquillising substance

The NHSA is absolutely opposed to, and condemns in the strongest possible terms, the harvesting of an animal when such an animal is under the influence of one or other tranquillising substance, albeit how minute. This practice violates all of the criteria against which the NHSA describes its position on *the Hunt*, and in our minds could verge on criminal conduct.

### 4.7.2 Size of Hunting Area

Due to South Africa's historic reality of properties being fenced as indication of ownership of same, and for the protection of huntable game species since approximately 1960, the impression is wrongfully created among the uninformed that any hunt taking place on any fenced property amounts to canned hunting, since the animal is perceived not to be given fair opportunity to successfully flee its pursuer(s). For this reason, *the Hunt* is perceived to take place under circumstances which "...gives the hunter an improper advantage over such animal ...".

The NHSA's position in this regard is that it advocates harvesting on fenced properties of approximately 400ha (4km<sup>2</sup>), as the hunter cannot obtain an unfair advantage on such a piece of land while hunting on foot. The area constitutes the smallest area in which *the Hunt* can be conducted while adhering to the principle of fair chase, as the hunted animal has more than a fair chance to escape the hunter.

It is also the smallest possible area for game to establish territories which male animals can naturally defend.

In all fairness, the question, which proponents of not hunting on fenced game ranches have not been able to answer, is: how is *the Hunt* conducted differently on a 100,000ha hunting area as opposed to *the Hunt* being conducted on a 1,000ha fenced game ranch?

### 4.7.3 Hunting of carnivores

Despite the legal framework for the hunting of carnivores not being equal in its management in all provinces in this country, the prevailing provincial legislation in this regard has to be supported as the minimum for the harvest of these animals.

The practice where especially lion are let loose in small enclosures (<500ha) for "hunters" to hunt same, is condemned in the strongest possible terms, as this act is nothing more than killing for the sake of killing and cannot, ever, be described as part of *the Hunt*. It verges on criminal conduct and deserves the harshest possible punishment under animal welfare legislation.

However, the legal hunting of ranch bred lions is supported as the legal prescripts which have to be followed are strict and makes for a very dangerous hunt on foot on at least 1,000ha.

What proponents against the hunting of ranches lion cannot answer, is the question: what is different from hunting lion on a 1,000ha fenced game ranch than hunting eland or kudu on the same sized land?

#### **4.8 Culling**

The act of intensive culling of excess numbers of game-on-game ranches is not perceived to constitute hunting, and is thus not understood to form part of *the Hunt*.

#### **4.9 "Illegal hunting"**

There is no such thing as illegal hunting. The NHSA upholds the position that hunting is inherently a legal activity. There can accordingly be no activity which can be described as illegal hunting. The killing of wild animals outside the law, in any manner with whatever means and under whatsoever guise, is illegal and constitutes game theft (poaching), and should be acted against accordingly.

#### **4.10 Humane dispatch**

The fastest and most effective manner in which to dispatch of a designated harvested species within the context of a one-shot-kill with the correct calibre of firearm or correctly weighted bow and arrow (or cross bow), while avoiding any form of cruelty to any animal, and causing as little as possible distress to other animals in the vicinity of the harvested animal. While taking cognizance of the changing limitations of different individuals' practical ability to humanely kill within a said distance from hunter to animal.

#### **4.11 Damage causing animal(s)**

The NHSA understands the concept to mean that an individual animal or number of animals of a specific species, under specific circumstances is (are), in the interaction with human activity, proven to:

- cause losses to stock or to other wild specimens;
- cause excessive damage to cultivated trees, crops, natural flora or other property;
- present a threat to human life; or
- is present in such numbers that agricultural produce, or grazing is materially depleted.

The NHSA upholds the position that the harvest of such an animal, or animals, must be conducted within the existing legal framework, and with the utmost of care and responsibility, and; that the species so harvested, must at all times be put to good use.

The NHSA understands that “culling”, “cropping”, “trapping”, “capture” and vermin control are necessary parts of game management. However these should be conducted with consideration and within the confines of the humane treatment of the wildlife involved (thus in the context of animal welfare).

The NHSA does not understand any activity related to the control of damage causing animals as forming part of *the Hunt*.

#### **4.12 Hunting trophy**

This concept is understood to mean any horn, ivory, tooth, tusk, claw, hoof, hide, skin, hair, feather, egg or readily recognizable part or derivative of a harvested animal, whether processed or not, and which is kept as a memento of a hunt.

The NHSA holds the position that the harvested animal from which such a trophy derives, must in all instances where the animal is killed, be put to good use, and the display of any such trophy should reflect respect for the animal from which the trophy is derived.

#### **4.13 Trophy hunting**

To the NHSA, trophy hunting signifies the harvest of any species for the purpose of retaining the whole mounted animal, or a part of such a wild animal as token or as memento of a hunt.

The NHSA does not support the practice of taking only, for instance, the set of horns of such a harvested animal for the sake of a trophy, while leaving the carcass in the veldt.

The NHSA further advocates the taking of the trophies of animals which are over (past) their reproductive age as these animals, in most instances, represent the largest trophy of the species, or at the least presents the hunter with a representative trophy.

The taking of trophies of dominant breeding herd males of all huntable species, is actively discouraged.

NHSA supports the German concept of the "future buck" - the one still breeding but will be a valuable representative trophy of his species in future (after his prime)

#### **4.14 Trophy register**

NHSA supports the principles adhered to by Rowland Ward (<http://www.rowlandward.com>). The internationally accepted hunting trophy register of Rowland Ward, which is updated annually through the measuring of sets of horns or of skulls, or of tusks and ivory of harvested species by different Rowland Ward attached trophy measurers, is not intended to establish records in the sense of competition of biggest or best, nor to glorify the hunter. Competition in this context is in direct conflict with the NHSA's stance on respect for life.

The system of maintaining such a database (a so-called set of records) of measurements so submitted to Rowland Ward, celebrates the animal, no matter whether the trophy was picked up in the veldt, and does not distinguish between trophies of harvested species or of those deriving from animals which had died of natural causes, or were killed by predators.

#### **4.15 Breeding of rare and high value species**

The breeding of high profile rare and endangered species such as Rhino, disease free Buffalo, Sable, Roan, Cheetah, and of African Wild Dog, due to their proven demise in the wild, is positively supported, with the understanding that such activities will always be conducted with the utmost of responsibility and accountability.

#### **4.16 Gamebirds**

In the context of its stance on fair chase, the NHSA takes the stance that all gamebird hunting should be conducted on the wing (in flight) with the appropriate shot-size of shotgun ammunition.

Any deviation from hunting gamebirds on the wing, will be actively denounced and discouraged (excluding instances where for instance, spur-winged geese are harvested over long distances with i.e. a .222 Rem small calibre rifle). In the same manner the hunting of gamebirds outside of season

and without the hunter(s) having acquired the appropriate provincial licences will be actively denounced and acted upon if proven to be true.

The practice of using pigeon shoots as practice for shotgunning, as are the presentation of pigeon or guineafowl hunts for purposes of competition in size of bag, are condemned in the strongest possible terms. The NHSA will not shy away from openly denouncing such activities, which with adequate proof, comes to its attention, and will also not shy away from bringing such activities under the attention of the appropriate authorities.

The NHSA acknowledges the inappropriate and severe haphazard manner in which gamebird hunting is managed in the different provinces of this country, but maintains the position that this should in no manner prove adequate reason for not adhering to hunting seasons or to bag limits as stipulated per provincial Gazette on an annual basis. Nor for partaking in wingshooting without the necessary licences being obtained annually.

#### **4.17 Hounding and use of bird-dogs**

The NHSA supports the use of hunting hounds where such packs of hounds are managed with strict discipline in the hunt, and where such hounds are used only to flush and spoor game (thus the activity known as hounding).

In the same instance, the NHSA supports the use of bird-dogs in wingshooting where such dogs have been adequately trained and are utilised responsibly to hunt, point and retrieve gamebirds.

The NHSA denounces in the strongest possible terms the use of single dogs, or of packs of dogs, to kill game.

#### **4.18 Trade in wildlife**

The NHSA supports the sustainable, responsible and accountable national and international trade in wildlife in all its forms, as this has been proven to be the mainstay of conservation of large numbers of game, and of biodiversity through habitat conservation all over the world. The fact that wildlife is given a value other than being nice to look at, is the most important aspect contributing to the growth of game numbers in this country, in Europe, and in the USA.

The trade in wildlife has also made significant, considerable, and proven contributions towards an adherence to the concept of conservation through sustainable use.

#### **4.19 The Regulatory environment**

The NHSA expresses its deepest concern with the unevenness and uncoordinated governmental management of all facets of conservation, on all aspects related to *the Hunt* and of all aspects related to private wildlife management on national level, but specifically on the provincial level in South Africa.

The NHSA supports the responsible and appropriate Regulatory environment which is in the mandate of government to create and manage. The NHSA further supports the principle of government's responsibility in policing the implementation of the various conservation and hunting related legal prescripts in existence in South Africa which reflects the highest quality of regulatory conservation management on an international scale (at least in words on paper).

However, it is also the NHSA's contention that the severity of lack of service delivery on provincial level regarding all aspects of issuing of wildlife and hunt related permits and licences, requires critical attention to rectify. The NHSA's representatives will continue to lobby this fact at each and every appropriate occasion.

The NHSA will actively support all sincere and appropriate attempts to formulate realistic and implementable regulations regarding *the Hunt* in this country, as well as of the so-called TOPS Regulations.

The NHSA will, therefore, continue to expect of its members to adhere to, and comply with any stipulation of any law, ordinance, or proclamation in force, irrespective of whether these are perceived to be realistically feasible and implementable, or not. It is the NHSA's weighed view that at least the following minimum aspects should be reflected in any set of Regulations (national and provincial) that might be drafted to appropriately regulate *the Hunt*.

- Sustainable utilisation of nature and renewable natural resources is to be the overarching principle against which all Regulations are to be drafted in order to ensure that the harvest remains ecologically sustainable;
- Viable populations of indigenous wildlife should be maintained and exotic invasive species should be rigorously controlled, with maintenance of habitat being the priority;
- Economic incentives to encourage participation in conservation on privately owned land with an emphasis on the encouragement of cooperation between land owners, hunters, and local communities in management of harvestable species, as well as their habitats, and;

- Uniformity in wildlife related Regulations and their implementation and policing across all 9 provinces of this country.