

Is This the Future of Cape Buffalo Hunting?

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Wildlife Game

Harry looked at the buffalo through the glasses. "There's a damned good bull in that herd," he said. "Better than the one you've got by six inches at least. I'd think we'd best go and collect him." I didn't say anything... I don't know what there is about buffalo that frightens me so. Lions and leopards and rhinos excite me but don't frighten me. But that buff is so big and mean and ugly and hard to stop, and vindictive and cruel and surly and ornery. He looks like he hates you personally. He looks like you owe him money. He looks like he is hunting you. I had looked at a couple of thousand of him by now, at close ranges, and I had killed one of him, and I was scarer than ever. He makes me sick in the stomach, and he makes my hands sweat, and he dries out my throat and my lips.

All hunters know this passage from Robert Ruark's *Horn of the Hunter*. It describes better than anything else why we hunt buffalo and cannot give it up, even if charged or, on occasion, worse.

Artificial Breeding of Buffaloes on the Increase.

What a difference is Ruark's description compared with the "hunting adventure" advertorial in *AHG* 17.1 that explains buffalo breeding projects for future "hunters." To sum up the philosophy and business policy of the South African company behind this: *"Buffaloes appear to be at the top of the worldwide list of game species according to market research. And hunters expect big trophies as their most important consideration. In the wild it is, however, not so easy to find, hunt and kill a buffalo with a real big trophy on his head. Subsequently, there is a gap in the market for bigger horn lengths of 50"+. The XXX company has decided to try and fill this gap."*

Similar advertisements and auction results clearly demonstrate that some South African breeders and game ranchers have started to produce bulls with horns that regularly measure 45+ inches. Such lengths have always been difficult to find in wild Cape buffaloes. And so all successful methods based on the breeding of cattle and other livestock, including the latest technologies, are now being applied. We see photos of breeding bulls that have sold for US\$100,000 at auction; some of their offspring already have 42-inch horns at age three.

Breeding such buffaloes does not serve any conservation purpose. Rather, it is producing animals that will be killed solely because they possess large horns. The process reduces a formerly wild animal to a domesticated animal and brings with it many dangers for biological diversity – and for the future of our beloved sport hunting.



The CIC opposes the artificial manipulation of wildlife, including the enhancement or alteration of a species' genetic characteristics, including pelage color, body size, and horn or antler size, through intentional crossbreeding or use of domestic livestock breeding methods.

Pecunia non olet?

A friend of mine in the South African wildlife breeders industry stated: "What do you want to do? There's a market demand for such bred buffs. And we breeders and

game ranchers just follow the demand." Well, he is right insofar that money does not stink. "*Pecunia non olet*," said Emperor Vespasian after imposing a urine tax. However, there are demands, like that for

child pornography or heroin, which must not be satisfied, according to law or the general consent of society.

Accordingly, we must either have the artificial manipulation of wildlife banned by law or, if that is not possible, be outlawed by ethical hunters who follow the rules of fair chase. We must face the fact that the manipulation of formerly wild animals is increasing in many parts of the world; and that many people who call themselves hunters are losing their natural feeling that killing such animals has nothing to do with hunting, especially when it happens within a confined area, which is normally the case.

CIC Resolution Against Commercial Breeding of Formerly Wild Animals for "Hunting" Purposes.

The International Council for Game and Wildlife Management (CIC), which is actively engaged in the conservation of our biological diversity, has recently repeated its condemnation of such malpractices. It has confirmed its support for fair-chase hunting and urged all hunters and hunting associations to oppose such unethical, manipulative practices.

In its new Resolution on *Wildlife and Commercially-Bred Formerly Wild Animals*, the CIC expressed its concern that such exploitation and manipulation of formerly wild animals, if uncontrolled, may have detrimental effects on biodiversity and unwanted consequences for the genetic integrity of animals that live in the wild. In particular the following is feared:



Ranch-bred Cape buffalo with horn spreads over 41 inches are now being sold to meet the demands of the sporting trophy hunting industry, fetching prices over R125,000.

- uncontrollable impacts on natural evolutionary processes, including changes in behaviour, breeding patterns and reproductive cycles;
 - genetic pollution of naturally occurring taxa;
 - loss or irreversible alteration of evolutionary significant local wildlife populations;
 - uncontrollable expansion of exotic wildlife species outside their natural habitats;
 - elevated risk of zoonotic disease outbreaks;
 - unpredictable impacts on habitats and ecosystems.
3. Excludes all “trophies” of animals so manipulated from being scored with the copyrighted CIC Trophy Evaluation Methods;
 4. Encourages all governments to develop enforceable policies and establish relevant guidelines in their national wildlife conservation models;
 5. Offers assistance to national governmental agencies to develop policies and establish guidelines;
 6. Urges all CIC members to abstain from manipulated animals;
 7. Invites all national and international hunting organizations and associations to adopt similar guidelines and policies.

The CIC Council on 8 November 2011, therefore:

1. Expressed its full commitment to further develop and promote principles, criteria and indicators for sustainable fair-chase hunting;
2. Opposed artificial and unnatural manipulations of wildlife, including the enhancement or alteration of a species’ genetic characteristics (e.g. pelage colour, body size, horn or antler size) in particular through
 - (a) the intentional crossbreeding of species, subspecies, or evolutionary significant local phenotypes;
 - (b) the use of domestic livestock breeding methods, like flow cytometry or genetic testing, germplasm and semen production or trading, artificial insemination, embryo transfer, castration, growth hormone treatments, controlled or unnatural breeding programs, cloning.

The advertorial ends by stating: “*Ethical hunting should be promoted and practiced at all costs.*” I agree. However, killing buffalo and other wildlife that has been artificially manipulated with the objective of producing big trophies is unethical.

Such practices, and the killing of such animals by people who pretend that this is hunting, will ruin the reputation of sport trophy hunting in the short run and destroy fair-chase hunting in the long run. Ruark and many renowned big-game hunters of the past would turn over in their graves if they could see how their successors have turned the *mbogo* of Africa’s savannas and miombo forests into some kind of Frankenstein creature.

For full text of CIC Resolution see: http://www.cic-wildlife.org/uploads/media/Rec_on_Wildlife_manipulation_EN.pdf