

INVERDOORN CHEETAH CONSERVATION



CONSERVATION PROGRAMME & COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT

Only 7 500 **cheetahs** remain worldwide and their numbers continue to decrease.
The species is currently listed as vulnerable.

**EXTINCTION
IS NOT AN OPTION**

BACKGROUND

Our vision is to play a key role in global cheetah conservation to ensure the survival and sustainability of the species in the wild.



The Inverdoorn Cheetah Conservation programme is based at the Inverdoorn Private Game Reserve - two and a half hours drive from Cape Town. The project was founded in 2001 and have since become a core function within Inverdoorn's Big 5 safari tourism operation - allowing guest interaction with the animals throughout the safari experience.

Inverdoorn is an upmarket Big 5 safari reserve in the Tankwa Karoo - near Sutherland. The lodge sits on a the vast expanse of 10 000 hectare flat Karoo veld. The reserve have built a solid tourism reputation locally and internally and the original cheetah rehabilitation programme has become synonymous with its business model.

The programme was originally positioned to rehabilitate and connect with cheetahs. Since inception, the programme released seven cheetahs - two of which have been released onto the main Inverdoorn game reserve. Their independent living unfortunately made them kill considerable amounts of wildlife indiscriminately. These individuals died at Inverdoorn due to old age.

Since August 2018, The Aquila Collection has taken over the ownership of Inverdoorn Private game Reserve with very little background information on the programme, together with little facts of the success of these cheetahs. Searl Derman, owner of The Aquila Collection - immediately announced an investigation into the programme - together with NO animal interaction policy updates, effective immediately.

ETHICS COMMITTEE

Over the last 20 years, Aquila Private Game Reserve has won the most prestigious internationally acclaimed awards for its ethics - based on social upliftment, sustainable development and most importantly, conservation. Just days after taking ownership of Inverdoorn Private Game Reserve, Searl Derman made a bold industry announcement that a strict “no touch” policy was implemented at Inverdoorn Private Game Reserve.

Faced with the concern that the existing cheetah programme might be seen as unethical with possible animal welfare and brand implications, it was decided to embark on a mission to get industry and conservation partners together to establish an ethics committee to look into the programme, reconsider the mission statement, and overlook future cheetah conservation efforts to ensure and establish an honest and honourable global conservation project.

This independent committee was established on the 4th and 5th of September 2018, and consists of the following amicable persons:

- **Chris Mercer** - wildlife activist and founder of the Campaign Against Canned Hunting (CACH)
- **Toni Brockhoven** - chairperson of Beauty Without Cruelty; defending animal rights
- **Richard Pierce** - wildlife documentary author and activist



CURRENT PROGRAMME



REHABILITATION PREPARATION

Rehabilitation camps are set up in such a way to allow cheetahs that show interest in one another to interact in a more natural manner. This has subsequently led to 3 successful litters born here at Inverdoorn, a huge achievement for any reserve, as breeding in captivity is extremely difficult.

CHEETAH DIET

The cheetahs get a varied diet, containing for example full feathered birds, red meat, game meat & rabbit. The diet and exercise of cheetahs are extremely important and it's something we greatly prioritise for their well being.



FAST DAYS & ENRICHMENT

The programme includes one fast day per week. These days are important as they mimic the natural hunting behaviour of the cheetah. The areas are also positioned for optimal natural enrichment which include high vantage points, trees for shade, exercise and scratching, water holes and other items such as skins, bones and hooves.



DEHUMANISATION FOR FINAL RELEASE

Stimuli such as view of prey, running and mating behaviours are crucial at the final stages when individuals are ready for release. Three months before their release, only full body diets are given, fast days are increased, and human contact restricted.

GUEST CHEETAH EXPERIENCE

Since inception and up until the recent new ownership of Inverdoorn Private Game Reserve, the cheetah conservation programme monetized the cheetah experience. These activities included various forms of interaction and add-on sales to Big 5 safaris.

These add-on sale income streams have been removed from the Inverdoorn business model and will be replaced with activities that place the interest of the cheetah as priority.

The cheetah conservation programme - within its new format - will provide be an auxiliary service and project to Inverdoorn and present value-adds to guests on safari.

Staying true to its core focus to rehabilitate and release cheetahs into natural environments in order to prevent the especie from extinction, these conservation focused guest activities could include:

- Viewing of the cheetah runs from elevated zero impact position
- Educational tour from a distance or from a game viewing vehicle
- Rehabilitation centre tour
- Research and tracking presentations
- Additional safari experience within a new release sight within Inverdoorn
- All activities will have NO touching or interaction



COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

The initial committee inspection of the Inverdoorn Cheetah Conservation project confirmed 15 animals in captivity - cared for by experienced and dedicated handlers. The animals have excellent quality of life which ensure they remain in good condition.

As part of the rehabilitation process, a number of cheetah have to run for their supper by chasing a lure down a runway ay up to 120kmph. At the end point, they are rewarded with food. Guests only observe from a vantage point. The holding camps are spacious and clean and cheetahs are taken into the veld every morning where they are allowed to run free.

The modern view and the ethics of animal welfare are still evolving and hence no touching will be allowed.

Previously, guests were allowed to touch the animals during various times on their safari stay - but since the implementation of the policy update - all interaction has been stopped.

All future bookings have been informed of this change and guests will now have the opportunity to enjoy a conservation educational presentation. The project will strive for Fair Trade certification.

The committee concludes that the animals are content and well cared for - stating that cheetahs are most probably some of the luckiest captive cheetahs in South Africa - based on conditions, care, contentment and quality of life enhancement programs.

