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PREDATION MANAGEMENT
CENTRE (PMC)

The Predation Management Centre (PMC), University of the Free State, South Africa

by

HO de Waal and Quinette Kruger

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HO de Waal & Quinette Kruger

Department of Animal, Wildlife and Grassland Sciences, Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, University of the Free State, PO Box 339, Bloemfontein 9300, South Africa

PredationMC@ufs.ac.za

Introduction

The Canis-Caracal Programme (CCP) was launched in 2004 by the African Large Predator Research Unit (ALPRU) at the University of the Free State (UFS) and its objectives are implemented by the Predation Management Centre (PMC), namely:

- Collate and interpret all available data and information on two important predator species, the black-backed jackal (*Canis mesomelas*) and the caracal (*Caracal caracal*).
- Initiate, support and conduct scientific studies on the ecology of these two predator species and their food base.
- Formulate new or update existing scientific-based management strategies to control these two predator species and relate it to provincial and national policies.

It has become obvious that the initial listing of only two important damage-causing animal species must be broadened to be more comprehensive and inclusive.

Management Information System (MIS)

The Predation Management Information Centre (PMiC), with the focus on information gathering and distribution, is an important aspect of the PMC. At the request of the Predation Management Forum (PMF) the PMiC is collecting and distributing data and information on predation management.

Human-wildlife conflict solutions must be informed by a Management Information System (MIS) and a common **institutional memory**. Therefore, the PMC is constantly collecting, analysing, interpreting and distributing relevant information in South Africa, through a wider system of Coordinated Predation Management (CPM).

The MIS must provide appropriate answers to the following type of questions:

- Where are predation losses occurring; identify the current hotspots?
- Which predator species are involved?
- What are the links between reported cases of predation and predation management?
- Does predation decline as a result of predation management on a property?
- What is achieved when different predation management methods are used?
- Who are the recognised and proven role players (e.g. specialist predator hunters)?

The MIS must collect, maintain and integrate information in databases and create an institutional memory, consisting broadly of the following:

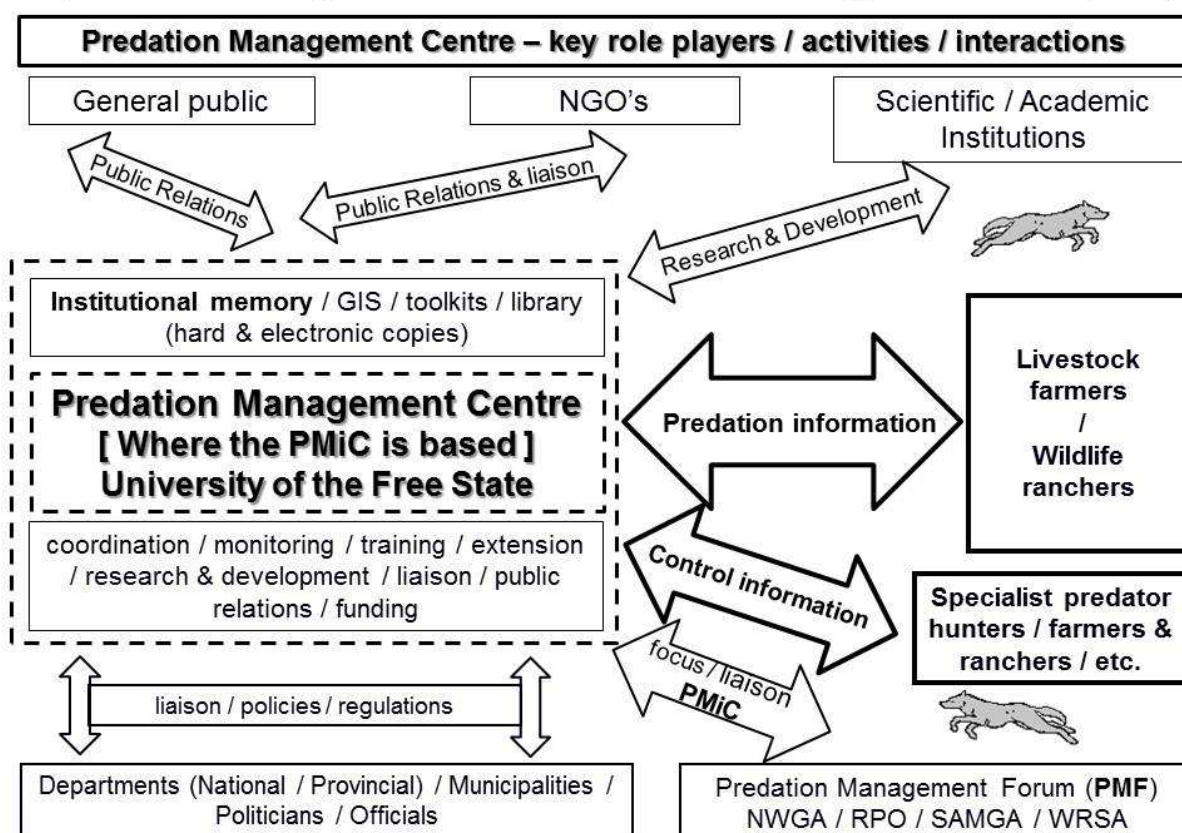
- Reported cases of predation (e.g. predator species, where, date and time).
- Reported cases of predation control (e.g. method used, species, sex, date and time).

- Government departments, offices and staff involved with predation management.
- PMF, livestock and wildlife producers' organisations – staff involved with predation management.
- Universities and research institutions – specialists involved in predation management.
- Specific information on the fields of expertise of specialist predator hunters.
- National and provincial acts, regulations, policies and protocols applicable to predation management.
- Departmental offices and staff responsible to enforce regulations and issue permits regarding predation management.
- Hard or electronic copies of literature on predators, predation management and associated topics.
- Non-lethal and lethal predation management methods and toolkits of equipment such as foothold traps and cage traps, livestock protection collars, bells and guard animals.
- Specifications and protocols regarding the correct way to obtain, safeguard, store and handle predation control devices and equipment.

Activities and interactions

The activities and interaction of the PMC with key role players and stakeholders in predation management are presented schematically in Figure 1.

Fig. 1 – Schematic presentation of the Predation Management Centre (PMC)



The main **activities** of the PMC include the following:

- Coordination – initiatives and activities of role players and stakeholders to improve cooperation and effective predation management.
- Monitoring - activities of role players and stakeholders regarding predation management; from lessons learnt establish best practices for wider application.
- Training – ensure that individuals engaged at all levels of predation management are well-trained in the detail of best practices and the appropriate use of methods and equipment.
- Extension – ensure that relevant information on predation management is packaged and made available to different role player and stakeholder groups, namely farmers, farm workers, specialist predator hunters, the general public and departmental staff.
- Research & development –research topics must be identified and informed by an institutional memory and the MIS and the results implemented as best practices.
- Liaison – role players, stakeholders and the broader public must be continuously informed and given reasonable opportunity to interact in a meaningful way.
- Public relations – well-informed public will assist in developing a meaningful and effective predation management system in South Africa.
- Sourcing necessary funding – in the absence of an official system of coordinated predation management, funds must be sourced and generated to implement strategies.

Information gathering and distribution, liaison and public relation

Sourcing information on predation losses

- Livestock farmers – two studies have set baselines for predation losses on small livestock (sheep and goats) farms (in five provinces) and cattle farms (in seven provinces).
- Wildlife ranchers – a third study has set a baseline for predation losses on wildlife ranches (in seven provinces).
- Regular feedback must be provided to these client bases on best practices to mitigate the impact of predation.

Sourcing information on predation control

- Specialist predator hunters, livestock farmers, wildlife ranchers and officials – relevant information on predation control are continually collected from a range of sources.
- Regular feedback must be provided on best practices to improve predation management.

The PMC is actively liaising with key role players and stakeholders

- Predation Management Forum (PMF) – the focus is informed by active liaison with the PMF and the producer organisations (NWGA, RPO, SAMGA and WRSA).
- Departments (DEA and DAFF) – relevant information regarding policies and regulations is gained by liaising with the national and provincial departments.
- Municipalities – active liaison and lobbying are required at appropriate levels.
- Politicians – active liaison and lobbying of individuals and groups are required at appropriate levels.

Public relations

- General public – it is necessary to foster and maintain good relations with the broader public to ensure social acceptance of predation management.
- NGO's – it is necessary to engage with all role players, specifically NGO's to ensure a common basis of information and acceptance of predation management.

What if?

Implementation of a system of coordinated predation management, which is informed by a MIS and common institutional memory, is urgently needed in South Africa to mitigate the negative impact of predation.

What if not?

If a system of coordinated predation management, which is informed by a MIS and common institutional memory, is not implemented urgently any real prospect of mitigating the negative impact of predation in South Africa will be remain slim.