



**ENDANGERED
WILDLIFE TRUST**
Protecting forever, together.

15 May 2019

Latest attack a stark reminder of the urgent need to end captive carnivore interactions

Start

The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) is shocked and saddened that yet another child has been badly injured while interacting with carnivores at a captive carnivore facility. For over a decade, the EWT has been calling for an end to tourist interactions with captive carnivores and, as recently as May 2018, wrote an [open letter](#) to then-Minister of Environmental Affairs, Dr Edna Molewa, lobbying for these kinds of facilities to be closed down. Our concerns include serious welfare issues, that these facilities offer no conservation value, and pose risks to public safety.

Captive breeding does not address any of the key threats carnivores face in the wild, and there is no conservation requirement or recommendation for any captive breeding or keeping of carnivores in South Africa. In 2018, the EWT and the Centre for Environmental Rights published a [report](#) funded by the Lewis Foundation, which addressed in detail the flaws in the regulatory system around wildlife wellbeing and welfare. Cruelty cases continue to be opened against captive facilities across South Africa and the EWT will continue to call for the welfare of species in captivity to be properly addressed. In addition to serious flaws in the regulation of captive facilities, the operations of most of these facilities fail to take into account the natural social structures of carnivores (for example, that Lions occur naturally in prides, while Cheetahs are naturally solitary), and fail to provide proper enrichment and living conditions for the captive carnivores. Further, the continuous handling of captive carnivores by multiple people results in stress for the cubs, who should naturally be spending large portions of their days sleeping or playing with their siblings.

In addition to the numerous conservation and animal welfare concerns presented by captive carnivore facilities, it remains tragically evident that there are also serious human safety issues to be considered. At the time of our writing to Minister Molewa, in May 2018, at least 40 people had been injured – or worse, killed – at South African captive carnivore facilities since 1996. These incidents have continued unabated over the past year, with the latest case at Weltevrede Lion Farm not being an isolated event. Indeed, despite the facility describing it as a “freak accident” in media reports, it is the second incident at the same facility in the space of just one week. Two sisters were also injured at this lion park in 2010.

Little Dina-Marie de Beer is sadly not the only child to have been injured by captive carnivores. Of the incidents that the EWT is aware of, 11 of the victims have been children, and two of these children have died as a result of their injuries. If our government continues to fail to take action and close these facilities down, the responsible choice is to keep our children safe and stop supporting predator parks or 'sanctuaries' that offer captive carnivore interactions.

There is no justifiable rationale for the public to be interacting with carnivores in captivity, risking people's lives. The EWT once again strongly calls for government to do the right thing and put an end to these activities, and for members of the public to [take the Wild 'n Free pledge](#) and avoid these facilities.

End

The Wild 'n Free [pledge](#): "I pledge to keep all carnivores Wild 'n Free by not petting, walking, feeding or taking selfies with them. I vow to become an ambassador for wild carnivores and to honour their right to live a natural life. I encourage others to do the same."

About the Endangered Wildlife Trust

The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) has worked tirelessly for over 45 years to save wildlife and habitats, with our vision being a world in which both humans and wildlife prosper in harmony with nature. From the smallest frog, to the majestic rhino; from sweeping grasslands to arid drylands; from our shorelines to winding rivers: the EWT is working with you, to protect our world.

The EWT's team of field-based specialists is spread across southern and East Africa, where committed conservation action is needed the most. Working with our partners, including businesses and governments, the EWT is at the forefront of conducting applied research, supporting community conservation and livelihoods, training and building capacity, addressing human wildlife conflict, monitoring threatened species and establishing safe spaces for wildlife range expansion.

A beacon of hope for Africa's wildlife, landscapes and communities, the EWT is protecting forever, together. Find out more at www.ewt.org.za

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