

South Africa to clamp down on captive lion breeding, minister says

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South Africa will clamp down on captive lion breeding after a review panel concluded the industry risked the conservation of wild lions and harmed tourism, the environment minister said on Sunday, 2 May.



A pride of lions is seen at a game reserve adjacent to the world-renowned Kruger National Park. Reuters/Siphiwe Sibeko

In the nearly 600-page report, the panel appointed by the ministry in 2019 recommended that South Africa end the breeding and keeping of captive lions for economic gain, including hunting them and tourist interactions such as cub petting.

The panel also recommended an immediate moratorium on the trade of lion derivatives such as bones, which they found to pose major risks to wild lion populations in South Africa.

Barbara Creecy, minister of forestry, fisheries and the environment, responded to the report by saying the ministry would adopt all recommendations in the report which were supported by the majority of the 26-strong panel.

"I have requested the department to action this accordingly and ensure that the necessary consultation for implementation is conducted," she said at the panel's presentation, referring to recommendations on captive lions.

Developing biodiversity conservation policy

Amongst other measures, the ministry will now embark on a consultation process with various stakeholders and develop a policy on biodiversity conservation for cabinet approval.

The panel could not reach consensus on how to tackle captive lion breeding, and only two thirds of its members supported these recommendations, according to the report.



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Creecy stressed the measures were not aimed at the hunting industry.

"Preventing the hunting of captive lions is in the interests of the authentic wild hunting industry, and will boost the hunting economy and our international reputation, and the jobs that this creates," she said.

On rhino horn and elephant ivory stockpiles, the panel recommended that the minister consult other countries in the Southern Africa bloc to determine under what conditions current ivory and rhino horn stockpiles can be disposed of.

Legalising rhino horn trade has been a hot button issue, with conservationists concerned that it could stimulate demand in Asia, while others argue it could raise funds that would help it to protect the species.

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