

## An open letter to Roland Ward and SCI

*Dear fellow hunters,*

We have all seen that the campaign to stop all hunting has gained new momentum in recent times. We have seen how individual hunters and specific hunting incidents have been targeted, and how the unbelievably intense hatred boiled over into mass hysteria in the formal as well the social media. We have seen the disinformation being disseminated by an efficient anti-hunting propaganda machine that does not care too much about the truth or the scientific approach, and that does not hesitate to turn, twist and contort the truth into untruths that suit their agenda.

Unfortunately, there is a large section of the public that is not adequately informed and that is gullible to sentimental propaganda. It would be irresponsible of us to underestimate the risks that the anti-hunting fraternity is posing. Unless we win the hearts and minds of the uninformed masses, we may well lose our hunting heritage, as governments will eventually follow public opinion.

We hunters all know that hunting is critically important for the conservation of wildernesses and wildlife, but we need to convince a sceptical non-hunting world thereof. The only way forward for us is to demonstrate undeniably that hunting and conservation is tied together – like waves to oceans.

You are also aware that game breeders in South Africa are attempting to push the industry in a new direction: captive breeding in small camps in an intensive system for specific morphological characteristics, such as exceptional horn growth and colour variations. New colour variants keep on appearing on the catalogues of the game auctions. We all know that none of the colour variants are distinct species or subspecies. Unfortunately, there are a few outfitters offering colour variants as separate species to an unsuspecting public.

Most hunting organisations have already taken a strong position against the intensive, line-breeding practices as (i) it contributes nothing to conservation, and (ii) hunters wish to hunt in an extensive system where natural selection prevails.

Your record books are highly regarded and it serves a valuable scientific purpose. Unfortunately, there are some hunters who get carried away by their obsession with the measuring tape, and their main rationale for hunting is to get their names into the record books. This is not what hunting is

about. They also give hunting a bad name. In view of the above, you are respectfully requested to consider the following:

1. Not to provide for any of the new colour variants in your record books
2. To remove the existing categories for colour variants (springbok and blesbok) from your record books and to include them with the nominate species or subspecies.
3. Not to allow any animal with ear tags to be entered into your record books.
4. Not to allow any animal that was captive bred in an intensive system to be entered into your record books.
5. To remove the names of the hunters from future editions of your record books. The rest of the information is very useful and should be kept.

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