NEWSLETTER APRIL

In this newsletter:

Dear clients,

Sadly, rabies is once again wreaking havoc amongst our kudus and eland. We have highlighted some important info. Save the date! On the 10th of May, Namibia Stud Game Breeders will host their game auction, an exceptional chance to acquire top genetics! We give you a summary of our article Mating and the Birthing Season. Can our game adjust their birthing season – what did you observe? Lastly, we would greatly appreciate it if you could leave a Google review for us. Kind regards, Wildlife Vets Namibia team

RABIES

This month we have spent quite a few hours in the helicopter vaccinating kudus and eland against rabies. Unfortunately rabies is doing its damaging rounds again in Namibia.

If you want to understand this disease better, we would like to refer you to our website. Here we have 3 articles (under the 'Diseases & Health' header) that provide lots of information. Of course you are very welcome to contact us as well.

We wanted to highlight some key information that we think is important for you to know.

- All mammals are susceptible for rabies, not just jackals and kudu and eland. We had several rabies cases in rhino, African wild dogs, roan and even aardvark! Always be on the look-out for animals displaying strange behaviour, such as:
  - Unusual behaviour; domestic animals become wild, wild animals become tame.
  - Nervous signs; staggering, hindquarter paralysis, restless, changed tone of voice.
  - Often found near water because animals lose the ability to swallow, show excessive drooling and usually die of thirst and dehydration.
- Rabies is a fatal disease, there is no treatment. When you suspect an animal to have rabies, the best we can do is euthanize. When shooting a rabid animal, never shoot it in the head or upper neck but rather go for the heart. When the animal is dead, remove the head from the body (be aware to wear gloves and that you don't get blood splatters in your eyes or mouth!). **NEVER take out the brain** - this and the salivary glands is where the virus is highly concentrated! If you have small wounds/scratches on your hand, you can get infected by handling these tissues!
- We understand it can be a mission, but we urge you have possible rabies cases tested at the Central Veterinary Lab (CVL). Address: 24 Goethe Street, Whk. That way we get a better (more scientific) idea of where rabies outbreaks occur.
  - Remove the head from the body (wear gloves!).
  - Wrap the head in newspapers to absorb body fluids.
  - Put the head in a plastic watertight bag, make sure no juices are running out.
  - Keel this bag COOL, not frozen (!), label it 'DANGER, POSSIBLE RABIES'.
  - Contact your veterinarian so he/she can fill out the CVL form.
  - Take the head and the CVL form from your vet to CVL in Windhoek.
  - The test is being done for free. If there is human contact, this must be mentioned!

Human contact with rabid animal? Inform your Doctor!! Share details about the contact (bites, open wounds, etc.).

Have your pets vaccinated yearly, and consider getting yourself vaccinated, especially if you are often in close contact with wildlife.

Fill in and print our 'DANGER RABIES' label via our website

WILDLIFE VETS NAMIBIA

NAMIBIA STUD GAME BREEDERS AUCTION – 10 MAY 2025

Less than two weeks to go! **Saturday 10 May** marks the very first **Namibia Stud Game Breeders Game Auction!**

The recent rains have transformed Namibia to a lush and green country, now is the perfect time to strengthen your game populations with top-genetics sold on this auction.

Introducing top genetics into your herds lead to stronger, healthier animals with improved survival rates and reproductive success. Members from The Namibia Stud Game Breeders have built a strong reputation over the years by consistently producing exceptional game with proven genetics.

Don't miss the opportunity to invest in the future of your game! View the catalogue here.

The game auction will be held both online and on-site at the **Nedbank Sky Garden** in Windhoek (address: Nedbank Head Office, c/o Fidel Castro & Rev Michael Scott street – 7th floor). Parking is available, canapés will be served throughout the auction, and a cash bar is available.

Registration starts at 11:00, the auction itself starts at 12:00.

To register and bid online, download the **Veewinkel app**: Apple Appstore, Android Playstore, Huawei App Gallery

If you have questions, please feel free to contact:

- Floors Nel 081 127 3428 (only WhatsApp)
- Raymund Simon 081 411 0112

MATING AND THE BIRTHING SEASON

CAN OUR GAME ADJUST THEIR REPRODUCTIVE STRATEGIES?

In our latest article, we dive into the world of reproduction. Reproduction is key to survival of a species. We know that game species have certain times that they mate and give birth, which are usually in favourable environmental conditions (food availability/rainfall). Let's take impalas as an example, since the rams display mating behaviour that is hard to miss. If you think back, when do impalas mate? And when do they normally lamb?

Next question... did you observe a difference in the birthing season during the 2019 and 2024 droughts? Many farmers observed a shift in the birthing season. Is it possible that our plains game species in times of extreme droughts, somehow manage to delay the birthing season until environmental conditions improve? In our online article we explain the balance of animal physiology, how wildlife responds to environmental challenges and how they use unique reproductive strategies to maintain and grow their populations. Below you find a summary, the whole article you can read and download via our website here.

Mammalian pregnancies are broadly divided into three stages:

1. Germinal stage (days): Fertilized egg becomes a blastocyst and implants in the uterus.
2. Embryonic stage (weeks): Organs and basic structures form.
3. Foetal stage (months): Growth and development continue until birth.

Poor nutrition and starvation, e.g. during droughts, affect these stages. Females might go into anoestrus (a state where females do not come in heat) or resorb or abort the foetus. These are well-known survival mechanisms resulting in low calving/lambing percentages, but gives improved survival chances for the adult females, who can re-enter the reproductive cycle once environmental conditions have improved.

Many species have a rather narrow, species-specific period (often days to 2-3 weeks) within which virtually all the calves or lambs are born. This so-called *'lamb flush'* overwhelms predator take-off and thus reduces the risk of predation. Lambs and calves born during droughts conditions are often weak and die soon after birth. Where we normally see would see a *lamb flush*, during a drought we might be unaware that lambs/calves are born, simply because they do not make it.

A 'lamb flush' refers to a period when many lambs are born within a short timeframe, typically in species that synchronize their birthing season.

Impala 'kindergarten'. After birth, impala ewes often leave their lamb hidden in dense vegetation for a few days. Once the lamb is strong enough, the lambs join together in a group. A few adult ewes act like a 'babysitter'. This strategy helps to reduce the risk of predation (more eyes watching), and it allows the lambs to interact and learn from each other. © M. Bijsterbosch

WILDLIFE VETS NAMIBIA

Species	Body weight (kg)	Gestation (days)	Gestation (months)	Lambing/calving season	Mating season
Warthog	45-100	170	5.7	Nov	June
Springbuck	30-60	170	5.7	Oct- Nov	April-July
Impala	45-65	196	6.5	Nov-Jan	May
Blesbok	60-70	240	7.5	Nov-Dec- Jan	April-June
Red Hartebeest	105-180	240	8	Oct-Nov	Feb-March
Oryx	210-240	264	9	Aug-Sept	Nov-Dec
Blue Wildebeest	170-250	250	8.3	Mid Nov-end Dec	March-April
Waterbuck	160-270	280	8.3	Aug-Sept	Jan-Feb
Eland	400-900	280	9.3	November	February

In the above table is an overview of the mating and breeding seasons of some plains game species. These reproductive patterns are well accepted general rules of nature. However, during and following times of extreme drought (as experienced in Namibia in 2019 and again in 2024), game farmers and nature lovers observed a definite exception to this rule! We found that the birthing season of almost all common plains game species was delayed by between 2-4 months. The onset of birthing at the end of 2024 and beginning of 2025 varied between regions in Namibia, but generally coincided with a time after at least some rain had fallen and the veld started greening up.

So what influences the breeding and calving seasons in game? One explanation is what we call the *photoperiodism theory*. According to this theory, the reproductive cycle of mammals is influenced by seasonal changes in daylight.. This might work well in the higher latitudes (e.g. Europe), but in the lower latitudes (southern Africa) there is only minimal variation in daylight length.

Another explanation could be *variation in rainfall*. If you check the table above, you will see that mating and birthing seasons coincide with periods of rainfall and subsequent optimal food availability. Animals give birth when grazing is at its peak.

Next question... Does our game delay their births? This is a tricky one! Some possibilities are:

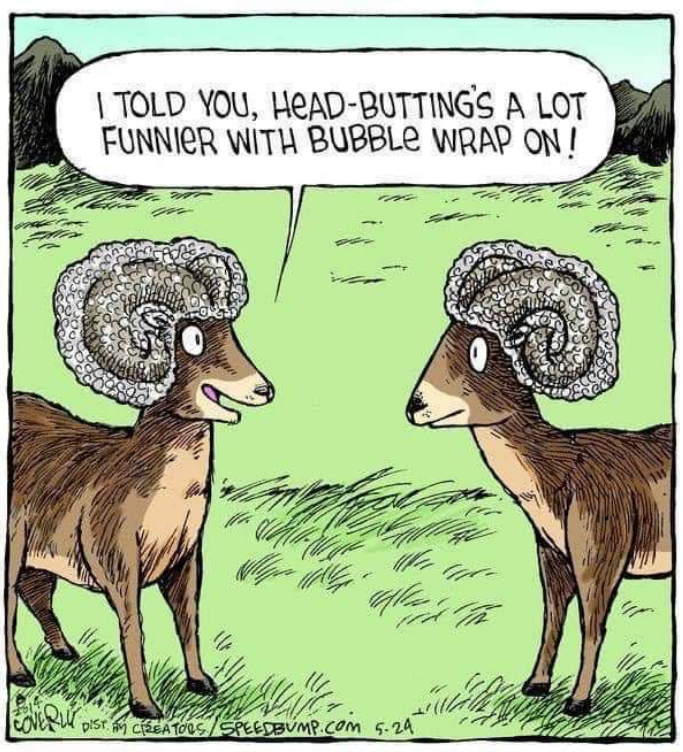
1. The mating season was delayed. During times of nutritional stress (e.g. drought), females might go into anoestrus, or resorb/abort the foetus. These females could potentially come into heat later in the season. However, given that many are already in poor condition due to the drought, it seems unlikely that they would be able to conceive much later and still produce strong, healthy offspring.
2. Normal mating season, but pregnant animals delay birth.
    a. Some people speculate that game can delay their births (in other words, prolong their pregnancy) to await environmental conditions more favourable for survival. However, animal reproductive experts disagree with this theory, and argue that the delayed lambing was a result of delayed mating.
    b. It could also be that most young die unnoticed while in the hiding phase. You would not see the typical lamb flush. Some lambs that are born later, following the onset of rains, would have a better survival chance and thus give the impression of a synchronised late lambing season.
3. Embryonic diapause. This is an interesting reproductive strategy that occurs in over 130 mammalian species. These species are able to pause the development of the embryo. This means they mate during the normal season, but birth can be delayed until times of food abundance. Check the full article for a more in-depth explanation of this phenomenon.

And, what do you think happens? We know that reproductive cycles are linked to environmental conditions. For African game, it seems that rainfall and the subsequent food availability are the most significant drivers behind the reproductive cycles. But are animals able to adapt their reproductive cycle to enhance their survival? Is this due to a delay in the mating season, embryonic diapause or another biological response? This remains a question, and we would love to hear your ideas on this topic! What is evident, is that nature always have extraordinary ways of ensuring survival!

LEAVE A REVIEW

Are you happy with our services? We would love to hear your thoughts on Google Reviews! It is quick, easy, and it would mean a lot to us!

Scan the QR code on the left, or click on this link to go to the review form. Thank you for your support!



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