

Pride in Our Prides runs first professional livestock herder training course in Botswana

July 2017 was a very special month for Pride in Our Prides lion research and conservation program. Together with experienced facilitators from the Africa Centre for Holistic Management in Zimbabwe, we trained 20 participants from Beetsha village in rangeland management and livestock herding methods. This was the first training course of its kind in Botswana, and much needed as the community struggles to raise livestock in a challenging and complex environment. We chose Beetsha as the first training site due to its persistent conflict with lions, but also because it has the largest number livestock in the area, many of which roam freely.

Participant: *“This course is an eye-opener.”*

We invited village chiefs, representatives from the wildlife and veterinary departments and community trusts, and local livestock farmers from Beetsha and its surrounding cattle posts. The course covered everything about proficient livestock management in Africa, such as appropriate grazing areas in the local ecosystem, mapping important resources, the need for and advantages of active herding, protection from predators, diseases, market access, and much more. This type of comprehensive training has the potential to alleviate conflict with predators while also improving how people farm their livestock and, with that, how these affect the environment into the future.

Participant: “When I was selected to attend, I first felt ashamed and embarrassed because I don’t speak English well. But now I am very thankful because I have learned so much during the training.”

The 6-days training provided an excellent mix between theory and practical learning sessions. It took the trainees through the process of designing a communal grazing plan according to the local conditions. Much was learned and discussed – the course was a real success! Despite the wealth of new information and long days, the trainees stayed focussed and committed. The training certainly sparked a lot of interest in improving livestock management, while delivering the necessary tools to do so, hopefully also addressing issues of lion conflict.

Facilitator: *“It’s time for lunch now, should we break here?”*

Participant: *“Let’s skip lunch. We’re learning.”*

Going forward, village meetings will be called to allow other community members to benefit from the knowledge gained. PiOP will keep assisting Beetsha in implementing and monitoring changes in livestock farming. And we surely hope to repeat the course in other villages along the northern edge of the Okavango Delta very soon.

Stay tuned and follow our progress via: www.clawsconservancy.org