

Timeline legal procedures Wildforlife Rehabilitation centre – North West Department

- ✓ Mufasa was confiscated from people keeping him without a permit at the end of 2015 and handed over to the Wildforlife Rehabilitation Centre. It was understood that he would go to a sanctuary at the end of legal proceedings against the previous owners. At the time he was teamed up with lioness Soraya who also came from the captive breeding industry, and they have formed a close bond since then;
- ✓ At the end of legal proceedings against Mufasa's previous owners in 2017, Wildforlife Rehabilitation Centre was informed by the North West Department of Economic development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism (previously known as READ and further on referred to as The NW Department) that Soraya could move to a sanctuary but that Mufasa would be sold on auction. This would leave Mufasa open to the possibility of entering the captive lion hunting/canned hunting industry. Wildforlife Rehabilitation Centre, represented by Mrs. Tjitske Schouwstra, initiated legal proceedings to prevent that Mufasa was handed over to the NW Department and instead, to have both lions moved to a NSPCA registered sanctuary;
- ✓ Several court appearances later, a date was finally set for the matter to be heard on 27th of March 2020. A few days before this date, South Africa went into Covid lockdown and all court matters were taken off the roll. Due to Covid lockdowns affecting court procedures, the matter was only eventually heard at the end of November 2020;
- ✓ End of November 2020, Mufasa's case was heard. Judgement was handed down and received in writing in March 2021. The judgement was flawed and Wildforlife Rehabilitation Centre, represented by Mrs. Tjitske Schouwstra, was able to lodge an appeal on technical matters. The appeal is still to be heard;
- ✓ Mrs. Tjitske Schouwstra (once again) offered to purchase Mufasa to be able to send both lions to a NSPCA approved sanctuary. Her pleas received no response. A hearing to petition an appeal was successful and appeal is pending;
- ✓ In the beginning of March 2022, Mrs. Tjitske Schouwstra was approached by a sanctuary on the NSPCA approved list in Limpopo, stating that the NW department had provisionally agreed to a relocation of the lions to this sanctuary. Mrs. Tjitske Schouwstra was informed that she should apply for export/transport permits, which she did in early May 2022;
- ✓ In the beginning of August 2022, several months after handing in her application, Mrs. Tjitske Schouwstra sent a letter via her lawyers due to the fact that she hadn't received any correspondence regarding the permits. It is the duty of the NW department to provide permits for the movement of wildlife in and out of the North West Province and, as pointed out in her letter, the permits would either have to be approved, additional information could be requested or permits could be declined - with reasons stated, which can then be appealed;
- ✓ At the end of August 2022, Mrs. Tjitske Schouwstra was contacted by a NW department official for a pre-permit approval inspection. The inspection was held on 12th September 2022 at which time Mrs. Tjitske Schouwstra was told that the recommendation would be to approve the permits;
- ✓ On 19th September 2022 Mrs. Tjitske Schouwstra received a permit to move the lions. The permit however contained a clause to sign over the lions to the SAP 13 register. This meant Mrs. Tjitske Schouwstra would have to sign the lions over to the South African Police, implicating herself to be in possession of confiscated or stolen goods after which she should have no further say in the welfare of our lions.
On recommendation of her lawyers, Mrs. Tjitske Schouwstra refused to do so, as the lawyers regarded this as a ruse to remove the lions from her care.

It also carried the risk of Mrs. Tjitske Schouwstra being arrested and end up with a criminal record, according to the lawyers. This could affect her in a professional capacity, leaving her unable to financially continue caring for Mufasa or carrying on with legal proceedings. The arranged relocation on the 8th of November therefore never took place;

- ✓ Further negotiations in October and November 2022 led to an agreement that the lions would be moved under a governmental permit, meaning the status quo would remain as it is and that Mufasa and Soraya could be temporarily moved to a NSPCA approved sanctuary while legal proceedings carried on. The NW department applied for import permits from the government of Limpopo, who would, in request of the NW department, keep a regular eye on the lions. This permit was approved in early January this year, 2023;
- ✓ On the morning of the 9th of January 2023, Mrs. Tjitske Schouwstra received a message stating that the lions would be moved the next day.
On the afternoon of the 9th of January 2023, she received a new message that the move was cancelled, following a notice from the office of the new MEC of the NW department for an inspection which would happen within a few days. The MEC of the North West Department was replaced in November 2022. Said inspection has not happened to this date;
- ✓ Next, Mrs. Tjitske Schouwstra was told the lions would be moved on the 21st of February 2023. This was cancelled due to the fact that the official named on the permit would be on leave during that time. Mrs. Tjitske Schouwstra was informed that new arrangements would be made following his/her return;
- ✓ On the 10th of March 2023 Mrs. Tjitske Schouwstra was informed that the NW Department once again refuses to let the lions leave the North West province until the appeal has been heard.

During all this time, as court processes proceed slow, Mrs. Tjitske Schouwstra has been trying to convince the NW Authorities to have both lions relocated to a NSPCA approved sanctuary in the interim. Unfortunately, the NW department has been less than agreeable about this and although various NSPCA approved sanctuaries have been put forward as options, and one of them willing to take both lions permanently, the NW Authorities have refused all of them.

As we understand, the NW Department wants to propose wildlife facilities in the NW province in which they want to accommodate these two lions. There are no NSPCA approved lion sanctuaries in the North West Province.