



**CCF is a Namibian non-profit incorporated association dedicated to the long-term survival of the cheetah and its ecosystems.**

**RESEARCH**

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## ILLEGAL PET TRADE

Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) tracks cheetah trafficking and assists with confiscations. Cheetah trafficking incidents involve the capture and sale of live cheetahs or cheetah parts (skin, bones, teeth, claws, etc.). Most of the trade in live cheetahs occurs between East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, where cheetahs are favored pets across the Gulf States.

The live cheetahs in the pet trade are believed to originate from the wild populations in Ethiopia, northern Kenya and Somalia, and are smuggled mostly out of the Somaliland coast.

### THE PROBLEM

Approximately ~300 cheetahs, mostly cubs, are smuggled out of East Africa every year, mostly through Somaliland (a region of Somalia). Many more die before being transported. Cubs usually between 3-10 weeks are taken from their mother while she is out hunting or taken in retaliation when she is perceived to be preying on livestock. The adult wild cheetah population in the affected areas of East Africa are estimated to be ~300 total. Re-introduction of confiscated cheetahs into the wild are not really possible as the cheetahs are often in poor condition and have been cared for closely after confiscation to get them back to health.

### CCF'S SOLUTIONS

To identify the origin of cheetahs in illegal trade and to assist criminal investigations, CCF collects genetic material for storage in a DNA database at our cheetah genetics laboratory in Namibia. DNA samples are collected from cheetahs, wild, captive, and deceased to expand the database.

CCF is researching and developing long-term holistic strategies to combat the live-trafficking of cheetah, addressing law enforcement, wildlife conservation, education, livelihood development and demand reduction. Working with all stakeholders is the key to successful implementation.

Currently, efforts are underway to develop a permanent wildlife sanctuary in Somaliland.

### GEOGRAPHIC AREAS OF MOST CONCERN

**East Africa** - Active areas for trafficking include eastern Ethiopia, northern Kenya, Somaliland and Somalia. CCF supports governments from this region in the care for confiscations of illegally trafficked cheetah cubs, mostly in Somaliland, an autonomous region of Somalia. Somaliland is a preferred route for illegally trafficking cheetahs out of Africa. Cubs are taken to Yemen and distributed across the Gulf States to be illegally sold as pets.

Prior to 2016, confiscated cheetahs have been transferred to Born Free Foundation's sanctuary in Ethiopia and the DECAN Refuge in Djibouti. In 2016, the government of Somaliland reversed its policy and in favor of keeping confiscated animals in country. In response, CCF's team in Hargeisa, the capital city, began caring for cheetahs intercepted from the trade. Currently, there are cheetahs housed in two temporary shelters. CCF is working with the Ministry of Environment and Rural Development (MoERD) to develop strategies aimed to facilitate Somaliland's ability to fight the trafficking of wildlife including awareness as a top priority, capacity building, regional cooperation and, in the longer term, a sanctuary for confiscated wildlife.

**The Arabian Peninsula** - Wild, exotic animals are in high demand in the Gulf States. In addition to tigers, lions, sun bears, clouded leopards, jaguars, chimpanzees, orangutans and many other protected species, it is estimated that hundreds of cheetahs are kept as pets in houses and compounds, in the Arabian Peninsula. Evidence sug-

gests that most of these cheetahs have been sourced illegally from the Horn of Africa.

CCF's Founder and Executive Director, Dr. Laurie Marker visited the UAE twice to raise awareness, and organized a workshop to train veterinarians in proper cheetah care. Additionally, CCF has formed alliances in the UAE to obtain samples of captive cheetahs for its growing DNA database.

In December 2016, the UAE enacted a national law banning private ownership of exotic and dangerous pets. To date, no cheetah confiscations have been reported; however, CCF continues to follow developments in the UAE closely, both directly and through its collaborators and allies on the ground.

**South Africa** - CCF has received reports of cheetah skins, skulls and other body parts being sold at traditional medicine markets in South Africa. The most widely known markets are the Faraday and Mai Mai markets in Johannesburg.

During 2017 alone, in three separate visits to the Mai Mai market, a CCF supporter reported having seen 56 cheetah skins or heads. CCF's Executive Director, Dr. Laurie Marker, also visited the markets and recorded 17 cheetah products.

The origin of the cheetah products is unknown. South African experts believe they could originate from free-roaming wild cheetahs, which usually survive on farmland along the borders, or from captive-breeding facilities.

South Africa is the world's largest breeder and exporter of cheetahs. Captive-bred cheetahs are traded under the terms of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Appendix II, and concerns about the possibility that cheetahs are being taken from the wild have been raised at CITES level.

#### **PUBLIC POLICY**

In 2007, CCF became a founding member of the Coalition Against Wildlife Trafficking (CAWT), a group of governments and NGOs dedicated to bringing public and political attention to the issue of illegal wildlife trafficking in cheetahs. CAWT was

initially focused mainly on the trafficking of ivory, and rhino horn. The cheetah was formally included in the CAWT agenda in 2010.

CCF's illegal cheetah trafficking database was utilized to support a proposal by Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda to include illegal cheetah trade in the CITES 16th Conference of the Parties agenda (CoP16). This was the first time that the illegal trafficking in cheetahs was part of a global discussion. The following year, a CITES-commissioned study on illegal cheetah trafficking was presented at the CITES 27th Animal Committee Meeting.

CCF works alongside governments and NGOs to carry forward the issue of illegal wildlife trafficking in cheetahs. Following the CITES 65th Standing Committee meeting in 2014 (SC65), an inter-sessional working group surveyed laws and cheetah trade activities in all CITES Parties and held a workshop, hosted by the State of Kuwait.

#### **COLLABORATIONS**

Visiting veterinarians from the European universities listed below assist with cheetah care and give lectures for veterinary students at the University of Hargeisa.

- Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Czech Republic (VSF-cz)
- USAMV Cluj-Napoca (Romania)
- University of Veterinary and Pharmaceutical Sciences Brno (UVPS, Czech Republic)
- University of Hargeisa (UOH)
- University of Burao (UB)

CCF works in partnership with the following NGOs and governmental organizations.

- Cheetah Conservation Botswana
- Action for Cheetahs in Kenya
- Cheetah Outreach
- Morad & Heritage Somaliland
- Cat Specialist Group
- Rangewide Cheetah & Wilddog program
- Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Cheetah SSP
- Wildlife Conservation Society
- International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

