

RPO and NERPO Code of Best Practice

for

Sustainable and Profitable Red Meat Production

Preface

Being custodians of the land, farmers have a responsibility to the natural and social environment they live in. They are also increasingly confronted with pressures downstream in the value chain, consumers and the public at large. Although sometimes perceived as negative, these contribute to longer term stability, social and environmental sustainability, and food security with positive consequences to the sustainability and profitability of the enterprise. This document provides principles and self-assessment measures that will guide red meat producers towards continuous improvement and adherence to the Code presented.

Our sincere appreciation goes to everyone that has contributed to the development of the Code.

Signed

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Chairman RPO

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Chairman NERPO

Definitions of key terms:

1. *Biodiversity: An expression of the variety of species that exists in a community. This is a reflection of the numbers and relative abundances of genes (genetic diversity), species and ecosystems (communities) in a particular area.*
2. *Biome: A grouping of similar plant and animal communities into broad landscape units that occur under similar environmental conditions.*
3. *Bio-security: Security related to animals, feed, medicines and plants on the farm.*
4. *Carrying capacity: Potential of an area to support livestock through grazing and/or browsing and/or fodder production over an extended period without deterioration to the overall ecosystem. Or: The number of individuals in a population that the resources of a habitat can support.*
5. *Climax species: A plant species that is self-perpetuating in the absence of disturbance, with no evidence of it being replaced by another plant species.*
6. *Clone: A plant or animal derived from another plant or animal with the same genetic make-up.*
7. *Cloning: Production of a cell, plant or animal with the same nuclear genome as another cell, plant or animal. In practice: The technique of producing a genetically identical copy of an animal by replacing the nucleus of an unfertilized ovum with the nucleus of a body cell from that animal.*
8. *Composite (breed): A livestock breed derived from at least two component breeds, designed to retain heterosis and/or breed complementarily in future generations without crossbreeding, and maintained as a purebred.*
9. *Ecosystem: Biological system comprising both living organisms and the non-living, basic elements and compounds of the environment.*
10. *Encroachment: The spread of a plant into an area where previously it did not occur.*
11. *Genome: All of the genetic information, the entire genetic complement, and all of the hereditary material possessed by the plant or animal.*
12. *Genotype: Genetic constitution of a cell, plant or animal; the constitution referring to the entire set of genes.*
13. *Grazing or browsing capacity: The graze able or browse able portion of a homogeneous unit of vegetation, expressed in the context of the area of land required to maintain a single livestock unit over an extended period without deterioration to the vegetation or soil*
14. *Habitat: The environment in which a plant or animal normally lives and is adapted to.*
15. *Key species: Those plant species which have the greatest effect on the condition of the rangeland or pasture and which are responsive to changes and manipulation.*
16. *Stocking rate: Area of land in the system of management which the operator has allotted to each livestock unit in the system, and which is expressed per length of the graze able and/or browse able period of the year*
17. *Transgenesis: A transgenic plant or animal has had genes from another plant or animal put into its genome through recombinant DNA techniques. Alternative: A plant or animal in which there has been a deliberate*

modification of its genome; the genome being the genetic make-up of a plant or animal which is responsible for the inherited characteristics.

18. Veld (range) condition: Condition of the rangeland in relation to some functional characteristics, normally maximum forage production and resistance to soil erosion.

19. Veld (range) type: Unit of vegetation whose range of variation is small enough to permit the whole of it to have the same farming potential.

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1. Introduction

Farming is about sustenance and sustainable profitability. It is also about heritage, as farmers are custodians of land. In their influencing environment, it is about their responsibility for and care of resources and those that share or are affected by the activities of the farming enterprise. In South Africa these values are guided amongst others by several Acts, the National Agricultural Strategy, the GreenChoice Alliance, as well as operational functions of farmer support bodies such as the Red Meat Producers Organization (RPO) and the National Emerging Red Meat Producers Organization (NERPO). **The values, therefore, become imperatives which require farmer and support structure commitment.**

In more practical terms this philosophy translates into the following: Modern day farming has evolved from a largely techno-economical viable enterprise into one that is integrated with natural resources, biodiversity, ecosystem, welfare, and social, global and consumer considerations. Sustainability and profitability of production and supporting agricultural practices are therefore increasingly dependent on socio-economic and natural system influences. Consequently, **a Code of Best Practice must commit the industry and farmers to adherence to principles and imperatives** that address these issues. In order to give substance to the resolution, the contents of the Code pay attention to:

- Guidelines from the “Livestock Development Strategy for South Africa 2006-2015” (www.daff.gov.za).
- RPO and NERPO obligations and functions.
- Supportive descriptions and arguments in the “GreenChoice Living Farms Reference: Generic principles, criteria and indicators for sustainable farm management in SA” (2010 version; www.wwf.org.za).

and, discuss the following in more detail:

- Conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems.
- Protection of natural resources.
- Maintenance of animal health and well-being.
- Safeguarding the livelihood and well-being of employees, and contributing

to the social and economic development of the local community.

- Assuring safe and high-quality animal products to the consumer.

2. Guidelines from the Livestock Development Strategy for South Africa:

The Livestock Development Strategy (LDS) emanated from the National Agricultural Strategy (Strategic Plan for South African Agriculture of 2002; www.daff.gov.za). The point of departure in the LDS is core and complementary strategies that inform livestock farming for the future. As such, these are not further discussed but they form the backbone of all principles and guidelines below. The strategies are:

Core:

- Enhance equitable access and participation in agriculture.
- Improve global competitiveness and profitability.
- Ensure sustainable resource management.

Complementary:

- Good governance.
- Integrated and sustainable rural development.
- Knowledge and innovation.
- International co-operation.
- Safety and security.

The LDS is a co-operative agreement between government, represented by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), and the livestock industries where government primarily has the responsibility to provide an enabling environment and the industries the organized and operational framework to, where applicable, support the core and complementary strategies. In relation to the Code of Best Practice the following is pertinent:

- RPO and NERPO should have business and implementation plans aligned with the LDS.
- RPO and NERPO should liaise regularly with the DAFF and associative

government structures to review implementation plans and monitor progress.

- As members of the Red Meat Industry Forum, RPO and NERPO should assist with development of a common position on agricultural policies as they affect the red meat industry.
- RPO and NERPO members should judiciously protect and utilize the high health status and diverse gene pools of the South African red meat species in support of maintaining biodiversity, competitiveness and profitability. (See Section 4).
- RPO and NERPO should emphasize to their members the importance of humane and environment compatible husbandry practices. (See Sections 4, 5 & 6).
- RPO and NERPO should encourage commercial and emerging farmers to join the respective organizations to benefit from the information and knowledge base provided by them, as well as the mentorship, common interest and collective bargaining potential of the South African Federation of Red Meat Producers (the “Federation”).
- In support of domestic and global competitiveness RPO and NERPO through the Federation should commission investigations into the reasons for sub-optimal efficiencies in red meat production, develop strategies for research and development (R & D) and non-R & D interventions, and commit funds to these.
- To increase market share RPO and NERPO individually and through the Federation should increase their commitment and focus to understand and satisfy the needs of consumers through surveys, promotion, innovation and R & D input, and invest more in such efforts as in the past. (See Section 8).
- In support of the emerging sector RPO in liaison with NERPO should assist with training, mentorship and demonstration. As a more advanced responsibility, RPO should assist with formation of co-operative structures with shareholding, and with participation in and representation of black entrepreneurs in agri-business.

3. RPO and NERPO obligations and functions:

RPO and NERPO are autonomous organizations with the highest authority in representing the interests of respectively commercial and emerging red meat farmers. For RPO the umbrella goal is to assist commercial farmers to maintain optimum profitability by coordinating liaison, investigations, submissions and bargaining, thereby serving their collective interests and by providing information that could enhance their enterprises. Goal-supporting functions are communication, Black Economic Empowerment, animal health issues, stock theft, damage causing animals (predators), R & D, monitoring of imports, traceability and several ad hoc services in the interest of members and the industry.

NERPO was established to facilitate commercialization of the emerging red meat sector in order that the members may meaningfully participate in the economy at large. Empowerment in terms of social and economic well-being is facilitated by institutional capacity building, lobbying for supporting legislation, assistance to obtain appropriate technologies, credit and market access and ensuring job opportunities in the supply chain for members, youth and women. To that effect NERPO through its consulting arm provides services to their members in research, project development and training, and through its investment and financial support arm seeks opportunities of investment, shareholding, loans and capital acquisition.

In terms of the Code of Best Practice both members and functionaries of RPO and NERPO should commit themselves to meeting their goals and objectives, as well as the imperatives of the LDS.

4. Conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems:

Maintaining biodiversity of flora and fauna species and the associated ecosystems have become a global concern as the successful functioning, resilience and sustainable utilization of natural resources in future as in the past will depend on sufficient genetic diversity and healthy ecosystems. To support imperatives in this regard and provide directives, several pieces of legislation have been promulgated which partially can be found in Acts such as the Animal Protection Act (Act 71 of 1962), The Animal Improvement Act (Act 62 of 1998) and the Sustainable Utilisation of Resources Bill of 2003 (www.daff.gov.za; go to "Legislation" and then "Acts"), and primarily in The National Environment: Biodiversity Act 10 of 2004 (NEMBA) (www.polity.org.za; go to "Legislation & Policy" and then "Acts"), with supportive reading from The National Water Act, Act 36 of 1998. Follow-up

publications to NEMBA provide further detail: South Africa's National Spatial Biodiversity Assessment (2005) and the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2006) (consult the document: "GreenChoice Living Farms Reference: Generic principles, criteria and indicators for sustainable farm management in SA"; reference given under 1. Introduction). Strategies from these documents with relevance to livestock farmers are:

- Conservation of representative samples of species and habitat.
- Conservation of the ecological and evolutionary processes that allow biodiversity to persist over time and to set biodiversity targets.
- Linking biodiversity and socio-economic development. **One principle is that co-operation is required between production sectors and private and communal land-owners to maintain biodiversity, to prevent the loss of threatened habitat and species and to protect ecosystem functioning.**
- Focus emergency action on threatened ecosystems to prevent further loss of ecosystem functioning. Since threatened ecosystems and land degradation are often found in farming and communal areas, minimizing these could be supported by amongst others stewardship between private and communal land-owners.

Clearly, here is a responsibility for all RPO and NERPO members.

In the livestock sector, global concern for the loss of diversity in genetic resources because of injudicious crossbreeding and replacement, together with a growing awareness of the real value of adapted minimum care breeds to the natural vegetation, have boosted maintenance of genetic diversity and created a lucrative market for South African farmers of such breeds and composites. The demand will increase with increased attention to investigations into sequenced genomes and transgenic or cloned animals to exploit favourable genes for increased productivity and quality livestock products. To conserve animal genetic material is more difficult than with plants where seed is easily stored, because semen and ova are expensive to store. **Therefore, sustainable utilization of existing animals themselves remains the primary option, placing a strong biodiversity perspective on the responsibilities of seedstock (stud) suppliers.** For that purpose and to ensure that livestock farmers maintain the competitive advantage in the international market, guarantees on lineage and genetic soundness will have to be provided. This will be successful only if breed societies, registering authorities,

farmer associations (RPO, NERPO), service providers and traders in genetic material work together to provide the necessary certification on positive identification, pedigrees (by for example regular randomized parentage testing) and performance. Also, the Federation together with others involved should work towards establishing the legal framework for animal breeders' rights to the benefit of commercial and emerging farmers. Arguments in favour of a legal framework were advanced also in the first report on the State of the World's Genetic Resources (FAO, 2007). In addition, in support of the discussion above, the following resolutions were adopted:

- Animal genetic resources are a global concern, because they are essential to achieve food security and sustainable livelihoods.
- Domestic animal diversity is essential for future generations to develop breeds adapted to largely unforeseeable ecological and economical scenarios.
- The conservation of animal genetic resources must be promoted and much more awareness raised.

For further reading, consult the National Beef Cattle Strategy and Implementation Framework which falls under the LDS (www.daff.gov.za).

5. Protection of natural resources:

Although there are several examples to the contrary, degradation of natural vegetation, loss of underlying soils, poor water retention because of wetland drainage or damage, alien plant invasion and bush encroachment are well-documented as reasons why rangeland (veld) condition and grazing capacity have deteriorated. The situation is of concern for sustainable livestock production and maintenance of natural resource protection and biodiversity, and it becomes alarming when the perceived negative effects of predicted climate change are taken into account. **To improve or reverse the condition of the natural resources, a holistic and inclusive management approach will be required with dedication by government, supporting non-government organisations (NGO's), the agricultural associations and the farmer as the custodian of the land. Functionaries and members of RPO and NERPO must be committed to this responsibility.**

Guidelines are provided by the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act 43 of 1983, The Sustainable Utilisation of Resources Bill of 2003, the LandCare Program

(www.daff.gov.za/docs/landcarepage.htm) and the LDS, with supporting reading provided by the Best Practice Reference Manual for Wool Sheep Farming in South Africa (www.nwga.co.za) and the document: “Sustainable Mohair Industry Production Guidelines: Pre-Farm Gate” (e-mail:info@mohair.co.za). Objectives address issues of maintaining the production potential of the land, restoration and prevention of erosion, preventing the deterioration or destruction of water sources, protection of the natural vegetation and combating invading weeds and alien species. In terms of measures the objectives translate to the following:

5.1 Rangeland management:

Since rangeland condition largely determines the productivity and well-being of the ecosystem or biome, the healthier the rangeland the more productive and sustainable livestock production will be. Rangeland in a healthy state limits the variation in seasonal induced fodder supply, it maximizes the return in fodder production per unit rainfall and the number of palatable species, and it prevents soil erosion and water run-off. Therefore, rangeland in a healthy condition is also to an extent an effective antipode to droughts. To the contrary, rangeland in a poor state due to overgrazing, bush encroachment, invasion of alien species and soil erosion shifts everything above towards the opposite.

Of all measures, stocking rate has the highest correlation with the biological output of livestock products, the economic return and the long term condition of the rangeland; these are optimized at stocking rates aligned to the grazing capacity (number of hectares per defined livestock unit) of the defined area and whether the rangeland management system allows for alternating comparatively short grazing cycles and long resting periods. Thus farmer dedication to rangeland protection and restoration (supported by appropriate expertise) should be to:

- Restore the loss of basal cover
- Restore the loss of key climax and palatable species
- Address bush encroachment and invasion of alien species
- Employ conservative stocking rates aligned with regularly monitored grazing capacity
- Prevent soil erosion and recover eroded areas through natural and mechanical means

With regard to grazing capacity, stocking rate and rangeland management system the introduction of wildlife warrants a specific comment: Game species on the farm or introduced may support sustainable rangeland management provided their requirements and influence on the resource are taken into account and provided they are endemic to the area. The negatives of overgrazing discussed above have been aggravated with the injudicious introduction and stocking of game species, in addition to exposing susceptible domestic livestock to game non-susceptible diseases. Where applicable, game species introduced should include browsers, selective feeders and bulk (grass) feeders to complement effective rangeland management strategies, but stocking rates should even be more conservative as alternating grazing-resting cycle management programs are not always easily employable.

For further information consult the authoritative textbook edited by N. M. Tainton (1999): "Veld Management in South Africa", available from University of KZN Press, Pietermaritzburg or leading book shops.

5.2 Supporting fodder supply:

Where the potential of vegetation resources are limited and/or overgrazed the fodder supply should be supported by cultivated species. Drought tolerant crops should be established in areas susceptible to seasonal, annual and longer term droughts. In cash crop areas crop residues provide a valuable supplementary fodder source whereas various high potential grass and legume species are considerations in high rainfall areas and the south and eastern seaboard. The principle is to support livestock productivity when the rangeland fodder supply is limited and/or to support rangeland resting phases through removal of stock. A word of caution though: Whereas cultivated pastures offer the opportunity to increase fodder supply and potential overall grazing capacity, if unwisely implemented by increasing livestock numbers this practice can actually increase degradation of the natural vegetation. This will result when the animals are supplemented by the cultivated resource during winter and put to pasture in summer without reducing numbers. The ratio between supplementary fodder sources and fodder supply from the rangeland, therefore, should be assessed carefully and holistically before deciding on the introduction of cultivated fodder support. Farmers should consult expertise and various literature sources for guidance and suitable cultivated species, example: "Pasture Management in South Africa" (1999), edited by N. M. Tainton, University of KZN Press, Pietermaritzburg.

5.3 Bush encroachment and alien species invasion:

Bush encroachment and alien species invasion have in common habitat destruction and the reduction in resilience, productivity and water holding capacity of rangelands, biomes and ecosystems. Bush encroachment under particular circumstances occurs because climatic variation may favour increases in woody species, but primarily it results because of long term overgrazing. Apart from the factors above, the net effect is lower fodder production and therefore a reduction in grazing capacity and the economic viability of the property. Alien species in addition reduce habitat and water availability for indigenous species and increase the risk and intensity of wild fires, thereby putting biodiversity at risk.

Landowners should be committed to control the invasion of woody species by fire, or mechanical and chemical means, depending on advice of rangeland management experts. In the case of alien species they are under legal obligation to control the invasion. Table 3 in The Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act lists all declared weeds and invader plants, dividing invaders in three categories according to the risk:

- Category 1: These species must be removed and controlled by all land users. They may not be propagated, established or traded with (examples rooikrans, hakea).
- Category 2: These species pose a threat to the environment but nevertheless have commercial value. They are only allowed in demarcated zones. The land user must obtain a water use license as these invaders use large quantities of water (examples black wattle, grey poplar, pine).
- Category 3: These species are potential invaders but have ornamental value. Existing plants do not have to be removed but no new plantings are allowed and they may not be sold (examples jacaranda, syringe, sword fern).

Alien grasses are amongst the worst invaders, especially in lowland ecosystems and are sometimes difficult to detect and control (examples wild oats, quacking grass, kikuyu, riggut brome, rats' tall fescue). Burning or hand clearing are not effective methods of control since they stimulate alien grasses. The judicious use of pre-emergent, systemic herbicides is usually effective. Consult the useful alien species clearing contacts: www.daff.gov.za/docs/landcare.htm or Working for

Water: www.dwaf.gov.za/wfw or e-mail: weedbuster@dwaf.gov.za.

5.4 Preventing pollution:

Effective waste management, judicious pesticide and fertiliser application methods and control of effluent from intensive operations such as feedlots are essential to protect the environment (particularly wetlands or marshes and other water sources). To that effect, refuse management must comply with legal prescriptions and not create a health hazard; the land owner should use a recycling management program or add value to the waste for commercial application (consult www.fairestcape.co.za); and, avoid pesticide drift and fertiliser runoff onto natural areas, in particular wetlands and water sources (consult www.dwaf.gov.za).

6. Maintenance of animal health and well-being:

As with others, this section is guided by several Acts and pieces of legislation (consult www.daff.gov.za). The following is relevant to RPO and NERPO and their members:

- Animal Health Act, 2002 (Act no 7 of 2002)
- Animal Identification Act, 2002 (Act no 6 of 2002)
- Animal Improvement Act, 1998 (Act no 62 of 1998)
- Animal Protection Act, 1962 (Act no 71 of 1962)
- Fertilizers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act, 1947 (Act no 36 of 1947)

In addition, Codes of Practice with relevance to RPO and NERPO members were developed by the Livestock Welfare Coordinating Committee (commissioned by the DAFF) for:

- The Handling and Transport of Animals
- Feedlots
- The Handling of Livestock at Sale Yards and Vending Sites

The Codes of Practice (obtainable from the RPO office or web) should be read in conjunction with the Animal Protection Act (Act no 71 of 1962) and a supporting

document, the “Manual of Animal Care and Use”, which was compiled by the South African Veterinary Foundation (www.savf.org.za). The Manual was developed to consolidate all pieces of legislation on animal care.

6.1 Points of departure in the Codes of Practice and supporting document: Animal welfare can be defined as a reflection of people’s concern for the humane treatment of animals. Internationally, therefore, the humane treatment of animals is guided by a set of principles when it comes to the care and use of animals, such as with livestock on farms, in transit, or in sale yards or feedlots. Those with relevance to RPO and NERPO are the following:

- a) A realization that there is a critical relationship between animal health and animal welfare.
- b) The recognized “five freedoms” provide valuable guidance in animal welfare management (these are: freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition; freedom from fear and distress; freedom from physical and thermal discomfort; freedom from pain, injury and disease; and freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour).
- c) The use of animals carries with it a duty to ensure the welfare of such animals to the greatest extent practicable.
- d) Improvements in farm animal (livestock) care can often improve productivity and lead to economic benefits.

The basic principles are not difficult to associate with, in fact they reflect the love of farmers for their livestock and if adhered to can be positive to their balance statements. To that effect there are many confirmation studies, examples are: the animal that does not bruise when in transit because of well-designed transport equipment; quality and shelf life of meat improve with humane handling practices; losses are minimized and efficiencies of production improved if stress and disease are controlled.

RPO and NERPO members should study the Code of Practice of Handling and Transport of Livestock since they are regularly confronted with handling and transport of stock. Although the Code for Feedlots was compiled for commercial operations, some farmers do feed their weaned calves, lambs or kids on farm, which make the guidelines of feedlot construction and procedures handy. The Code of Practice for the Handling of Livestock at Sale Yards and Vending Sites was compiled for the person(s) responsible for the auction or vending site, but it

provides valuable norms and procedures for farmers transporting livestock to and from and housing them at the premises.

6.2 Provision of feed and water:

Livestock should be provided with feed compositions which in relation to requirements for specific physiological states such as growth, pregnancy and lactation, are nutritionally adequate and free of contaminants. Their water supply should be clean, also free of contaminants and provided at a level of 3 to 4 litres per kg of dry feed intake. Conditions favourable to heat stress should be avoided through management and housing but if experienced, water supply should be increased by 50% or more.

The nutritional requirements of the livestock should be assessed in relation to the amount, quality and continuity of the feed supply. Total mixed rations and supplements should be formulated under the guidance of a qualified animal nutritionist to prevent metabolic and other disorders which may lower production and cause unnecessary discomfort or pain to the animal. Feeding and watering during droughts require special attention and put a burden on resources. For further details, RPO and NERPO members should consult Act 36 of 1947 (www.daff.gov.za), the Best Practice Reference Manual for Wool Sheep Farming in South Africa and “Sustainable Mohair Industry Production Guidelines: Pre-Farm Gate”.

If self mixing is considered, the document “Good Manufacturing Practice for Self Mixing of Feed for the Livestock Industry”, compiled by the SABS (www.sabs.co.za) provides valuable guidelines. Some specifications may be too stringent and costly to implement for the farmer operator that mixes less than 100 tons per annum (which is the stance taken by RPO and NERPO); nevertheless, feeds and feedstuffs may become contaminated if basic hygiene and sanitation measures are not implemented with negative consequences to human and animal health, and environmental protection. **Farmers, therefore, should ensure that they keep trace of all feed products, have a dedicated feed mixing and storage facility, control access to the facility, keep it clean, unpolluted and free of vermin, store veterinary additives and medicines as specified, regularly check mixing equipment and train staff properly with regard to safety measures and handling skills.**

6.3 Health and disease:

Maintaining good health and preventing disease are partly management and partly control driven. For further information RPO and NERPO members should consult the Animal Health Act (Act no 7 of 2002), and in association the Animal Protection Act (Act no 71 of 1962). The Animal Health Act amongst others provide for measures to promote animal health and control animal diseases.

Many husbandry and managerial practices are required to prevent production losses, disease and discomfort. Some procedures may result in short term distress, but if not implemented can lead to even greater distress and pain. Principles here are:

- a) Procedures that cause pain must be minimized and not performed if practical alternatives exist.
- b) On farm health and disease control management procedures must be done by competent and experienced operators or under the supervision of a veterinarian.
- c) Precautionary health measures should always be employed.

Owners and managers should ensure that livestock are routinely monitored with respect to overall health and maintaining good condition. A sound health program must be developed and implemented for the benefit of the herd and traceability purposes (see Section 8). This should be done in consultation with a veterinarian and can include regular inspections of welfare issues such as feed, water, protection against climatic extremes, disease, injury, morbidity and distress. Sick or injured animals must be attended to promptly, treated appropriately or killed humanely in an accepted manner and within specified legal parameters. **If remedies are required, they must be administered strictly according to the instructions of the manufacturer and where applicable, medicines according to the prescription of the veterinarian. Also, these products must never be administered routinely, but only when required.**

6.4 Control of damage causing animals (predators):

Predators such as jackal, leopard and caracal in natural systems or reserves are important in controlling population numbers and removing old and sick animals and decaying carcasses. Unfortunately, on adjacent farms calves and small stock are easy targets resulting in enormous losses per year. Obviously this has major

consequences to the agricultural gross domestic product (GDP), export of wool and mohair, and domestic meat supply.

Efforts by farmers to protect their stock by killing marauding predators have been met with emotional protests from the public and have become a major welfare issue. It is therefore important to meet the interests of all stakeholders by working towards an acceptable long term solution. Affected farmers should take cognizance of the principles and proposed measures below.

These predators are territorial, which implies that if killed other dominant ones will simply fill the vacuum. A second principle is that not all predators by preference prey on calves and small stock; most will only do so if their natural prey such as small antelope, dassies, hares, birds and lizards become limiting. **Thus, a balanced approach to the problem with selective killing (only culprits), collaborating with neighbours, predator experts and adjacent reserves, and restoration of the ecosystem and natural prey on farms, is the only long term solution.** If killing is necessary, it must be quick and humane to prevent suffering – preferably use qualified hunters. Killing is not the only option; farmers can use “natural shepherds” (for example donkeys, alpacas and dogs), pens, predator proof fencing or livestock protecting collars, provided the methods employed have been cleared with the authorities. **Methods which cause morally indefensible suffering to animals such as poisoning, use of hunting dogs and leg-holding devices/gin traps are neither endorsed nor condoned.**

For further reading, consult the Best Practice Manual for Wool Sheep Farming in South Africa and “Sustainable Mohair Industry Production Guidelines: Pre-Farm Gate”.

7. Safeguarding the livelihood and well-being of employees, and contributing to the social and economic development of the local community:

This section is informed by The Labour Relations Act (Act 66 of 1995), The Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998), The Basic Conditions of Employment Act (Act 75 of 1999), The Skills Development Act (Act 97 of 1998), The Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (Act 130 of 1993) and The Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Act (Act 3 of 1996) (www.polity.org.za). **The overriding principle is that farmers need to ensure that the rights and well-being of farm workers and their families are upheld and that they contribute to the social and economic development of the local community and on the periphery.**

The Labour Relations Act for example deals with rights as contained in the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of South Africa. Those relevant to RPO and NERPO members are: the right of freedom of association of both employer and employee, the protection of employers and those seeking employment, the protection of the rights of employees (Sections 4 and 9), the organizational rights of employees such as access to the workplace by a representative of the trade union, collective bargaining rights, the right of employees to strike and the right of an employer's recourse to lockout (Sections 64-71), unfair dismissal and unfair labour practices (Sections 185-197), and supporting Codes of Good Practice to deal with fair dismissals, sexual harassment and HIV/AIDS in employment. Consult www.labour.gov.za for details.

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act was promulgated to advance economic development and social justice by giving effect to the right to fair labour practices. It is supported by a Code of Good Practice which deals with fair working hours and the impact of working time on the health, safety and family responsibilities of employees. The Skills Development Act was introduced to develop the skills of the South African workforce, improve their quality of life, their prospects of work and labour-associated mobility, improve the productivity in the workplace and therefore the competitiveness of employers, promote self-employment and improve the employment prospects through training and education. The Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act is designed amongst others to provide for the health and safety of people at work, those that use or are exposed to potential dangerous equipment and those on the periphery of where the work is conducted. Finally, The Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Act was introduced to provide for security of tenure of labour tenants and people occupying or using land as a result of their association with labour tenants. The Act also deals with the acquisition of land and the rights to land by labour tenants.

RPO and NERPO members should commit themselves to the following:

- Comply with the conditions legislated for fair labour practice.
- Contribute to employee unemployment benefits.
- Contribute to the skills development of employees.
- Provide for compensation of death or disablement resulting from occupational activities.

- Provide for the safety and health of the persons at work.
- Uphold the rights of labour tenants and farm occupiers to reside on land and to acquire land where appropriate.
- Ensure that land on the farm is available for recreational use.
- Participate in actions towards establishment of a sustainable local economy.

One way of participating in such actions is to adopt a policy of preferential employment of residents from the local community or from labour tenants on the farm. Applicable research results suggest that agricultural growth and efficient management of natural resources are dependent on the political, legal and administrative capabilities of rural communities to determine their own future and to protect their natural resources and other economic interests. Commitments hereto should be read together with obligations discussed in the recommendations of the LDS, and RPO and NERPO goals and objectives. **The overriding principle is that farmers are the mainstay of the economy of towns, townships and the surrounding rural environment, and they have the knowledge and skills to support development towards a viable and sustainable local economy.**

8. **Assuring safe and high-quality animal products to the consumer:**

Access to safe and healthy food is a fundamental human right and endorsed in the Constitution of South Africa. As such, this puts a responsibility and commitment on all concerned in the supply chain (farmers, processors and retailers), to meet these obligations to consumers. The farmer obligation and commitment in this regard really comes down to all principles and measures discussed above: **It is about everything captured in conservation of ecosystems, protection of the natural resource base, animal welfare measures and training and social development of employees.** After all, it makes economic sense to follow humane animal management and health guidelines, to graze and supplement livestock closely aligned with the sustainable grazing capacity of the area, to support the water supply by maintaining wetlands, and to train and support farm workers to become better employees for the combined task of achieving economic stability and sustainability of the enterprise.

The supply of safe and healthy (quality) livestock products is not about an organic versus a conventional farming system, or intensive versus extensive practices, as

has been regularly argued in the popular media. Rather it is about **control of risks**; all systems have risks which the farmer needs to be aware of and manage meticulously. For example health and growth promoting products that come on the market have been thoroughly tested, often over periods of years, to comply with human and environment safety measures before they can be registered. **They do however have storage, usage and withdrawal specifications which must be adhered to.**

Risk control becomes effective when a **traceability and audit system** is implemented. From the perspective of the farmer it assists in controlling health and safety risks before the farm gate, but it also supports communication down the supply chain, because regular interaction with processors and retailers becomes necessary (as an example RPO and NERPO members can consult the Woolworths Code of Practice for Sheep Production, available from the RPO office). Traceability requires identification of all animals by tattooing (Animal Identification Act) and the keeping of records of: breeding and husbandry practices, disease and medical treatments, feed sources and compositions, health, safety and contamination (e.g. waste, pollution etc.), and important - control of access to the farm or contact with livestock and the work environment, because such contacts can spread disease. Therefore, to comply, farmers are advised to implement **bio-security measures, have a policy on visitors, draw up a written veterinary health plan with time frames, have regular recorded visits and reports from a veterinarian and have recorded assistance from a nutritionist when doing home mixing** (the latter to comply with specifications of Act no 36 of 1947). On farm training and skills development should emphasize the reasons and actions for these measures to limit risk and ensure safe products, thereby supporting the socio-economic well-being of both employer and employee. All these measures can be accommodated and put to practice by implementing an integrated farm management plan.