



Correct control methods are key

➞ by Niel Viljoen

Part of the NWGA's strategy for improving predation management in South Africa is the introduction of so-called monitor farms demonstrating best-practice predation management. In total there are 29 monitor farms covering an area of 155 000 ha.

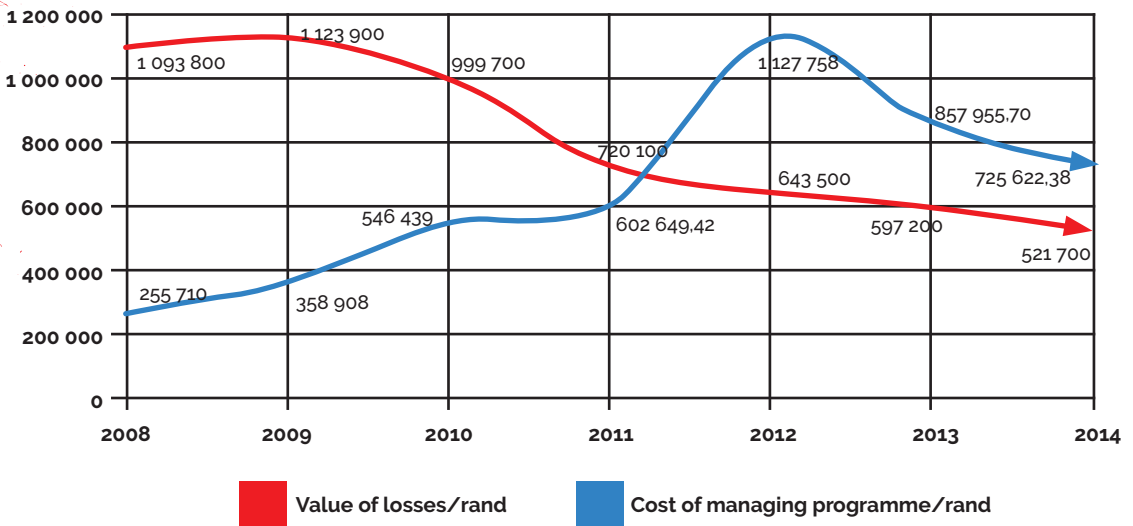


Understanding predation and the behaviour of predators are the key factors in the success of predation management programmes that are being implemented by commercial livestock farmers. A combination of knowledge, both by the farmer and his workforce, and the use of the correct control methods will determine the outcome and success of a predation management programme.

To summarise the effect the predation management programme has had on the monitoring farms the overall results are revealed in Figure 1.

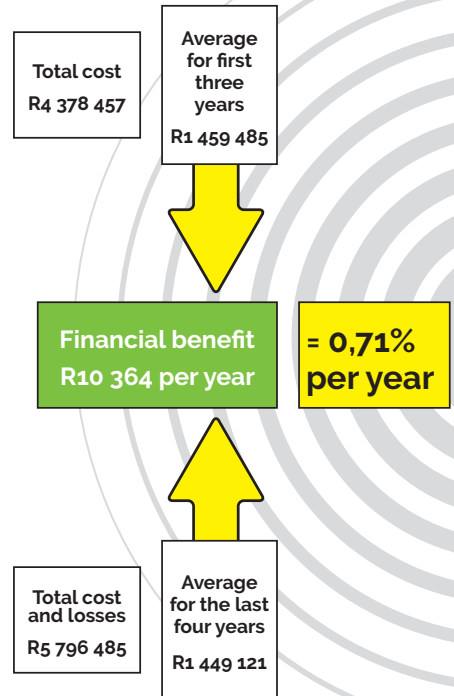
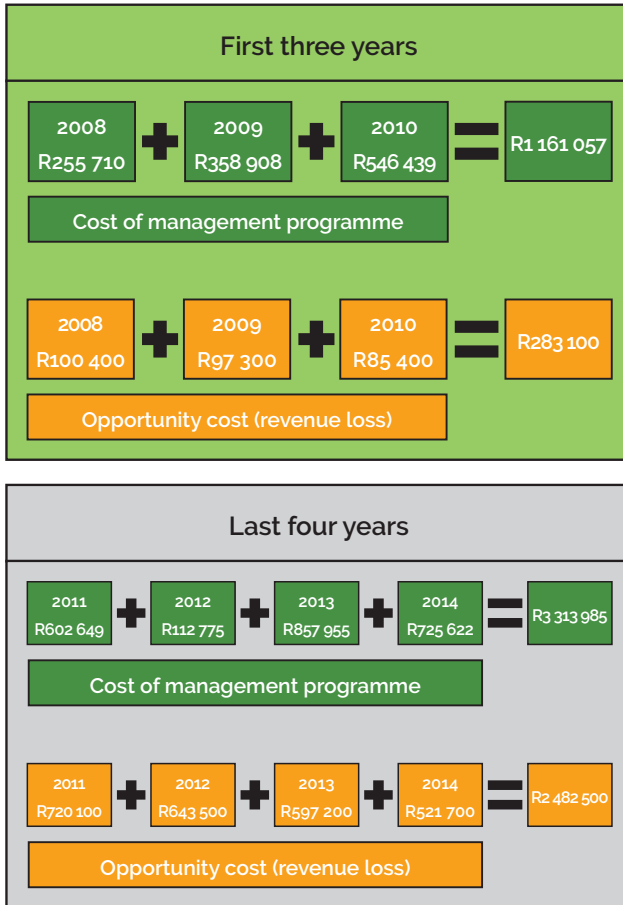
In Figure 1 the three-year period before the management programme had an effect is clearly visible. After three years there was a significant drop in the number of animals lost due to predators. The huge amount of money spent nationally on the management programme in 2012/13 was due to an initiative by BKB which offered a better price for jackal-proof fencing. Four provinces – the Western Cape, the Northern Cape, the Eastern Cape and the Free State – invested in this programme. Figure 1 gives a clear indication of the money spent nationally in 2012/2013.

Figure 1: National cost analysis



The following diagram provides an average total cost-benefit analysis for all the monitor farms in the Western Cape, the Northern Cape, the Free State, the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Kwa-Zulu-Natal. Despite the financial negative values in the costs of the management programme for the Free State, the overall average in all the provinces was a national financial benefit of 0.7%.

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Summary

The monitor farms prove that it is possible to manage predation. The sustainability of this is totally dependent on the farmer's ability to incorporate and manage his predation management programme. Not one of the management tools available can be used on their own. A combined and integrated approach of control methods is necessary.


One of the options farmers have to manage the predation problem is to isolate their property or part of the property with either jackal-proof fencing or electric fencing. Indifference about predator behaviour and management options are still the biggest stumbling blocks

preventing farmers from being totally in control of their predation problems. Unfortunately, these options are costly, but there are benefits:

- Isolating a farm or a block of farms tends to keep unwanted predators outside the block being isolated.
- Isolated areas are easier to manage.
- Isolated areas interfere and affect the natural behavioural patterns of predators.
- Isolated areas compel predators to change their behaviour to more predictable patterns.
- Predictable behavioural patterns are easier to manage. This will make predation management more successful, less stressful and time consuming and more cost-effective.

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This report has demonstrated the cost benefits of a well-considered predation programme. The extent of the benefit is dependent on the following:

- the time spent on the management programme;
- good record-keeping;
- good knowledge of the behaviour of predators;
- understanding the topography of the farm and how it impacts on predator behaviour;
- knowledge and understanding of the management tools available, both lethal and non-lethal; and
- implementation of the management plan. 



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