



Gweru lease agreement

As previously reported in ALERT updates, the Zimbabwean Authorities agreed a 1,000 acre piece of land adjacent to Antelope Park in Gweru to rebuild the release area that was originally sited at the Dollar Block reserve; building for which is ongoing.

Having viewed the progress of the African Lion Rehabilitation & Release into the Wild Program in further detail, Antelope Park has been offered the option of a further 5,200 acres and we are happy to report that the agreement for this additional land has now been signed. For many years now the land has been under-utilised bringing little economic benefit to the local community. This additional land affords Antelope Park a number of exciting opportunities for development in addition to the release areas being built.



Firstly, the Park itself could be extended from its current size of 3,000 acres. Antelope Park is located just outside the city of Gweru in the centre of Zimbabwe; a region almost devoid of wildlife following the introduction of extensive agriculture and livestock farming many years ago. Such extension will conserve land for wildlife and in particular will enhance protection of the dwindling vulture populations of the region – six species of which, including the endangered Cape Vulture, are known to frequent the Park’s Vulture’s Restaurant.

Our oldest lions are nearing the end of their natural breeding life. It is our intention to release these lions as a pride into a protected area where they will have the opportunity to live out their days in a semi-natural environment with the opportunity to hunt and become self-sustaining. However given their time in captivity we may have to supplement feed them.

Such extension to the land available to the program could easily accommodate an area for retiring breeding lions.

The program now also has the opportunity to release an FIV positive pride of lions into stage two where we will be able to observe their progress in comparison to an FIV negative group in a separate release site. This could result in crucial knowledge about the effects of the virus on an infected lion’s survival with significant benefits to the management of the species continent-wide.

Antelope Park is one of the largest employers in the area and provides significant benefit to the local economy by direct employment and through secondary and support industries. The expansion of operations at Antelope Park, where the lion release program was developed, can only enhance social and economic development in an otherwise relatively impoverished city.

This is exciting news in the history of the release program, and everyone involved is looking forward to developing the enlarged land area over the coming months and years.