

Ellie Contraception Programme at Garonga



The aim of elephant contraception programmes is to stabilise the elephant population by introducing a management programme that does not require the relocation or immobilisation of individual elephants. This in turn reduces disruption to social and reproductive behaviours amongst elephant populations.

An elephant contraception programme was started on the Greater Makalali Private Game Reserve as a first in 1999 to manage the elephant numbers. Audrey Deslink and JJ Van Altena started the programme when Audrey was working for Makalali as a guide and researcher. The study uses a vaccine that prevents elephant eggs from being fertilised through an immune reaction, rather than through sex hormones. The programme still lets elephants give birth as this is so important to the social structure of the herds. It only prevents pregnancy over a 3 year period.

Audrey Delsink says "It has been a tremendous success and the population has stabilised." As a result the programme is now sponsored by the Humane Society of the United States (HSI).

The herd has subsequently increased in numbers from 66 to 70. Young, prepubescent cows have matured since the beginning of the study and have now had calves.

Coincidentally, a group coming out to Garonga with HSI, Audrey and JJ will soon be staying at Garonga and will see the programme in action when they dart a couple of female ellies later this year.

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