



forestry, fisheries & the environment

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 1976 {NW2316E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 18 of 2022

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 20 May 2022

Mr D W Bryant (DA) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

- (1) Whether, with reference to the concerns that have again been raised regarding the health and welfare of Charlie, the elephant at the Pretoria Zoo, with civil society offering to rewild the animal as they have concerns about its living conditions at the zoo, she has found that the current living conditions for Charlie are of a suitable standard; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details;
- (2) Whether she will consider negotiating with the zoo and civil society to help rewild the elephant; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;
- (3) What total number of elephants are currently residing in zoos in the Republic?

1976. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

- (1) The elephant at the National Zoological Garden (NZG) underwent a periodic health assessment, which was conducted on 8 March 2022. This health assessment was done by a team of six external or independent wildlife veterinary specialists and two internal veterinary doctors from the NZG. A comprehensive series of diagnostic tests and examinations were executed, including dental and ophthalmic examinations, a bronchoalveolar lavage and trunk wash to determine its tuberculosis status, as well as complete blood analysis and blood chemistry.

Faecal corticosteroid levels were also determined. The medical results received and analysis conducted do not suggest any health concerns on the elephant. At 42 years, the elephant is reported to be in a good condition, healthy and there are no concerns on its living conditions.

Charlie, the elephant, has been at the NZG for the past 21 years. He has a history of having been rehabilitated from a circus to a zoo setup and his natural incarnations have already been tampered with for his entire life (42 years), 21 of such being tendered for at the zoo. The current living conditions for Charlie are of a suitable standard for an elephant in a controlled environment and SANBI is doing its best to look after Charlie in line with the relevant protocols. SANBI continues to provide the best medical care through internal and external specialists.

- (2) I am in constant contact with the two civil society organisations interested in the matter and offering to rewild the animal. Currently, no evidence points to the success of reintroducing African elephants from zoos to the wild, especially those that have been in controlled environments for many years. Charlie, being the case of an elephant who has been in controlled environments for 42 years, may, therefore, battle to survive in a natural environment.
- (3) A total of 9 elephants are currently being kept in zoos in South Africa, as per the data provided by issuing authorities as of May 2022. Four of these elephants are currently in South Africa's renowned zoos that are affiliates to the Zoological Information Management System (ZIMS), of which one is at the NZG and three in the Johannesburg Zoo. The remainder of the elephants are kept at the Natal Zoo.

Regards



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MS B D CREECY, MP

MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

DATE: 1/06/2022