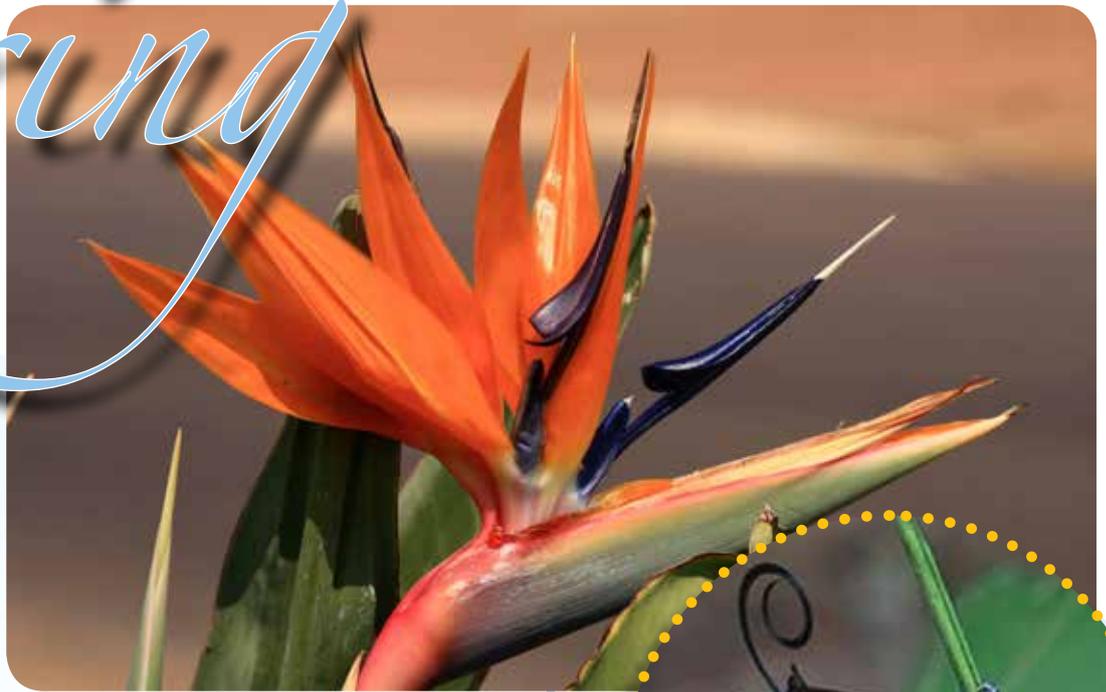


# Spring

has arrived

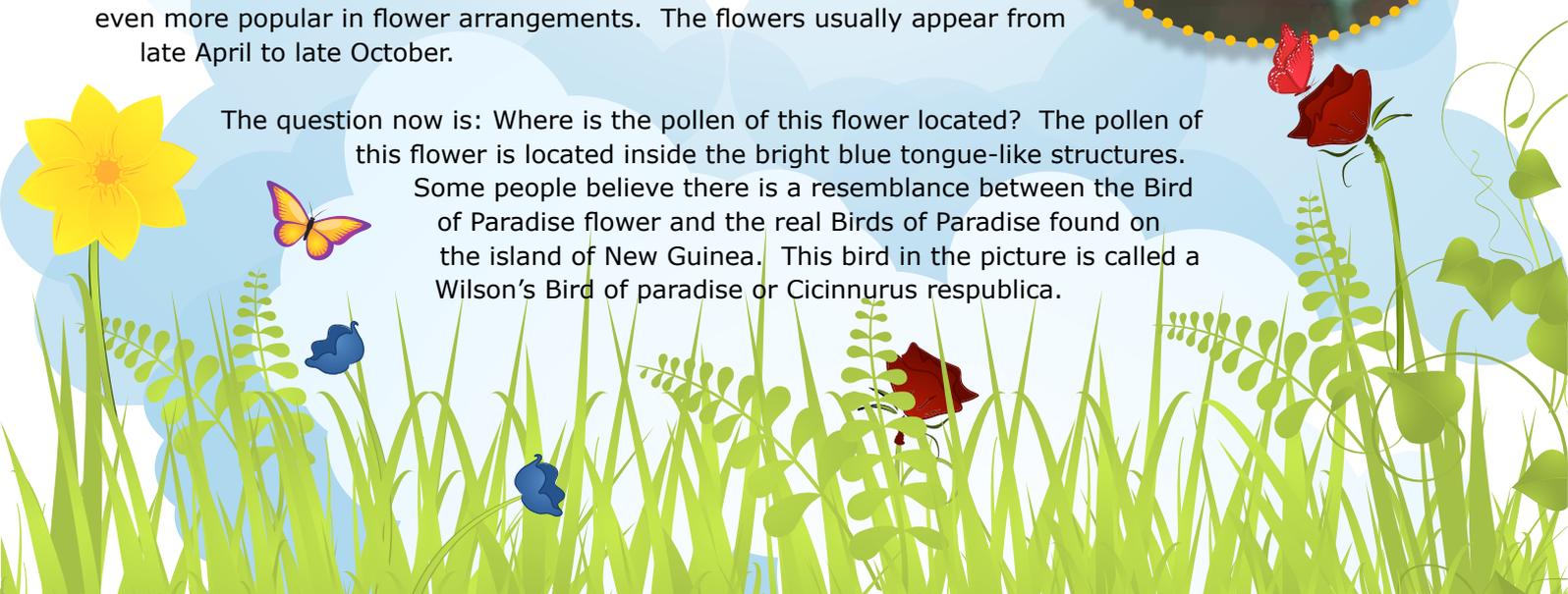


*Spring is here and everything is coming to life...*

This flower belongs to a plant family called Sterlitziaceae. In this genus there are only five species present. The Sterlitzia plant is indigenous to South Africa and is commonly called a crane flower, Bird of paradise flower or Wildepiesang. The flower on the picture is that of a plant species known as Sterlitzia reginae and it is pollinated by sunbirds and insects. The Sterlitzia is a very popular garden plant and even more popular in flower arrangements. The flowers usually appear from late April to late October.



The question now is: Where is the pollen of this flower located? The pollen of this flower is located inside the bright blue tongue-like structures. Some people believe there is a resemblance between the Bird of Paradise flower and the real Birds of Paradise found on the island of New Guinea. This bird in the picture is called a Wilson's Bird of paradise or Cicinnurus respublica.



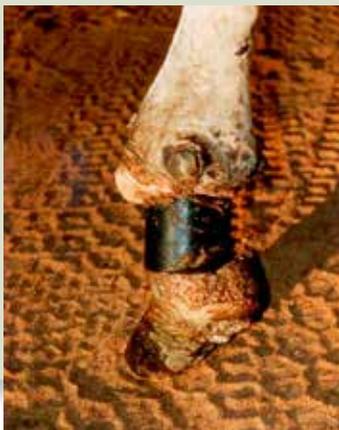
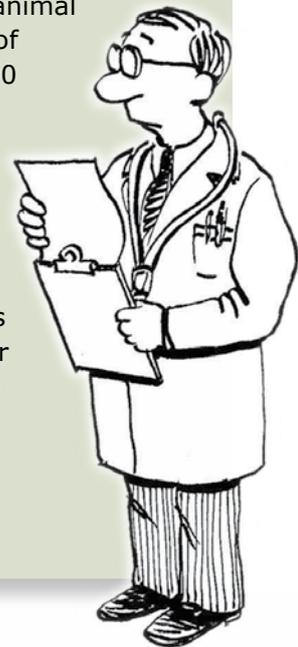
# A *NOT* so *INNOCENT* Piece of Pipe



*On construction sites and even on game ranches people are often quick to simply discard left over building materials.*

An example of this could be pieces of plastic pipe that are simply discarded at the location of where it had been worked with. Very few people think of the consequences that this could have. The way a kudu walks is by placing the tip of the hoof on the ground; this particular manner is also called walking on its toes.

A 50 mm piece of black plastic PVC pipe will easily fit over the hoof of a kudu, resulting in the foot swelling up and resulting in the blood supply being cut off. If this problem is observed soon after it has happened a veterinarian can be called to have the animal tranquilized, provided the animal can be tranquilized on foot. If this is not possible a helicopter will have to be used at a fee of nothing under R3600 per hour. The veterinarian will charge anywhere in the region of R1000 to R2000 to perform such an activity. Worst case scenario the kudu with the pipe over its hoof can go undetected and die from infection and or starvation.



A similar mishap befell a warthog. The pipe that lodged on the hoof of the warthog had a 25 mm diameter. The Environmental Impact Assessments and Environmental Management Plans for developments happening in rural areas or on Eco-Estates and game ranches should include very clear guidelines as to what should happen to building rubble and in particular to the off-cuts of any kind of pipe being used.

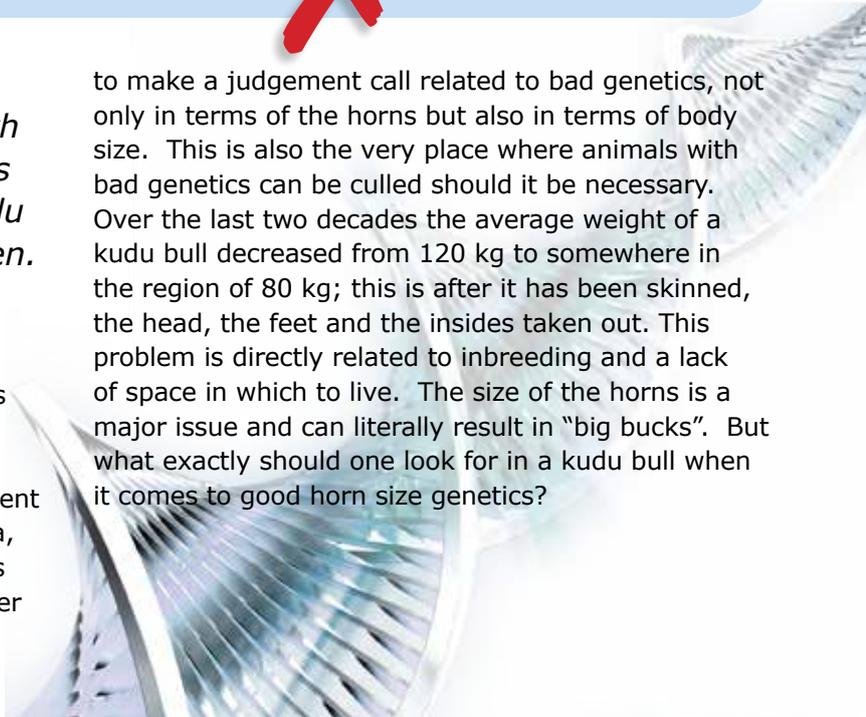
This aspect and compliance with these guidelines should be enforced to the letter.

## Good Genetics & Bad Genetics

*On many game ranches all over South Africa landowners are so concerned with the genetics of the scarce game species that the more common species like kudu and blue wildebeest are simply forgotten.*

On large game ranches (5000 ha and bigger) the issue of addressing genetic inbreeding is not such a major issue in comparison to small game ranches (less than 500 ha). On many game ranches the wildlife are fed additional supplements during the winter months. This activity will result in the different species such as kudu, blue wildebeest, eland, nyala, etc. congregating around the feeding spots. This is a good place to carefully look at the animals in order

to make a judgement call related to bad genetics, not only in terms of the horns but also in terms of body size. This is also the very place where animals with bad genetics can be culled should it be necessary. Over the last two decades the average weight of a kudu bull decreased from 120 kg to somewhere in the region of 80 kg; this is after it has been skinned, the head, the feet and the insides taken out. This problem is directly related to inbreeding and a lack of space in which to live. The size of the horns is a major issue and can literally result in "big bucks". But what exactly should one look for in a kudu bull when it comes to good horn size genetics?





Mostly kudu bulls will grow a decent sized horn ( $\pm$  50 inches) provided they are given the time to do so. On average the Southern Greater Kudu (this is the kind you will see on Ledibeng) will grow a 50 inch horn at an age of 7 to 8 years. What kind of genetics should one select when you want a 55 plus inch kudu at the age of 8 years and up? The ideal horn characteristic has to do with the depth of the curl or the spiral in the horn. This is demonstrated in these pictures. A small increase in the distance marked with an 'A' can result in a significant increase in the total length of the horn. The opposite is also true. When the horns of a kudu are measured the measurement should start on the ridge of the horn located on the front side of the horn, the ridge is then followed all along the spiral of the horn until it disappears at the tip of the horn. To purchase a kudu bull with horn lengths of 55 - 60 inches can cost anywhere from R20 000 to the current record of R80 000 paid for a 61 inch bull. Apparently size does matter!

In blue wildebeest, good horn genetics comes in the form of a wide spread (26-28 inches) at the age of five years, the spread being the distance measured at the outside of the horns at the turning points as indicated by 'B'. Bad horn genetics can be seen when the horns mature and become hard in the area of the boss (the boss is the area where the horn comes out of the head) whilst the spread is still very small.



The length of the ears in relation to the outside of the horns is often used with great success. The total length from the tip of the one ear to the tip of the other ear is usually 25 inches. When comparing the horns to the tips of the ears the ideal situation is where the horns extend far enough past the ears to where even the inside of the horns at the turn are well past the tips of the ears. The boss must then also still be soft as to allow for even further growth. On the second blue wildebeest picture it can clearly be seen that the boss has fully matured - prior to the horns reaching the desired spread - past the tip of the ears.



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***From your Wildlife Management Team***