

Re-breeding of quagga moves into new phase

JOHN YELD
Environment Reporter

THE Quagga Project — started in 1987 to re-breed the extinct quagga from zebra stocks — has moved into a new phase, with carefully selected breeding animals being released into several Cape nature reserves.

At least two more "quaggas-in-the-making" are likely to be sent to join the four animals already on Rhodes Estate.

Cape Nature Conservation, which was keeping the zebras in camps at its Vrolijkheid nature reserve near Robertson, said it was finding it "increasingly difficult" to meet the costs of feeding them.

Because the project was so successful — there are now more than 20 breeding animals — the project costs had soared from less than R20 000 a year to about R70 000, said Cape Nature Conservation spokesman Mr Dieter Odendaal.

"Apart from the Vrolijkheid nature reserve, we have other more suitable reserves which can be used for the translocation of zebras from now on.

"There they will not be managed intensively but will be allowed to breed naturally."

Quagga Project member Mr Reinhold Rau, of the South African Museum — who played a key role in the recent discovery that quaggas were not a separate species, but merely a sub-species of zebra — said there were both advantages and disadvantages to the move.

"It is in some respects an advantage to move the animals nearer Cape Town and into areas where there's natural grazing, because of the expense.

"But, we lose the convenience of having six adjoining enclosures into which we could move the animals without any problems."

Moving zebras is both costly and risky, Mr Rau pointed out.

The four surviving animals at Rhodes Estate — two died soon after being moved — were doing well, and another two probably would be moved to join them, said Mr Rau.

"Numbers are increasing every year and we're now selling two of our own foals, which are too heavily striped, to a private reserve in Barrydale."

The project had received generous funding from the Confederation of Hunters Associations of South Africa, as well as some financial contributions from the Detroit Chapter of Safari Club International in the United States, said Mr Rau.

"But up to now we have not been able to raise reliable sponsorship — and that is a big problem," he added.

Released 9/10/93

Melanie & Shauer.

Sakkies & Jeanette.

Born Maandag
or

Alex.

Released 12/10/93.

Betty & Vossi.

Lulu & Monica

Aidan.

Born 26/12/93

♀

Kangas.