



## GAME INDUSTRY FLOURISHED IN 2012!

The South African game ranching industry really flexed its muscles during 2012 and proved its value to the commercial agricultural sector. The gross turnover of game auctions showed for the second year in a row an increase of more than 65% and indications are that it will for the first time in history break the R1 billion benchmark. At present it stands at R918 million.

It is interesting to know that fewer animals were sold in 2012 with some 16 600 animals traded against the previous year's 17 500 animals - this represents a decrease of about five percent.

When the Game Species Price Index is scrutinised, it reveals that game species prices showed a nominal growth of 36,6% and even real prices indicated a positive growth of 6,4%. The price index of scarce game species showed a relative strong increase, but as expected, the index of more common species showed a continuous decline in value. This is in line with that of previous years.

White rhinoceros showed a decline in 36% fewer animals sold and prices also declined between 14% and 28% for the various categories of white rhinos sold on auctions. Buffaloes also showed a decline in numbers sold (some 200 fewer than in 2011), but this was offset by the spectacular record prices some animals fetched at the auctions. Excellent prices were realised for sable antelope and aggressive trade resulted in 38,8% more sable sold than in the previous year.

When looking at the performance at recent game auctions, it becomes clear that game ranching has moved beyond that of simply having a game camp or two on a farm, but in fact has become a true farming enterprise where animals are sought after for specific characteristics, gene qualities, and other potential qualities. Owners of game now actively farm with game and it is now not uncommon to find game study groups who strive to enhance the qualities of specific game species. This all bodes well for the conservation of biodiversity, and future generations will definitely benefit from this.

It was just a few years ago when game was sold only as either "breeding animals" or as "male animals". Today auctions differentiate between male animals, females, heifers, sub-adult males, cows in calf, cows with calves and even 3-in-1 cows!



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The establishment of game study groups creates some pressure on research entities to become involved with game ranching research and within this there is much scope to develop and ensure a vibrant healthy game industry which will showcase one of Africa's biggest indigenous assets.