

CITY OF CAPE TOWN - Media Release - 24 JUNE 2021

City to reintroduce humane use of paintball markers for trial period

Given the support from both CapeNature and the Cape of Good Hope SPCA for the humane use of paintball markers, and in the interest of the safety of baboons and residents alike, the City of Cape Town will reintroduce paintball markers for a trial period of six months. This is an interim intervention only.

The humane use of paintball markers will be in place while the guidelines for the management of a sustainable baboon population on the Cape Peninsula are being reviewed under the guidance of CapeNature, as the leading authority on animal welfare, the Cape of Good Hope SPCA, and other stakeholders.

The reintroduction of paintball markers as an aversion tool in areas adjacent to baboon troops' natural habitat will take place as from tomorrow, Friday 25 June 2021, with ongoing oversight by CapeNature and the Cape of Good Hope SPCA.

The City wants to reiterate that the use of paintball markers by baboon rangers is only allowed in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) as revised by the Western Cape Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, CapeNature, the Cape of Good Hope SPCA, researchers from the University of Cape Town, field specialists, and the City of Cape Town on 17 June 2021.

Baboon rangers must comply with the SOP at all times.

NCC Environmental Services who is contracted to manage the City's Urban Baboon Programme will ensure that all baboon rangers are trained and qualified to use paintball markers in accordance with the revised SOP. Compliance will be monitored by CapeNature and the Cape of Good Hope SPCA during the trial period, and legitimate complaints will be investigated by the two parties.

The continued use of paintball markers as an aversion tool will be reconsidered after the six-month trial period in consultation with the public and interested and affected parties.

The temporary reintroduction of paintball markers is informed by the alarming increase in the time that baboon troops have been spending in urban areas since 14 May 2021, and the impact this is having on the health and safety of baboons and residents.

As from 14 May to 31 May 2021 the City's service provider has recorded:

- * Three baboon deaths, two as a result of pellet gun wounds, and one due to a suspected dog attack in the urban area
- * Raiding of bins, unoccupied and occupied houses has increased by 310% from 29 to 119 known incidents
- * Raiding of houses while people are inside increased by 178% from 14 to 39 known incidents
- * Several troops' ranging areas have shifted into the urban space, in particular in Simon's Town where two troops consisting of approximately 70 baboons are frequenting town on a nearly daily basis

- Two incidents where a male baboon from the Slangkop troop attacked baboon rangers in the Kommetjie area. After the most recent attack the ranger had to be taken to hospital for a tetanus vaccine

Despite the imminent return of paintball markers as an aversion tool in keeping baboons out of the urban areas, the City wants to inform residents that it may take months to see a subsequent change in baboon troops' behaviour and that progress will be slow.

Residents and business owners are once again reminded to please manage waste in a responsible manner, to minimise food attractants on their properties, to store wheelie bins where baboons cannot access it, and to enclose vegetable gardens and composting areas as far as possible. For affected residents who have yet to receive lockable bins, the City can also confirm that it will be able to issue new-design lockable bins in areas adjacent to baboon troops' natural habitat from 1 October 2021, if all goes as planned.

In the meantime, CapeNature is leading ongoing engagements between authorities about the long-term challenges and possible solutions that must ensure a healthy and sustainable Chacma baboon population on the Cape Peninsula.

During this interim period, and while the broader governance issues of roles and responsibilities are being addressed, the City will not take a decision on any specific baboon or baboon troop among which relocations or euthanasia in particular. In these cases, and in all other matters that may arise, we will be guided by CapeNature as the decision-making authority on interventions required.

The City welcomes the progress made in recent discussions under the leadership of the Western Cape Government and CapeNature. We are looking forward to contributing to a process that will see an outcome that is to the benefit of all – from the Chacma baboon population, residents, and interested and affected parties, to those concerned with governance and oversight.

Residents and interested parties are accordingly alerted to a copy of the revised SOP. For more information, kindly see below:

STANDARD OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE FOR USING PAINTBALL MARKERS AS BABOON DETERRENTS WITHIN THE CAPE PENINSULA

Revised, 17 June 2021

1. INTRODUCTION

Paintball markers have been used predominantly for recreation and in military simulations, but have also been used in mark-recapture studies of free-ranging wildlife populations and in deterring problematic wild species (e.g. coyotes) from urban environments. Currently, paintball markers are used to deter baboons in KwaZulu-Natal, Sun City and in the Overberg Region (Hermanus) to deter baboons from tourist- and residential areas.

Essentially, a paintball marker fires gas-propelled spherical pellets which for the purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure, are filled with environmentally friendly paint and the pellets are fired at an approximate speed of 90 m per second. No paintball marker may fire a paintball exceeding a speed of faster than 300 foot per second. This should be checked against a chronograph every month.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim is to humanely deter baboons from entering urban areas where there are known high risks of injury and mortality often associated with extreme suffering. The aim is thus to keep baboons safe and not to cause unnecessary pain or suffering to the baboons.

The objective of this SOP is to regulate the use of PBMs in achieving the stated aim while not causing any unnecessary harm or suffering to baboons.

This Standard Operating Procedure does not substitute any regulatory requirements and should where applicable, be read and applied in conjunction with all relevant laws, by-laws, regulations and compulsory specifications including the following:

- Animal Protection Act (Act no 71 of 1962)
- Nature Conservation Ordinance (Ordinance 19 of 1974)
- Criminal Procedure Act (Act 51 of 1977)
- Firearms Control Act (Act 60 of 2000)
- Occupational and Safety Act (Act 85 of 1993)

3. CONDITIONS OF USE

3.1. Paintball markers for deterring baboons from entering urban areas may only be used in accordance with this SOP.

3.2. The indiscriminate use^[1] of paintball markers fired at point blank range at baboons is not permitted.

3.3. In some specific instances it may be justified to shoot directly at a baboon with a paintball marker in the “green” and “red” zones described in sections 3.9 below. Such instances include:

3.3.1. Self-protection and/or the protection of people and/or other animals;

3.3.2. For protection of baboons from urban-related threats, be they human or other, and/or for the prevention of baboons becoming injured.

In such instances, the paintball marker may only be directed to the flank and rear portion of a baboon.

3.4. Any operator tasked with using a paintball marker must undergo adequate training from a competent instructor to ensure sufficient understanding of:

3.4.1. Baboon behaviour;

3.4.2. Aversive conditioning;

3.4.3. Humane usage of paintball markers.

3.5. Any operator will need to demonstrate sufficient accuracy (hitting a 30 cm target at a range of 10 m with a frequency of 90% or more) before being allowed to use the paintball marker in the field.

3.6. Caution must be exercised when operating in wind velocities exceeding 40 km/h or more (operators will have to use some degree of their own discretion in this regard) or in situations (e.g., heavy rainfall) where external factors will compromise accuracy.

3.7. While markers are being used in the field, a veterinarian is required to be on call to attend to any unforeseen injuries to baboons. The proposed method of firing (see below) will minimise the probability of injury, but the ability of baboons to move quickly (and sometimes unpredictably) will introduce some degree of unpredictability.

3.8. When not in use, the markers will be concealed within a bag or carried on a shoulder strap and with the barrel sock in place

3.9. Two approximate zones will be designated, namely Green and Red:

3.9.1. Green zone (buffer zone) includes all areas estimated between 100m and 200m from the nearest inhabited area. Specific areas will be established for each baboon troop, based on topography of any human area.

3.9.2. Red zone (no go zone) includes all human inhabited areas and all land to the green zone.

4. GREEN ZONE (BUFFER ZONE) PROTOCOL

4.1. The operator of the paintball marker will position him/herself between the troop and the nearest urban edge, with potential firing directed towards natural areas.

4.2. Once the baboons cross into the Green zone (approximately 100 — 200 m away), the monitors will be instructed to make an effort to deter them by clapping their hands, shouting or shaking the marker in order to push them from the human area.

4.3. If the baboons fail to respond, the operator will begin to fire.

4.4. Only adult baboons will be targeted.

4.5. The operator will only target adult baboons that are within a safe distance from juvenile and infant baboons but within 20 m of the operator (so as not to compromise accuracy).

4.6. NO adult females carrying infants will be targeted.

4.7. At the discretion of the Field Manager, large juvenile males that are at least the size of an adult female AND a known raider, can be targeted.

4.8. The operator may aim at the ground 2 m in front of the targeted adult to give a warning shot.

4.9. No more than 2 warning shots are to be directed at any time.

4.10. From this point, troop members will either begin to retreat from the human area or will continue their approach. If the baboons approach the urban area purposefully the red protocol will be initiated.

5. RED ZONE (NO GO ZONE) PROTOCOL

5.1. From this point, troop members will either begin to retreat from the human area or will continue their approach. If the baboons approach the urban area purposefully the red protocol will be initiated.

5.2. The operator of the paintball marker will position him/herself between the troop and the nearest urban edge, with potential firing directed towards natural areas.

5.3. Once the baboons cross into the Red zone (approximately <100 m away), the operator will only target adult baboons that are within a safe distance from juvenile and infant baboons but within 20 m of the operator (so as not to compromise accuracy). No adult females carrying infants will be targeted.

5.4. At the discretion of the Field Manager, large juvenile males that are at least the size of an adult female and a known raider, can be targeted.

5.5. Caution should be used when firing on baboons moving directly towards the operator in order to avoid the risk of hitting the baboon.

5.6. Should the adult retreat from the operator, towards natural land, targeting of that adult will cease once it is beyond the green zone.

5.7. If the troop moves back into the green zone, the firing protocol will be adjusted accordingly.

5.8. Within human areas, efforts will be directed primarily towards keeping local residents safe, firing as little as possible and moving the troop out of the human area as quickly as possible.

5.9. In built-up areas, when monitors are herding the baboons out, firing must be used as a support to the monitors by targeting adult males/females that break ranks with the troop. If the troop is moving in a general direction, herded by the monitors, then firing should be guided by the Supervisor monitor so as not to scatter the troop.

5.10. No firing will be allowed where the visibility of the trajectory of the pellets is obstructed.

5.11. No firing will be allowed in the direction of people, houses and other buildings, domestic animals, windows or vehicles of any description.

5.12. No firing will be allowed into isolated trees where baboons are sheltering and where no escape route is available. The operator will need to retreat in order to allow the baboon/s to come down. The operator may fire again in order to drive the baboon/s in the desired direction once they are safely out of the tree.

5.13. Any firing must attempt to be maximally effective (i.e. a minimum number of clear shots).

5.14. If there are multiple operators, a predetermined direction in which to push the baboons must be decided prior to entering and firing in human areas. If baboons are located on roof tops, trees or dead-ends, the operators must devise an operational plan prior to firing. Baboon escape routes must be determined and operators must allow baboons the opportunity to escape in the direction away from the operator. No other operators or monitors should hinder this escape route.

5.15. No firing may take place from a moving vehicle.

/End

Issued by: Media Office, City of Cape Town

Media enquiries: Alderman Marian Nieuwoudt, Mayoral Committee Member for Spatial Planning and Environment, City of Cape Town, Tel: 021 400 5154 or Cell: 084 224 0023, Email: marian.nieuwoudt@capetown.gov.za (please always copy media.account@capetown.gov.za)

[1] The indiscriminate use of paintball markers is defined as the use of paintball markers in contravention of the SOP.

Picture: Bruce Sutherland.