On the sheep farm Bitterfontein, in the Karasburg district of southern Namibia, Dirk van der Merwe no longer employs full-time shepherds. Rather, he calls on a young Nama guy from the nearby location in Grünau to show up two or three days each week with his motorbike to tend to the fences on this massive 15,000 hectare farm. Van der Merwe's neighbour, Willem Coetzee, does the same on his 22,000ha Droëgrond; it takes his worker two days to cover the perimeter of the property, partially because one-third of the land is mountainous and must be covered on foot. The workers examine the electric wire running along the bottom to see that the current is flowing and if jackals and other wildlife have been digging underneath. Where they see holes under the fence, they fill it with stones, and they note where the fence was breached. When the fence is cut, they mend it; and when the posts have rotten from termites, they replace them.

The presence of what Fredrik Lilja, in the context of the Eastern Cape, has termed “camp walkers” - farm workers who tend to fences, rather than sheep – has become quite common in southern Namibia, particularly since the early 1950s and the development of government-subsidised jackal-proof fencing initiatives. This period saw a qualitative transformation in farm labouring. No longer was the majority of the sheep farming workforce referred to as wagters (shepherds), but rather plaasvolk (general farm workers). Plaasvolk were paid a lower salary than shepherds, were often employed on a seasonal or per-diem basis, and they were responsible for a much larger array of tasks: from camp walking, to fence building, pelt treatment, shearing, slaughtering, and vermin eradication, among others.

1 My apologies for the excessive length of this piece. I'm in the process of trying to split it into two separate articles/chapters, but as you can see, difficulties are arising. Comments and recommendations are welcomed.
2 Personal communication, September 2017. Farm and individual's names have been altered.
3 15,000 ha = 57.92 sq mi.
4 Personal communication, September 2017.
6 See, for example, National Archives of Namibia (NAN) Archives of the South West Africa Agricultural Branch (AGR) 500 File 68/6/1/1/1 (v. 1): Minutes: Kommissie van Ondersoek: Jakkalsproefomheining - Meeting at Deurstamp, 20 September 1955.
Similarly, this period also featured a qualitative shift in vermin control practices. Vermin control is the process of defending one's livestock from predators seeking to reduce flock numbers via carnivorous behaviour, as well as from non-carnivorous mammals competing for grazing access. Prior to the 1950s, methods of control were largely defensive: involving a shepherd and his hounds following alongside the flock of sheep, facilitating their movement from kraals to grazing sites and water sources unharmed by carnivores (in southern Namibia, the black-backed jackal \( \text{Canis Mesomelas} \) is the most serious threat among them). Once called the “doyen” of the karakul sheep industry, the shepherd dominated the labour force in southern Namibia.\textsuperscript{7} He earned relatively high wages compared to \textit{plaasvolk}, and he was responsible for many thousands of pounds worth of karakul ewes in his flock. If predator control strategies could be improved, and boundary and camp fencing could allow sheep to graze freely, this expensive worker could be made redundant.

Vermin control strategies became offensive over the course of the 1950s-1970s, as subsidised jackal-proof fencing was erected throughout the southern districts of Namibia, controlling the movement of predators and facilitating eradication.\textsuperscript{8} New poison technologies were developed and imported from the United States for testing and distribution in South Africa and Namibia. Bounties were increased, and punishments were made more severe for farmers who refused to participate in mandatory commando hunting parties. The number of jackals and other predators eliminated during these years was immense, and once a farmer had cleaned his camps of carnivores, he was able to release a large percentage of his shepherding labour force. Many Nama farm workers, only fully proletarianised via coercive measures in the 1920s, were now de-proletarianised and forced to return to the so-called “native reserves”, which offered little agricultural opportunity to compete with white-owned farms, even once the apartheid homeland “Namaland” was formed. Likewise, many of the Ovambo migrant contract workers either took up urban labour or worked on the developing mining industries. Agriculture in southern Namibia had changed completely.

\textsuperscript{7} South West Africa Administration. \textit{Report of the Long Term Agricultural Policy Commission, 1950} (Windhoek, 1950), 78. Hereafter, this report will be cited as \textit{LTAPC}.

This paper describes these two complementary and interrelated efforts put into place by the colonial/apartheid regime in Namibia (then termed South West Africa): to rid sheep farms of jackals, carnivores, and other declared vermin, and to rid those same farms of shepherds, reducing the labour force as much as possible. In the context of Namibian and Southern African agricultural practices during this period, both of these efforts were considered to be “progressive” or even “scientific” farming methods deemed to improve the productive capacity of the veld, increase farm profits, and even to secure the longevity of white settler society in general.\(^9\)

However, efforts to control complex ecologies proved difficult, as a new class of vermin, termed “problem animals”, developed from the late 1960s. Hares and Rock Hyrax (a.k.a. Dassies; *Procavia Capensis*) as well as termites, while clearly not the same calibre of threat as carnivores, grew in numbers in the absence of predators and competed with sheep for grazing during drought periods, leading some to question the entire predator control campaigns. Furthermore, the abrupt collapse of the once profitable karakul industry from the late 1970s and the introduction of Dorper sheep for mutton production led many to voice concerns about overstocking and land degradation (which has roots in the very grazing behaviour of the Dorper itself). A jackal may eat a lamb, but dassies, hares, and poor range management may starve it.

This paper also seeks to bridge the divide between what Mark Overton terms “agricultural history” - concerning the practicalities and technologies of farming (so-called “ploughs and cows history”) – and “agrarian history” – concerning broader transformations in rural society and economies.\(^10\) James C. McCann has also noted that Africanists have spent a great deal of time exploring agriculture solely as a function of political economy, rather than “as an agenda for the study of field systems, technology, and cropping patterns.”\(^11\) This paper further posits that

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understanding labour reductions in the rural economy of Namibia necessitates further understanding of the nature of shepherding itself and its relationship to vermin control, range ecology, and agricultural technologies.

**Conceptualising Vermin in Southern Africa and Namibia**

While jackals and other canines have existed in Southern Africa since at least 2,000 B.C.E., it was the actions of settler farmers and pastoralists since the Dutch arrived in the seventeenth century that drastically changed predator ecology and demographics. As the Dutch settled in the Cape Colony and began to move to the interior to practice some degree of transhumance pastoralism, they faced problems with predators. The *trekboere* and concession hunters began to eliminate lions and hyena, two of the larger carnivores which threatened the cattle and sheep economy of the Cape, which was still in its infancy at the time.

With the decimation of apex predators, jackals now became the primary predator, and it was prey to very few species other than humans. This process is known as “meso-predator release”: the

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13 Namibia Scientific Society (NSS), Photo Collection no. 2368 A/10.
extinction or decimation of a smaller predator's main competition allows it to rise higher up in the food chain, perhaps changing from scavenger to hunter.\textsuperscript{14} Similar processes occurred in the American West with the decimation of wolves; coyote numbers increased drastically, as did their range and diet.\textsuperscript{15} Crucially, meso-predators have a variable diet and are able to increase their densities in locations of human occupation.\textsuperscript{16} Though jackals are primarily carnivorous, feeding off of ground mammals and livestock, in specific circumstances they can diversify their diets to feed off insects and desert melons (!Nara). They have a relatively short gestation period of 60-65 days and can give birth to up to nine pups per litter (average 4-6). Jackals are also highly mobile, covering upwards of twenty-five miles in a single night, thereby always maintaining a ready food source.

Throughout the nineteenth century in South Africa, the number of sheep farmers grew, and perhaps most importantly, the number of sheep increased rapidly. While never reaching the production levels of Australia, wool-producing sheep (primarily merinos) in South Africa reached 44 million by 1930.\textsuperscript{17} With regards to vermin demographics, Karen Brown noted that the growth of the small-stock industry in Southern Africa was followed by an increase in black-backed jackal numbers, particularly in the sense that growth became concentrated in areas of intensive sheep production.\textsuperscript{18} Indeed, as William Beinart remarked, “opportunities for predators were initially created as antelopes were displaced by domesticated animals and the quantity of meat on the veld probably increased.”\textsuperscript{19} These observations are consistent with scientific research on predator/prey relationships on a more global stage.\textsuperscript{20} As white settlement increased in the region and sheep

\begin{itemize}
\item[20] See, as a start, Arlen W. Todd and Lloyd B. Keith, “Coyote Demography during a Snowshoe Hare Decline in Alberta,” \textit{Journal of Wildlife Management} 47, no. 2 (1983): 394-404. However, as ecologist Paul Errington has noted, one must be careful not to assume that predators are directly responsible for the control of prey populations,
\end{itemize}
numbers grew, jackals adapted their diet and pursued livestock instead of ever-dwindling game and less satisfying rodents; unlike springboks and fleet-footed ungulates, sheep cannot escape easily.

Throughout Southern Africa, black-backed jackals and other meso-predators – such as the rooikat (*Caracal caracal*) – were classified as vermin (*ongedierte* in Afrikaans). Vermin were subjected neither to the widespread imperial game legislation nor laws concerning private property of livestock. Vermin were often placed in a liminal space – neither human, nor livestock, nor game – and therefore not subjected to any set of moral standards. “Vermin Beings” as Clapperton Mavhunga has argued, are classified as such to be exterminated, nothing more.\(^{21}\) This provides an apt way to discuss human-wildlife conflict.

Environmental histories of hunting and animal killing in Southern and Eastern Africa have emphasised the destruction of game, particularly elephants, rhinoceros, and ungulates like springbok, kudu, and eland.\(^{22}\) While these histories illustrate the complicated trading networks and knowledge production surrounding hunting and the environment, most neglect the fact that the majority of animal killing is actually quite mundane and an integral part of agricultural production, rather than resource extraction.\(^{23}\)

Human-animal conflict in Southern Africa occurs primarily through vermin control. Unlike hunting game, which under settler society was held to certain perceived moral standards of “fair play”, black-backed jackal and other vermin killing prioritises ends over means. Intriguingly, in the Namibian case, the very methods which were deemed illegal in the game legislation, such as snares, traps, poisons, pitfalls, coursing with hounds, etc., were the most common and successful methods used to control vermin demographics. The most crucial point to understand about the distinction between vermin and game – or, indeed, vermin and animals – is that vermin are killed particularly with regards to rodents and other burrowing small mammals. One must not, according to Errington, confuse the fact of predation with the effect of predation. Habitat and ground cover is crucial. Paul L. Errington, *Of Predation and Life* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1967).

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23 Agricultural production, in this sense, refers to both commercial sheep farming and subsistence agro-pastoralism.
unapologetically for profit. Controlling vermin is part of the cost of agricultural production. The ability to manage vermin numbers correlates with one's competitiveness in the industry. Henrik Nieuwoudt, a farmer of Meatmaster sheep on the 26,800ha Geenriviere in Namibia's Karasburg district, remarked that poor predator control strategies could reduce the lambing rate of a 2,000 sheep flock from 120% per annum to as low as 60% or less.

Garry Marvin has described English fox hunting as containing a dichotomy between chasing the fox (sport) and killing the fox (vermin control); this distinction is not always present in jackal extermination. While there is a degree of structure to jackal control strategies, it cannot be equated to sport hunting. According to Marvin, “In sports hunting . . . humans must voluntarily reduce or restrict their ability to kill animals if there is to be sport rather than slaughter.” As will become clear below, many jackals were killed not in chase, but by stationary control measures, revealing the lack of “sport” in these methods. Vermin control strategies are intended to be slaughter.

It is not only carnivores which are classified as vermin. According to John Knight, we must consider two forms of human-wildlife conflict. Jackals and carnivores are killed first and foremost killed on grounds of vertical predation. This generally means that livestock raised for subsistence or commercial purposes are put in danger by the jackal, fox, etc.; therefore, they must be controlled or eliminated. Vertical predation is inherently violent.

The second form of vermin conflict results from horizontal competition, i.e. conflict over access to grazing. Rather than carnivores, this conflict is fought with herbivores such as hares, dassies, gerbils, zebra, insects, etc. Furthermore, growth and reduction of herbivore numbers, especially pertaining to rodents and ground mammals is often directly linked to carnivore demographics and vice-versa; while jackals may enjoy feasting on a lamb or goat, most of their day-to-day diet is made up of dassies, hares, and mice. Therefore, the interaction between farmers,

24 Further, see Lance van Sittert, “‘Keeping the Enemy at Bay’: The Extermination of Wild Carnivora in the Cape Colony, 1889-1910,” Environmental History 3, no. 3 (1998): 333-356.
27 Ibid., 196.
carnivores, and herbivores is complex and interrelated, and any sort of agricultural production necessarily requires some level of human-animal conflict.

**Defensive Vermin Control in Southern Namibia**

Southern Namibia is best described as a dis-equilibrium or non-equilibrium rangeland. Simply put, rainfall in dis-equilibrium ranges is both low and inconsistent year-by-year. The region is far drier than most of the other dis-equilibrium rangelands. Most districts receive between 85-200mm of rainfall on average annually; though it should be noted that there is large variation year-to-year. This renders southern Namibia small-stock country (predominately sheep), as there are too few water sources and too little biomass cover to allow for large scale cattle production. Despite the poor reliability of carrying capacity statistics due to great regional and annual variability, most commercial farmers today estimate that their stocking rate (drakrag) should not exceed four hectares per KVE (small-stock unit) for karakul, with decreasing capacity for dorper sheep, sometimes up to twelve hectares per KVE.

Historically, sheep production was key to the pastoral economy of the Nama and trekboere in the region; sheep (and goats as well) are more mobile than cattle and are able to move between water sources and grazing areas with less risk of health loss. Mobility remained key to pre-colonial Nama economies, and many of the Nama nations engaged in circular pastoral migration between the Northern Cape in South Africa and southern and central Namibia, seeking better grazing and safety from colonial and Oorlam kommandos, as well as carnivorous predators.

Many precolonial travellers to southern Namibia were already recognising the threat jackals played to pastoral economies in the region. For example, Swedish botanist Gustaf de Vylder noted

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the sophisticated system the Bondelswart Nama used to address jackal predation: mostly involving hounds. When jackals or other vermin made an appearance, a line of dogs would be strung out across the veld, and the Nama would walk towards the predator until the dogs had encircled the creature and eliminated it. He writes: “The dogs here are very brave and fight with, and often kill, the animal before the hunter can shoot it, but they do not follow spoor [tracks or scent]. The hunter must himself flush out the animal as the dogs do not attack until they see the beast.”

In the dry districts of southern Namibia, sight-hounds (lurchers) are far more useful than scent-hounds; these were generally crosses of the local *Africanis* with greyhounds or whippets. The flat, dry expanses make it very easy to spot game or vermin from a distance, but the low humidity and high evaporation rate makes it difficult for dogs to follow a scent for too long. Dogs were

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35 Similar research has been conducted in Natal, noting the difficulties dogs faced in the dryer parts. Namibia is far more arid than Natal, as well. NAN AGR 860 File 110/2: R.C Bigalke and D.T. Rowe-Rowe, “An Analysis of the Results of Hunting Black-Backed Jackals over a Five Year Period in Natal,” *Lammergeyer* 10 (1969): 70-80.
trained using scents, but the scent was generally of the shepherd or his sheep. According to the ethnologist Helmut Epstein, making dogs loyal to a flock was a complicated procedure:

In the protection of the herds and flocks from wild animals, especially jackals, the Hottentots [sic] were assisted by their dogs which were extremely watchful and gave immediate warning of the approach of strangers or beasts of prey by loud barking. By means of milk, the Hottentots familiarised the shy animals with the herds; and with their own persons by carrying a piece of raw meat for a few days in their veldshoes, afterwards giving it to the dog or by applying sweat from their armpits to the dog's nostrils.36

Dogs were seen as a form of agricultural improvement against the rising tide of jackal numbers, and large amounts of training was necessary to take advantage of canine protection. Indeed, scholars William Beinart and Lance van Sittert have both noted with relation to the Cape, that dog populations increased throughout the nineteenth century alongside jackal numbers.37 Shepherds kept at least two dogs per flock, one male and one female; many Nama held fears that if a female jackal was in heat and approached the sheep, a male dog would not kill it or chase it away.38

Furthermore, there is evidence that jackal karosses and skin products were relatively valuable in local and long distance trade, and the flesh was often consumed either as grilled meat or prepared in a soup.39 While jackals would ordinarily be killed or avoided because of the threat they presented to sheep farmers, their carcasses were not without value.

This was by-and-large a defensive arrangement, however. In oral history work on dogs among the Bondelswarks, some reported that their forefathers did occasionally go jackal hunting with their dogs, but it was far more likely that the dogs were kept with the flock for local protection as shepherds brought their stock between grazing sights and the protective kraals at night.40

Up until the end of the nineteenth century, transhumance pastoralism remained the dominant mode of production, though many had participated in concessionaire hunting parties and through trading with merchants from the Cape who were slowly penetrating into southern Namibia. The German colonial administration of Namibia, which began formally in 1884, led to very little white

38 Interview with Mr. Josef Rooi, ǂGâbes (19 June, 2015).
40 Interview with Mrs. Dorothea Davids, Daunoëb II (12 January, 2016).
settlement in the main southern districts of Warmbad/Karasburg, Keetmanshoop, and Bethanie.\textsuperscript{41}

After the genocidal war against the Nama and the Herero (1903-1908), land settlement throughout the German colony increased dramatically, partially because of the generous subsidies provided to former Schutztruppe soldiers; the lands of all Africans who rose up against the Germans were confiscated during the war and planned for future white settlement.\textsuperscript{42} Those such as the Rehoboth Basters and the Berseba Nama, who did not revolt, and the Bondelswarts (who signed an earlier peace treaty), kept their traditional lands, though in greatly reduced size. As the fighting diminished, efforts were taken to exploit the labour of the Nama and prevent any future uprisings. Directives were initiated to prevent Nama ownership of cattle and freehold land, and a large number of the members of Nama nations who were hostile to the Germans were transformed into forced labourers working for the colonial regime. Horst Drechsler has famously referred to the post-genocide economic regime as the “peace of the graveyard.”\textsuperscript{43} During this time, white settlement in Namibia increased from 202 farms sold by 1907 to 1,331 by 1913.\textsuperscript{44} During the later years of German colonialism, many forced labourers were converted into a poorly paid farm labour source.

**Labour Shortages and Reserves**

After the First World War, South Africa administered Namibia as a League of Nations “C-Class Mandate”, meaning that it was one of Germany's former colonies which was deemed least ready for self rule and independence. From the earliest days of South African occupation, the colonial administration sought to address what was termed the “labour question.”

Immediately after WWI, large numbers of Nama and Herero farm workers deserted their German employers, many of whom were detained or deported; farm workers took the opportunity


\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 244.
to loot livestock and property from the farms. Wolfgang Werner, in describing the relations between Germans and Hereros, has described this as “self-peasantisation”: taking deliberate steps to remove oneself from waged labour relations and to maximise the potentials of peasant production. In southern Namibia, there is evidence of this being a collective form of resistance against farm owners, such as the case of R.J. Badenhorst of Keetmanshoop district, a notoriously brutal employer, who had fled to South Africa rather than join the German Army. When he returned to his farm in 1915, he found that over 2,000 sheep were absconded by his farm workers and distributed throughout the location and reserve. Every sheep had its ears mangled (cut low at the base) to remove to possibility of identification by ear notches.

The effect of self-peasantisation strategies was two-fold. First, large-scale desertion became the norm. Farmers found that only by agreeing to grazing access in addition to wages could they obtain a sufficient amount of labour to run their farms. It should be noted that some cash-poor but land-rich farmers welcomed the work-for-grazing arrangements because it enabled them to obtain workers without dispensing cash. Second, livestock quantities among black farmers increased dramatically such that even in the dry reserves of southern Namibia, peasant pastoralism was possible.

Various strategies were pursued to address this “labour question.” Labour Exemption Certificates were put into place, by which black Namibians under the age of 55 had to be either in the employment of a white settler (on a farm or in town) or possess “sufficient means of support”, deemed to be ten cattle or fifty small stock. If a Nama shepherd shows his stock to the magistrate and pays the ten shilling annual fee, he obtains the right to live within the so-called “native reserve” or to lease out government grazing lands. This policy, while an improvement from the German

47 NAN ADM 043, file 567/2 (vol. 2): Gustav Schaeffer to Secretary for S.W.A. - 7 January 1920.
49 NAN ADM 043, file 567/2 (vol. 3): Protectorate of South West Africa, Native Affairs Memorandum, 3 August 1916.
situation, nevertheless rendered all poorer black Namibians unable to remain in the reserve. Strategies were taken to find loopholes to these regulations, and many Nama farmers practised a degree of stock-sharing arrangements. As branding legislation was not in force until 1923, it was possible for cattle and especially sheep to be redistributed throughout Nama men such that more can obtain exemption.50 Those with labour exemption still occasionally took up waged labour on farms or in towns, particularly during sheep shearing season, when flexible labour arrangements could be negotiated.51 Those who had exemption and chose to graze their stock in the reserve were still charged grazing fees per head of small or large stock, thereby making livestock accumulation far more difficult.

In general, most legislation during the early South African period was centred around restricting the mobility of black Namibians and ensuring that a self-sufficient reserve economy could not flourish. Reserves were intended to be homes for the children, elderly, and women, with men selling their labour power to white employers on farms and in towns. Reserve production was intended not to be high, as the poor land quality was widely known by administrators, and agricultural improvements, such as water infrastructure, would only be desirable to the administration if it consequently led to more men seeking work outside the reserves.52 The 1928 Native Reserves Commission concluded that at least two-thirds of men should be working outside the reserves on farms; they advocated a near 200% increase on grazing fees in order to create this outcome.53

51 NAN ADM 124 file 4672/5: Magistrate Warmbad to Secretary for S.W.A. - “Petition of Farmers and Inhabitants of Warmbad.” - 23 December 1917.
52 NAN AP 5/7/2: Report of the Native Reserves Commission, 1928. “If the water-facilities are improved, more natives will be able to go out to work. The Natives are only too ready to make use of the excuse of water drawing, and the improvement of the water-facilities will take this weapon out of their hands.” (p. 2).
Wolfgang Werner aptly points out the quandary many farmers faced regarding the reserves:

White farmers found themselves in a contradictory position. In the first place they demanded the abolition of reserves because the reserves allegedly provided an important alternative to wage labour. Yet the continued ownership of stock by black labourers was essential for capital accumulation to take place in settler agriculture as this enabled white farmers to pay their labour below the cost of its reproduction.  

The reserves were only desirable to farmers if residents could be kept poor enough that the entire family could not subsist on the reserve resources alone, yet that the reserve economy could still drive down wages. To give further credence to the labour intentions behind the creation of reserves, the Secretary for South West Africa remarked that

These reserves are not the same as the areas known as Native Reserves in the Union [of South Africa]; they merely consist of farms set aside in each district... and there is no intention of creating reserves to which tribes could remove themselves and thus restore their old tribal methods of living under their chiefs.  

Reserves were planned based on the cartography and labour demands of the districts in Namibia; for example, Maltahöhe district was granted one reserve for Nama, on the 10,000ha Neuhof farm situated alongside the Namib desert and nearly incapable of maintaining a resident population. The South African state's engagement with the reserves had very little to do with the so-called “Sacred Trust” of the League of Nations (which S.A. received permanently in 1920), and everything to do with ensuring that the growing agricultural industry in the territory has sufficient labour. Over the period 1920-1930, at least 1,261 additional farms were allocated to so-called “poor white” settlers from South Africa, many of whom had few assets and were highly dependent upon the administration for advances, loans, and remission of rents and interests in order to maintain their farming enterprises. Because of the very serious drought of the early 1930s and the global depression, only 394 farms were allocated between 1931-1945, though this would increase in later years again.  

Prior to the Second World War, the agricultural policy of the SWA Administration was largely concerned with increasing the raw numbers of workers selling their labour power, and

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57 Botha, “Land Settlement”, 270.
through marketing meat, pelts and other agricultural produce. The former was often dealt with through heavy taxation and other coercive measures. One of the most extreme examples was the incredibly steep tax levied on dog owners, which eventually led to the Bondelswarts Uprising of 1922 (put down by the South African army and air-force). Taxes for a single dog in 1925 reached £5 (approximately three months farm wages).  

Indeed, labour recruitment and vermin control went hand-in-hand, as those unable to pay the tax had their dogs shot by the police, greatly harming Nama pastoral agriculture in the reserves. Furthermore, while the tax was theoretically to be applied equally across racial divisions, the colonial police were incredibly enthusiastic of making sure that all unlicensed dogs in the reserves were shot, and little attention was paid to the white population. The administration admitted that the dog tax was at least partially intended to coerce black Namibians into wage labour. In his report to the League of Nations regarding the Bondelswarts Uprising, the administrator Gijs Hofmeyr remarked:

Pastoral and Agricultural pursuits are practically unknown to them [Bondelswart Nama], and to this day they are averse to manual labour . . . The necessity for this heavy [dog] tax was clearly demonstrated during my southern tour early in 1921, when I found vast numbers of dogs in possession of natives and a certain class of European squatter, who profited by the employment of these animals to hunt down game and obtained a livelihood thereby instead of by honest labour.

As the number of white settlers grew in southern Namibia, labour demand continued to increase, and prior to the mid-1930s, few farmers could afford to recruit contract workers from Ovamboland (northern Namibia) and Angola (who were primarily serving the mines and urban industries at this time). However, the growth of the Karakul industry provided these farmers with the wealth to begin to recruit migrant labour.

59 For a brief exploration into these dynamics, see Bernard C. Moore, “Dogs Were Our Defenders! Canines, Carnivores, and Colonialism in Namibia,” AHA Today (American Historical Association Blog) (16 June 2017). Available at http://j.mp/2rkCErL.
Karakul Sheep, Labour Dynamics, and Changing Priorities

Throughout the first few decades of the twentieth century, many white settlers in Southern Africa held the opinion that the region’s pastures were drying out and that rains would continue to fall less and less. To investigate these existing fears, the South African government held a drought commission in 1923, and South West Africa did the same a year afterwards. Some of the major concerns of these investigations were ways in which farming methods could be improved. Interestingly, these publications identified the farming practices of white settlers as reasons for dessication (the broader effects of lack of rainfall). A serious drought in Southern Africa from 1928-1933 made it imperative to find ways to get farmers to adopt improved methods.

One of the first ways to make farms more economically and ecologically sustainable was by changing the type of stock kept. The transfer to karakul sheep is key in this regard. After the drought subsided in 1933, farmers in southern Namibia noticed that those farms stocked with karakuls lost far fewer sheep than those with merinos or Cape fat tails. Nearly all of the advances for livestock purchase given to settlers after 1934 were for the purchase of karakul rams and ewes. Figure Three gives brief insight into this transformation of sheep breeds in Warmbad district.

Karakuls were originally imported from Central Asia in 1907 because many farmers and investors believed that the sheep would be more hardy than merinos in southern Namibia. They proved correct, and many farmers made small fortunes in the karakul pelt industry. Karakuls are bred not for wool or meat, but rather for lambskins, which are sold by international fur merchants, such as Hudson's Bay & Annings to Leipzig, New York, and London (today, it is Copenhagen), where impressive profits could be reaped. Approximately thirty pelts are used in the manufacture of one Swakara coat. Because the lambs are slaughtered for their pelts within the first 24 hours of

66 LTAPC, 140.
life, when skin is softest, the likelihood of jackal attacks during lambing season is decreased, and stocking rates can potentially be observed more closely.

Figure Three: Livestock Ownership: Warmbad District, 1928-1940

![Graph showing livestock ownership trends in Warmbad District, 1928-1940.](image)

From quite early on, the Department of Agriculture and the Karakul Industry Advisory

67 Data based on NAN Archives of the Magistrate at Warmbad (LKW) 3/1/3 file 3/5, subfile 3/5/2: Annual Reports 1928-1940. (no such specific data was collected for black farmers).
Board took steps to promote the industry and to protect sheep farmers from competition from abroad. From 1939, a levy of 6d was placed on each pelt exported to European auctions; these funds were used to engage in breeding research and techniques at Neudam Experimental Farm near Windhoek. Funds were also utilised for advertising purposes both in Southern Africa and in Europe to promote Namibia's karakul pelts, eventually known by origin name Swakara.

Despite the fact that South Africa governed Namibia at this time (and eventually would reject the Mandate Status in 1948), from 1926-1957 there was a complete ban on the export from SWA of karakul breeding stock, both rams and ewes. There were fears that the South African agricultural behemoth would overtake Namibia's main agricultural industry. After all, as of 1950, pelts made up the largest component of agricultural exports, which was not exceeded by mining

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68 See, for example, NAN Archives of the Commission of Enquiry: Karakul Breeding at Neudam (KAN) 1: Report of the Commission, 16 February 1931.
70 Spitzner and Shäfer, Die Karakulzucht, 37.
71 Bravenboer, Karakul, 97-98.
exports until 1951; in fact, throughout the early 1940s, agriculture and fishing contributed between 5-10% of mining's share of Gross Domestic Product. The nearly thirty-fold increase in agricultural profits in Namibia during the years 1933-1951 can be attributed to karakul pelts entirely. By 1946, karakul represented 73.8% of the small stock population of Namibia.

While South Africa would eventually develop a strong karakul industry, in the early 1950s, the fears were actually from Namibia's northern border. The Southwest of Angola, near Mossamedes, has a similar rainfall pattern and veld condition as Namibia's Omaruru district, and the Portuguese colonial administration began a Karakul Experimental Station there in 1945. Over 300,000ha of the lands seized from the Kuvalè were given free to white settlers by 1950 (5,000-10,000ha each), with 2,000,000ha more already surveyed awaiting ranchers to come. For each 300 karakul ewes a farmer brings with him or purchases, the Portuguese administration would provide a free ram for breeding purposes; sperm for artificial insemination was already available gratis. The Portuguese administration also made available funds, weapons, and ammunition for the elimination of lions and jackals in the region.

From the mid-1920s, a large number of the so-called Dorsland Trekkers (Angola Boers) were repatriated to Namibia from Southern Angola; many were given generous loans as part of the Land Settlement Programme in Outjo and Gobabis districts. Upon hearing of the Mossamedes scheme, some sold their farms, liquidated their assets, and planned to move to Angola to join relatives who remained. Some like Nicolaas J. van Rensburg saw a profit and smuggled rams through the bush in Ovamboland to buyers on the Angolan side; allegedly, the buyers were affiliated with the Portuguese regime.

73 LTAPC, 95.
76 NAN SWAA 1102 A.140/4/39: Deputy Commissioner, Windhoek to Secretary for S.W.A. “Alleged Smuggling of Karakul Rams from S.W.A. to Angola” - 20 November 1950.
77 NAN SWAA 1102 A.140/4/39: Criminal Investigation Department, Outjo to South African Police, Omaruru
The South West Africa Administration felt deeply threatened by the Karakul developments in Angola. Not only could it potentially lead to competition and reduction of sale priced through flooding the market with low-quality pelts, but it could cause their settlers to move to the Portuguese territory. Perhaps more importantly, the large amount of labour which was being directed south from Ovamboland and southern Angola would potentially take up contracts on these farms instead, exacerbating the existing labour shortage on Karakul farms in Namibia; some farmers feared that up to 40% of the labour force could be lost.\textsuperscript{78} The karakul industry up until the mid-1950s was a very labour intensive form of sheep farming. The sheep had to be sheared twice annually (and the wool is poor quality, only useable for carpets), and the lambing season is incredibly stressful; lambs must be slaughtered quickly if the pelts are to have any value. Furthermore, the drying and framing process is complicated and if done incorrectly, can make the pelt worthless. But most importantly, the karakul industry in those days required a great deal of labour in the form of shepherds.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Flock of Karakul Sheep with Shepherd: Location Unknown}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{78} NAN Archives of the S.W.A. Vereniging van Boerewerkgewers van Kontrak-Inboorlinge (A.0370) Box 1: Minutes, 15-16 November 1956.
Shepherding was a very difficult and lonesome form of labour, requiring constant attention to the flocks of often several hundred ewes (valued at several thousand pounds per flock). Shepherds constantly worried about losing sheep; as it would lead to corporal punishment or significant docking of his pay if he returned to the farmer with ewes missing.\textsuperscript{79} Due to famine and other developments in Ovamboland, from the late 1930s, farmers began to take advantage of the migrant labour system, bringing workers in from northern Namibia and southern Angola for 13-25 month contracts. Developments in the rail transport system and subsidised recruitment rates from the South West Africa Native Labour Association (SWANLA) – as well as low prevailing monthly wages for Ovambos – made it possible to hire contract workers at significantly lower pay than hiring local Nama workers.\textsuperscript{80} By the early 1940s, the vast majority of full-time shepherds were from Ovamboland, Kavango, and Angola; many Nama workers filled the ranks of general farm labour: shearing wool and treating pelts.\textsuperscript{81}

Labour conditions for shepherds were poor, and most farmers did not provide adequate housing; many simply instructed their workers to construct a hut in the bush, perhaps providing corrugated iron.\textsuperscript{82} Workers were required to be provided with rations, including maize-meal (or Mahangu), coffee, sugar, salt, tobacco, milk, and crucially, meat. However, many testimonies before the SWA Native Labourers Commission (SWANLC) revealed that workers were rarely given meat, only when a goat died of natural causes, or during lambing season to dispose of the carcasses after de-fleshing.\textsuperscript{83}

Not surprisingly, applications from farmers to SWANLA for shepherds from northern Namibia were often unfulfilled. The medical doctors in Rundu and Ondangwa would classify labourers along the lines of A, B, and C; with “A” workers destined for mines (with higher pay),

\textsuperscript{80} This has a lot to do with the dynamics of taxation in the so-called Native Reserves. In addition, Ovamboland was much higher quality land, and the population of the reserve could be more easily sustained with wage labour merely acting as a supplement. This did change over time, however.
\textsuperscript{82} \textit{SWANLC}, 55-56.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 50-51.
and “C” workers – physically fit workers, but under the age restriction for mine work – restricted to farm labour (with lower pay). Understandably, all “B” workers – of age, but not as fit as “A” workers – who had the opportunity to take up surface mine work, either in Namibia or in South Africa, took the opportunity immediately.\textsuperscript{84}

Furthermore, during the late 1930s, many of the magistrates and administrative officials were noting that, contra to the statements of farmers, the so-called Native Reserves were not full of able-bodied workers sitting idly, and nearly all of the men were already working out on farms or in town.\textsuperscript{86} The only way for farmers to meet their existing labour demands would be for the administration and SWANLA to increase the amount of “C” class workers entering the migrant


\textsuperscript{85} Spitzner and Shäfer, Die Karakulzucht, i.

\textsuperscript{86} NAN SWAA A.521/13 (v2): Assistant Native Commissioner, Windhoek to Chief Native Commissioner, Windhoek - “Farm Labour” - March 30, 1937.
labour system. By the late 1940s, the vast majority of contract workers from northern Namibia and southern Angola were destined for farms.

Table One: NLO, SLO, and SWANLA Recruitment Destinations, 1927-1947

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mines</th>
<th>Farms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>6283</td>
<td>1234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>5294</td>
<td>899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>5570</td>
<td>1166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>943</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>4650</td>
<td>5617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>1718</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>7260</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>1772</td>
<td>11664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>~5734</td>
<td>11130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure Seven: Medical Examinations, Northern Namibia, 1953

According to the SWANLC, approximately 66% of the total 1947 SWANLA recruits were

87 SWANLC, 3. NAN SWAA A.521/13/3: Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into Certain Aspects of the Native Labour Question in the Territory (July 28, 1939), Annexure O. Must find complete data.
88 NAN Photo Collection no. 03270.
eventually destined for farms, and of that figure, 84% of those workers were rated “C” class.\footnote{SWANLC, 21.}

Many of these workers were taking up farm labour for a one or two year contract in order to, in future years, be able to move into higher paid mine labour; for many workers from northern Namibia, farm labour was seen as temporary. To some extent, the mine owners, farmers, and SWANLA recognised this as well; the recruitment fees for “A” and “B” class workers were significantly higher (nearly double that of “C” Class), leading to allegations that the mines were subsidising the farmers when it came to recruitment and transport.\footnote{Ibid., 20-21.} There was an understanding, however, that “C” class workers would attain a level of linguistic competence in Afrikaans during their time working on the farms,\footnote{NAN SWAA A.521/13/3: Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into Certain Aspects of the Native Labour Question in the Territory (July 28, 1939), 61-62.} which was deemed beneficial to the mines in the long term.

The SWANLC recognised in time, however, that if the existing system remained in place, labour shortages would continue to abound. After all, even with the large amounts of workers coming out for farm labour with “C” class status, most of the 794 applications for shepherds (\textit{wagters}) and 1,240 applications for general farm workers (\textit{plaasvolk}) made during February 1948 were still outstanding by the end of that year.\footnote{SWANLC, 21. The commission estimates that the average farm employs approximately 7.5 workers each. Ibid., 5.} As long as “C” class workers viewed shepherding and farm labour as a temporary position they must take up before they can earn mine wages, farmers will continue having a labour shortage only temporarily filled by a revolving door of teenage shepherds in need of constant training. Furthermore, by the mid 1940s and the opening up of Kavango and Caprivi to the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA) – recruiting workers to the well-paid Rand mine jobs – there was recognition that the labour force was unlikely to expand very much.\footnote{Ibid., 70-75.}

With the prosperity of farmers in the southern districts from the growth of the karakul industry, they concluded that the only way to find shepherds was to offer more competitive wages, such that “C” class workers might sign a longer contract, or “B” class workers might choose farm labour. General farm labour (\textit{plaasvolk}) as of 1948 would now earn 20/- per month for the first year
and 25/- during the second year with the same employer. Shepherds (wagters), on the other hand, would earn 25/- and 30/- respectively. The SWANLC concluded that this was feasible for the farmers, as the pelt prices were quite high at the time, and shepherding was in high demand.

However, while this increase in salary for shepherds may have convinced more workers to engage in farm labour, the sheep farming industry recognised that this was not a long term solution to the labour question. Over the course of the late 1940s and early 1950s, mining finally overtook agriculture as the largest share of GDP, and urban employment and fishing were growing fast. Furthermore, more and more workers were seeking employment in South Africa (both on mines and in towns), and if the Angolan karakul industry were to take off, fewer Angolan workers would come out to SWANLA. The only solution to the labour question was simply to decrease labour demands on karakul farms. Thus, the Department of Agriculture and the SWA Administration changed priorities, from increasing the raw numbers of labour recruits to increasing technological investment into white farms to ensure financial (and ecological) sustainability. From the early 1950s, subsidised intervention into individual farms became the norm, and the Department of Agriculture (and its Division of Nature Conservation) grew dramatically.

**Soil Conservation, Vermin Control, and Labour Reductions**

From 1948 to 1950, the SWA Administration and various departments undertook a study of commercial agriculture in Namibia, looking to making it more sustainable in future years. Beyond labour shortage, there were serious worries of improper farming techniques, overgrazing, and problematic allocation of farms. The Long Term Agricultural Policy Commission (LTAPC) noted that the way in which farms were organised and operated was largely responsible for the increasing aridity in the territory. Crucially, they noted that the land was getting more arid, not that less rain overall is falling. Poor farming strategies were blamed for the reduction in veld biomass, which allegedly increased evaporation and dried the veld further. While droughts were a common

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94 Ibid., 64.
95 *LTAPC*, 77.
96 Ibid., 14.
occurrence in Namibia and Southern Africa in general, they were thought of as temporary, and the administration (via local farmers) were to take preventative measures to improve the quality of their pastures and livestock.

The commission strongly critiqued the ways in which the SWA Administration was operating the land settlement programme of the 1920s and 1930s. Many of these settlers' farms were located in poor regions which, when farmed intensively, put neighbours at risk because with reduction of biomass through grazing, desert encroachment from the Namib or the Kalahari could occur. Furthermore, the 1928-33 drought ruined nearly all of the poorer settlers. The post-drought Commission on Land Settlement had already identified this trend through oral testimonies heard from nearly ruined farmers throughout the south. It was the recommendation of the LTAPC that increased funds be placed on improving the situation of existing settlers through subsidizing farm infrastructure, improving access to overseas markets, addressing labour concerns, and attempting to maintain a degree of ecological stability. New settlers should not be brought in so long as existing settlers cannot sustain themselves. Therefore, it was recommended that funds should be directed towards capital improvements such as dam building, borehole drilling, windmill purchase, and crucially, fence construction.

This began to take shape with two complementary 1952 Government Ordinances: the Soil Conservation Ordinance (SCO) and the Promotion of Farming Interests Ordinance (PFIO). The terms of the SCO enabled farmers to vote upon the creation of a Soil Conservation District (grondbewaringdistrik; hereafter GBD), which would require that they submit farm modification plans to the national or district level Conservation Committee for approval. GBDs would generally be responsible for managing soil erosion and veld conditions, removing land temporarily or permanently from livestock access to prevent overgrazing, evicting African tenant farmers, and

97 Ibid., 60.
98 See testimonies in NAN Archives of the Commission on Land Settlement (KLS) file no. 1: Oral Evidence Given before Commission, 16-31 July 1934.
control of veld fires. Crucially, if the farm modification plans were approved for the GBD, the resident farmers were now eligible to loans and subsidies from the Farming Interests Board (Boerderybelange-Raad; FIB), which operated alongside the SCO.

The PFIO made its explicit goal the promotion of the interests of farmers and farmers’ associations “by making advances and grants of money” for specific infrastructural development projects within GBDs.\(^{101}\) Loans would be given at a reduced interest rate (3.5% as opposed to the Land Bank’s 4.0%) for the construction of dams, contour walls, boreholes, and boundary & camp fencing. Grants were also made often for the purpose of agricultural research (including bursaries), investigations into water resources, and crucially, reimbursement of completed infrastructural projects deemed to be in line with soil and veld conservation schemes. Naturally, these soil/veld conservation projects needed to be approved in the GBDs farm modification plans.\(^{102}\) The fund received financial support from the abolition of the butterfat winter subsidy, as well as a grant from the Vleisraad (meat board), and 75% of the Karakul Pelt Export Levy, in addition to general additional funds from the administration.\(^{103}\)

Interestingly, during the earlier years of the FIB’s existence, a surprisingly small amount of its funds were actually directed towards soil conservation projects as outlined in the SCO. The vast majority of loans went towards the construction of jackal-proof boundary fencing (jakkalsdraad-grensomheining); the same applies to subsidies and rebates on loans. The only construction project receiving significant investment from the FIB which could be conceived of through the lens of soil conservation is interior stock-proof camp fencing, which can enable rotational grazing and veld conservation (against overgrazing) if used properly. Observe Figures Eight & Nine for detailed statistics from the 1950s and 1960s.


Figure Eight: Farming Interests Board: Selected Loans, 1964-1967

Figure Nine: Farming Interests Board: Selected Subsidies & Rebates, 1955-1967


It must also be noted that the 1962/63 Farming Interest Board report provides an estimate of total loans to farmers for soil conservation projects since the foundation of the fund in 1952; it does not disambiguate by year, however, making the statistics difficult to include. Nevertheless, it reveals similar trends, namely, that interior camp fencing and jackal-proof boundary fencing were the vast majority of expenses. When taken into context of the later years, it appears that as farmers constructed camps, they then applied for loans for jackal proof boundary fencing. See below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Work</th>
<th>Approximate Value (in Rands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interior Camp Fencing (Stock Proof)</td>
<td>835,971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackal-Proof Boundary Fencing</td>
<td>772,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boreholes</td>
<td>517,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windmills</td>
<td>459,494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stock-Proof Boundary Fencing</td>
<td>116,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reservoirs</td>
<td>107,898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dams</td>
<td>80,168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A few of the earliest formed GBDs in southern Namibia included jackal-proof boundary fencing as part of their constitutions, most notably in the Uhlenhorst area of eastern Rehoboth district. Several of these farmers put up the fencing quite quickly, and most applied for loans from the Farming Interests Board. Crucially, in their correspondence with the FIB, few of them mention any desire to practice improved farming methods in order to protect the soil or the veld; they rather mention labour concerns. S.W.J. van der Merwe on farm Rusticana remarked that he can't convince any local labourers to become shepherds (wagters) on his farm, and when he is able to find someone, it is ordinarily an elderly man who requests £6-8 per month to look after a flock of 500 karakuls. Furthermore, he is unable to bring in Ovambo shepherds, as most are reluctant to take up this kind of labour; therefore, jackal-proofing, while labour intensive during construction, will reduce his labour demand in the long term. In response to D.D. Bassingthwaigte's application for a

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108 NAN Archives of the Boerderybelange-Raad (RBB) 5 File BB.84/53: S.W.J. van der Merwe: Rusticana No. 77 – Rehoboth District.
jackal-proof fencing loan, the Rehoboth Magistrate noted that a “lack of labour is compelling farmers to jackal-proof their farms.”¹⁰⁹ Indeed, over the course of the 1950s and early 1960s, hundreds of farms throughout the southern districts applied for loans for jackal-proof boundary fencing (as well as camp fencing). Some of the northern (cattle) districts sought stock-proof boundary fencing instead.

Jackal-proof fencing involved much more material than ordinary fencing; one of the main ways to build a jackal-proof fence is by purchasing large quantities of four-foot high & three-inch-gap wire netting to affix onto existing stock-proof galvanised-wire fencing, which prevents the jackals from slipping between the horizontal strands. Furthermore the fencing is buried up to six inches below the ground to prevent the animals from digging underneath (or folded over with stones), and it was sometimes built with a veranda to keep the jackals and rooikat from climbing over.¹¹⁰ Although this sort of fencing was recommended by the administration as early as 1925, few were able to afford it until the loans and subsidies of the 1950s came in (as well as the increasing revenue from karakul pelts).¹¹¹

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¹¹⁰ NAN SWAA A.486/1/1: Fencing Proclamation Ordinance, 1955.
¹¹¹ NAN Archives of the Division of Agricultural and Veterinary Services (AGV) A.2/3: A.P. van der Merwe, “Vermin Proof and Other Fencing” reprinted from Journal of the Department of Agriculture, October 1925. LTAPC, 56-57.
¹¹² Keetmanshoop district, photo by Bernard Moore, 2017.
Upon hearing of the successes of the Uhlenhorst farmers, as well as farmers in the Hamrivier GBD in Karasburg district (50% of whom had jackal-proofed), the Department of Agriculture decided to investigate if jackal-proof fencing should be made compulsory throughout Soil Conservation Districts in sheep farming territories. A series of twenty-two meetings were made with farmers throughout the southern districts to ascertain the farmers' perception of jackal-proofing. The vast majority of farmers supported the proposed legislation that GBDs require jackal-proof boundary fencing between the farms.

The first upside to jackal-proofing was the reduction of labour costs in the long term. Mr. B. Jansen of Gibeon district fenced his 4,790ha farm for a cost of £1,250 – he was subsidised with £312, and paid with a loan the remaining £938. He revealed that after the fencing was completed, he was able to release three of his shepherds, saving him an estimate of £188 per annum, greatly accelerating his payback of the loan. Another farmer near Koës noted that once he fenced his 12,000ha farm at a post-subsidy cost of £1,212, he released three of his five shepherds, saving approximately £100 per year. In addition, he estimates that forty sheep are spared from jackals each year, providing him with £120 further in revenue each year. Furthermore, Mr. Jooste, a farmer near Keetmanshoop, noted that on a jackal-proofed farm, 3,000 karakuls can be controlled by three “plaasvolk”, while on an open farm, you need seven wagters in addition to the plaasvolk. Below are some of the labour findings of farmers who had already jackal-proofed their farms. Most farmers who had jackal-proofed needed farm fewer workers to tend to the sheep; and they likely would keep a few full time employees, bringing in per diem shearers and de-fleshers during the shearing and lambing seasons, respectively.

113 NAN AP 5/7/8: Verslag van Kommissie van Onderzoek: Wenselijkheid van Verplichte Jakkalsproefomheining (February, 1956).
114 NAN AGR 500 File 68/6/1/1/1 (v. 1): Minutes: Kommissie van Onderzoek: Jakkalsproefomheining - Meeting at Witbooisvlei, 19 September 1955. It is very clear, however, that some of these farmers are overestimating the monthly salary of their workers. Even the SWANLC, held only a few years earlier, noted that the salaries of shepherds would be 25/- Even when one factors in the costs of rations and rudimentary housing, the amount doesn't reach anywhere near the £8-10 per month cited in these various minutes. Therefore, while the break-even point for the loan and construction costs might have taken longer to reach, it nevertheless existed.
117 Bravenboer, Karakul, 129-130.
Table Three: Selected Labour Reduction, Post-Jackal-Proofing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farmer Name</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Pre-Fencing Labour</th>
<th>Post-Fencing Labour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B. Jansen</td>
<td>Gibeon</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 Shepherds (released)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. van der Merwe</td>
<td>Keetmanshoop</td>
<td>5 Shepherds</td>
<td>2 Shepherds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.E. Smit</td>
<td>Keetmanshoop</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 Shepherds (released)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jooste</td>
<td>Keetmanshoop</td>
<td>7 Shepherds, 3 plaasvolk</td>
<td>3 plaasvolk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.P. Viljoen</td>
<td>Aroab</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 Shepherds (released)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.F. Strauss</td>
<td>Karasburg</td>
<td>18 (shepherds &amp; plaasvolk)</td>
<td>9 (shepherds &amp; plaasvolk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Esterhuize</td>
<td>Karasburg</td>
<td>7 Shepherds</td>
<td>2 Shepherds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Steyn</td>
<td>Keetmanshoop</td>
<td>2 Shepherds, 1 plaasvolk</td>
<td>1 plaasvolk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joubert</td>
<td>Maltahöhe</td>
<td>3 Shepherds</td>
<td>1 Shepherd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Visser</td>
<td>Mariental</td>
<td>3 Shepherds</td>
<td>1 Shepherd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the farmers in the Karasburg and Keetmanshoop districts were very supportive towards the proposed legislation, especially because a large number of them had already fully or partially jackal-proofed their farms. A few of the districts, however, were more reluctant; the most common fear concerning the fencing was that over-capitalisation and increasing indebtedness. For example, a number of the farmers in the Witpütz-block (near today's Rosh Pinah mine) were young, beginner farmers. They were some of the last settlers brought in under the Land Settlement Programme, and hence they were given land bordering the Namib Desert. They felt that they were already heavily indebted and fear that they could lose their farms if the pelt industry died.\(^{119}\)

There was virtually no disagreement regarding the second major upside of jackal-proof fencing: facilitating the elimination of predators, greatly increasing the profits of farms. It is crucial to understand the relationship between shepherding and vermin control. Farm owners often required that their shepherds bring with them dogs in the veld, in order to fend off the ever-present jackals.\(^{120}\) Prior to jackal-proof fencing, a complicated system of kraaling and trekking was necessary, by which sheep were contained at night within stone or bush kraals, only to trek to grazing and water during the morning hours.\(^{121}\)

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\(^{118}\) NAN AGR 500 File 68/6/1/1/1 (v. 1): Minutes: Kommissie van Ondersoek: Jakkalsproefomheining – all meetings.

\(^{119}\) NAN AGR 500 File 68/6/1/1/1 (v. 1): Minutes: Kommissie van Ondersoek: Jakkalsproefomheining - Meeting at Bethanie, 6 February 1956.

\(^{120}\) In fact, during the early 20th Century, a surprising number of whites, recognising the labour benefits they reaped from the system, were critical of the dog tax, because it meant that Nama workers had fewer dogs at their disposal to kill vermin, whether as wage labourers or as subsistence pastoralists. Jackal demographics do not obey farm borders. See NAN SWAA A.510/1 (v1): R.J. Badenhorst to Defence Department [sic], Windhoek - 1 April 1919.

\(^{121}\) LTAPC, 56-57.
and construction of camps had the effect of improving pasture quality and carrying capacity, because far less grass was trampled along trek paths, and manure was spread more evenly throughout the veld.\textsuperscript{122} Reduction of kraaling also helped reduce the spread of scab and other sheep diseases. While sheep were in the kraal or grazing, it was the responsibility of shepherds to engage in further vermin control practices, such as laying carcasses laced with strychnine to assembling \textit{slagysters} (gin traps) and regularly checking up on the bait sites.\textsuperscript{123}

In the end, the Fencing Ordinances were amended to include subsidised, mandatory jackal-proof boundary fencing between farms affiliated with GBDs in sheep-farming districts.\textsuperscript{124} From 1958 subsidies could range from £1,200 to £2,700 per farmer (depending on the farm size),\textsuperscript{125} and costs were to be shared by the farm neighbours. If the farm bordered the Namib desert or a game reserve, the administration would cover half of the cost; if the farm borders a so-called “Native Reserve”, 50% of the costs would be deducted from the tribal trust fund.

\textit{Figure Eleven: Jackal-Proofing farm boundaries often reached impractical extremes.}\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{122} Beinart, \textit{The Rise of Conservation}, 138-140.
\textsuperscript{123} NAN SWAA A.510/1 (v1): Magistrate Maltahöhe to Secretary for S.W.A. - “Poison for Destruction of Vermin” - 14 January 1918. NAN AGV 152 File V14: Secretary for S.W.A. to Senior Veterinary Officer, Windhoek – “Vermin Extermination Commission” – October 12, 1923.
\textsuperscript{124} NAN AP 5/7/8: Verslag van Kommissie van Ondersoek: Wenslikheid van Verpligte Jakkalsproefomheining (February, 1956).
\textsuperscript{125} NAN SWAA A.486/1/1: Secretary for S.W.A. “Wysing van Subsidies op Grondbewaringswerke” - undated, likely May 1958. An additional £1,200 to £2,700 per farm could also be received for successful completion of borehole, reservoir, dam, and piping systems.
\textsuperscript{126} Keetmanshoop district, photo by Bernard Moore, 2017.
Offensive Vermin Control, Post-Fencing

One must recognise, however, that fencing on its own does not eliminate predators. In conjunction with these fencing ordinances and increased enclosure of the farms in GBDs of the south, a new policy of offensive vermin eradication was brought in. From 1956, the Department of Agriculture resurrected the old “hunt club” legislation of the 1920s – back when the hunt clubs were merely a loophole to avoid the dog tax\textsuperscript{127} - in new-and-improved forms.\textsuperscript{128} Rather than forming hunt clubs for tax breaks and to collect a small bounty for submitted proofs, these new clubs had added elements, especially in the way they interacted with fencing and property demarcation. Those who were members of jackal clubs were able to cross over the boundaries of farms adjacent to the club's territory (gebied) in order to hunt predators which were presumably hiding out on the neighbour's land. Any jackals killed in this process resulted in a £10 fine levied by the jackal club onto the farm owner (this was raised in 1960 to £25).\textsuperscript{129}

Failing to address vermin demographics on your own farm could result in costly fines; this also applied to African communal lands, such as the Bondelswarts Reserve. Lesser fines were also levied for catching baboons and a number of other declared vermin, and many farmers realised that these new hunt clubs were profitable ways to control vermin numbers. Over the first few years after the signing of 1956 Vermin Extermination Ordinance, no fewer than twenty-nine jackal clubs were formed comprising at least three adjacent farms each.\textsuperscript{130} Soon after the passing of this legislation, most of the south was covered by hunt clubs. Each club must hold at least four organised hunts per year, and if jackal-proof fencing anywhere in the gebied or bordering the territory is damaged, it is to be repaired and paid for at the owners expense. The same applies with filling in burrows and holes where vermin could be hiding.\textsuperscript{131}

\textsuperscript{128} NAN AGR 859 File 110/1: \textit{Die Ordonnansie op Uitroei van Ongedierte}, 1956.
\textsuperscript{129} NAN AGR 859 File 110/1 (v1): \textit{Vermin Extermination Amendment Ordinance}, 1960.
\textsuperscript{130} NAN AGR 860 File 110/4/1 through File 110/4/29.
\textsuperscript{131} NAN AGR 859 File 110/1 (v1): \textit{Vermin Extermination Ordinance}, 1957.
By 1964, vermin extermination reached a new level. After a the annual congress of the National Wool Growers' Association (*Nasionale Wolkwekersvereniging* – NWKV), the Department of Agriculture endorsed their proposal for the formation of District Hunting Associations (*Distriksjagverenigings* – DJV).\(^{133}\) In all voted-upon GBDs in southern Namibia, all farmers were required to be members of the regional DJV, often made up of members of multiple neighbouring GBDs, and pay an annual membership fee of R0.10 per hectare owned. These funds would go towards the purchase of vehicles, poisons, weapons, traps, and dogs.\(^{134}\) Furthermore, these funds were also used to hire full-time vermin hunters to lead collaborative commando hunts, or lay traps

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\(^{132}\) See NAN AGR 860 File 110/4/1 through File 110/4/29 for the various registration documents and *gebied* maps. Territories superimposed on a cropped 1972 partial revision farm map. Most hunting association territories lined up with 1972 farm boundaries, but a few had to be approximated.


and poisons on their own. This intensification was brought to ensure that those receiving subsidies for jackal-proof fencing and borehole drilling – central components of improved agricultural techniques – were contributing to the well-being of the district. A number of farmers were ostracised for allegedly acting as jackal “breeding stations” (teelstasies) where the predators can run, hide and reproduce.\textsuperscript{135} Many of the farming associations wanted mandatory participation in hunts and larger fines for harbouring jackals.

Jackal killing was now collaborative, involving the administration, farmers, neighbours, and GBDs & DJVs. It was also decided that access gates must be built into jackal-proof fencing every 1000 yards, so that DJV members can enter a farm to eliminate predators which escape onto the owner's land.\textsuperscript{136} In addition, non-predatory mammals were often included on the lists of vermin, due to their ability to aid in vertical predation. Aardvarks and aardwolves are insectivorous, and while they don't eat sheep, they regularly dig underneath jackal-proof fencing, passively aiding jackals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Animal</th>
<th>Taxonomy</th>
<th>Reason for Elimination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aardvark</td>
<td>Orycteropus Afer</td>
<td>Vertical Predation (passive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aardwolf</td>
<td>Proteles Cristata</td>
<td>Vertical Predation (passive) / Mistaken Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black-Backed Jackal</td>
<td>Canis Mesomelas</td>
<td>Vertical Predation (active)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Gerbil</td>
<td>Gerbilliscus Afra</td>
<td>Horizontal Competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chacma Baboon</td>
<td>Papio Ursinus</td>
<td>Vertical Predation (passive &amp; active)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leopard</td>
<td>Panthera Pardus</td>
<td>Vertical Predation (active)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratel (Honey Badger)</td>
<td>Mellivora Capensis</td>
<td>Vertical Predation (passive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock Hyrax (Dassie)</td>
<td>Procavia Capensis</td>
<td>Horizontal Competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rookat</td>
<td>Caracal Caracal</td>
<td>Vertical Predation (active)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrub Hare</td>
<td>Lepus Saxatilis</td>
<td>Horizontal Competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spotted Hyena</td>
<td>Crocuta Crocuta</td>
<td>Vertical Predation (active)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Dog</td>
<td>Lycaon Pictus</td>
<td>Vertical Predation (active)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{136} NAN AGR 859 File 110/1 (v1): Direkteur van Landbou: Comments on Proposed Vermin and Jackal Club Legislation – 19 March 1957. Farmers keeping cattle or game and refusing to control their predator numbers remain to this day a threat to their neighbours, and significant conflict has arisen regarding the Gondwana Private Game Park near the Fish River Canyon. The corporation has torn down the interior fencing (including some of the jackal-proof) in order to create an image of “wilderness”; they also refuse to cull their jackal populations, causing headache and near financial ruin for some of their neighbours. Personal communication, Willem Coetzee, Droëgrond, September 2017. See also, Swanepoel, “Habits of the Hunters,” 138; and Femke Brandt & Marja Spijerenburg, "Game Fences in the Karoo: Reconfiguring Spatial and Social Relations," Journal of Contemporary African Studies 32, no. 2 (2014), 220-237.
Of particular importance to the success of DJVs in eliminating jackals was the adoption of the United States manufactured “Coyote Getter” (gifskieter). Getters are 5-7 inch stakes hammered into the ground featuring a powerful spring- or gunpowder-based ejector which fires a cyanide bullet into the mouth of the canid taking the bait. Death is relatively quick, though painful. In June 1961, Malcolm W. Allison of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Sacramento arrived in South Africa to offer a training in gifskieters at the Vrolijkheid vermin experimental farm (ongedierte proefplaas) in the Klein Karoo, Cape Province. For several years prior, the Americans had been using gifskieters in order to control coyote and wolf numbers in the American West. While it was clear that jackals were smart enough that if a getter backfired, the animals would stay clear away, the trials at Vrolijkheid were a success overall. Farmers found that in combinations with other strategies, getters had high kill rates for jackals across all kinds of terrains.

Gellap-Ost, the government experimental farm in southern Namibia, imported from Colorado several hundred gifskieters in the 1960s for testing on their grounds. The farm manager found that they resulted in much more efficient elimination of predators than coursing with hounds, which was difficult as an offensive strategy in the dry southern Namibian districts. They promptly ordered more gifskieters to be delivered and distributed among DJVs.

Only members of the DJVs were able to lay coyote getters in the districts, and they were the first to receive training on how to safely administer the devices. Transnational networks were fostered, as these jakkalsjagters kursus (jackal hunting courses) were based on the same courses at Vrolijkheid a few years prior. Over the course of the 1960s, numerous training modules were held at Gellap-Ost for upstanding farmers in districts throughout the south, as well as some of the dryer

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139 See, regarding getter use in Port Nolloth, D.J. Brand, N. Fairall and W.M. Scott, “The Influence of Regular Removal of Black-Backed Jackals on the Efficiency of Coyote Getters, South African Journal of Wildlife Research 25, no. 2 (1995), 44-48. The authors note that while early use of Coyote Getters on a farm or area near high jackal population resulted in high success rate, jackals eventually learned to avoid getters, resulting in lower kill rates. Getters must therefore be combined with other forms of jackal control, such as vermin clubs, traps, and other poison delivery methods.
central and northern districts, such as Usakos and Outjo, which also faced sheep losses to jackals. 

Passing the *gifskieter* licensing course would enable the farmer to lay getters as part of a DJV, or on his own (if he resided in a non-GBD). 

With farms enclosed with jackal-proof fencing, hunting associations armed with the latest poison technology, jackals seemed to not stand a chance. The number of jackals and other carnivores killed in these years were reported to be immense. This was not just a quantitative change in jackal eradication, but a qualitative one. When offered heavily subsidised training and breeding facilities for *jakkalshonde* (jackal hunting dogs) by the NWKV and the South African *Vleisraad* (meat board) the Director of the SWA Division of Nature Conservation & Tourism (*Afdeling Natuurbewaring en Toerisme*; hereafter NTB) flatly turned them down on grounds that *gifskieters* and other poisons (like strychnine and Compound-1080) were more effective. This was


143 It is unclear to me at this stage if African reserves (and later Bantustans) were able to form DJVs or enable GBD status. I believe that the Baster Gebied was able to, but they are generally an exception to the rule. More research is needed.

a qualitative shift; *jakkalshonde* would have been intended for defensive, targeted killings of problem jackals, rather than towards complete eradication. Importantly, they would also be intended for use in an industry with fundamentally different labour goals, one still reliant on shepherds. *Gifskieters* and *slagysters* (gin traps) are non-targeted methods of control; they will kill young, old, male, female – it did not matter. This strategy was advocated by the administration as a form of “progressive farming” to reduce losses and make sheep farming more “scientific” and rational.\(^{145}\) These policies of eradication did not remain static and unchanging, however.

**Caught Between a Rock and a Hyrax**

In October 1966, farmers near in Aroab, a sheep-farming town in South-eastern Namibia, were facing a difficult situation. Swarms of rodents and other ground animals had descended upon the district, eating the grasses and reducing the veld condition to such a state that the district's sheep were left with little to eat. One farmer, Mr. W.H.A. Boschoff, was poisoning the burrows and killing up to twenty-seven hares per day, but this was only a drop in a bucket.\(^{146}\) Similar infestations of ground animals were occurring throughout southern Namibia in these years; the main culprits were deemed to be the Rock Hyrax (*dassie*), the Scrub Hare, and the Cape Gerbil.

The events in Aroab sparked the South West Africa branch of the Wildlife Protection and Conservation Society of South Africa to petition the Secretary for S.W.A., arguing that the reason for the rise in the number of ground mammals was the wanton destruction of jackals and other predators on farms in southern Namibia, eradicated on grounds that they attacked sheep and other small stock.\(^{147}\) Boschoff himself had received loans and subsidies from the Farming Interests Board to erect jackal proof fencing on his farm near Aroab and clean his camps of carnivores.\(^{148}\) They also conducted an investigation into vermin destruction in the region, noting that between January 1965

\(^{145}\) The LTAPC confidently noted that “Carnivora should be ruthlessly exterminated.” *LTAPC*, 99. The Drought Investigation Commission recommended capturing female predators and tying them up in the veld until she was in heat, then killing any males which approached. NAN SWAA A.413/1: *Interim Report of the Drought Investigation Commission of South West Africa*, 1924, 195.


\(^{147}\) NAN AGR 860, File 110/2: Secretary, SWA Branch of the Wildlife Protection and Conservation Society to Secretary for S.W.A. “Protection of Small Vermin” - 22 October 1966.

and July 1966, at least 22,242 jackals were killed on farms in Namibia. This figure was based on the bounty system attached to submission of jackal “proofs”, which from 1965 was R1 per tail.

The Society did not appeal to an end of jackal killings, but rather, they asked for it to be done in a much more controlled manner, taking into consideration the role of jackals and other animals classified as “vermin” in the southern Namibian ecosystem. Another major critique brought before the administration was that farmers and magistrates were continuing to issue bounties for proofs of non-vermin species. For many years, the honey badger (*ratel*) and the serval (*tierboskat*) were considered to be vermin, as they are carnivorous species; however, neither eats lambs, as both are small creatures and mostly feed on snakes and rodents. Similarly, the aardwolf (*Proteles Cristata*), though looking suspiciously like a jackal from a distance, is not a close relative of the black-backed jackal, and is actually closer related to hyenas, and importantly, it is 100% insectivorous. As the aardwolf feeds mostly on termites, it actually serves a constructive role for farmers in reducing the insects that degrade fencing posts; the creatures consume over 40,000 termites in just a few hours. Efforts were taken to provide magistrates with colour photographs of aardwolves and other non-vermin animals so that bounties would not be given to those bringing in proofs. Similar dynamics existed regarding the burrowing aardvark (*Orycteropus afer*).

Situations like the 1966 events in Aroab convinced the S.W.A. Department of Nature Conservation and Tourism (NTB) to change vermin categories to reflect what the purpose of control was: profit. This led to the more inclusive, yet ambiguous term “problem animal.” According to J.K. Thomson, Director of NTB for the Cape Province,

> A problem species can be defined as one which causes appreciable economy loss to the local agricultural economy, and the object of control, as a function of nature conservation, is to reduce the numbers of the species in question in the area to such an extend that appreciable economic loss no longer occurs. It is obvious that there is a vast difference between control and extermination – and the guiding principle must be the first and not the second as, extermination in an irrevocable step which is incompatible with the principles of

In other words, problem animals become those creatures which get in the way of agricultural production. This is nothing new, and as was discussed earlier, agriculture of any sort necessarily involves conflict with wild animals. From this point on, conservation officers and employees were brought in to NTB to address a new class of problem animals, rodents, hares, and dassies. Johann Lensing was brought on the mid-1970s as Director of NTB (taking over from Eugene Joubert) while he was simultaneously completing his M.Sc in Wildlife Management at the University of Pretoria on rock hyrax ecology; and he made the “dassie plague” a major priority for NTB.

A number of farmers in the Karasberge (Karas Mountains) in south-eastern Namibia were facing major issues with dassies, who were coming out from the rocks to graze on the veld, removing quantities of pasture which karakul sheep could be feeding on. Furthermore, dassies have a reputation of ring-barking trunks, killing the entire tree. Lensing investigated this issue from 1974-1983, focusing on a number of key farms. From the earliest incarnation of the project, Lensing was clear of why the dassie plague became so:

The Rock Hyrax or dassie is South West Africa's most recent problem animal. This species

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153 NAN Archives of the Division of Nature Conservation and Tourism (NTB) 2/272 file N.50/10/1: Director of Nature Conservation, Cape Town to Director of Nature Conservation, Windhoek “Enquiries Re: Vermin Control” - 28 April 1970.

appears to have increased tremendously during the past 10-15 years, presumably as a result of the almost total extermination of predators such as black-backed jackal and lynx [rooi kat] from sheep farms on which jackal-proof fencing was erected during the early 1960s. Jackal-proof fencing restricted the movement of predators and enabled farmers to almost completely exterminate them. In the mountainous parts of the sheep-farming regions the hyrax population increased so that most of the available hyrax habitat became occupied. During dry years the hyrax competes with sheep flocks for grazing and browse and damages the veld.\textsuperscript{155}

Lensing sought temporary control strategies for the dassie and other herbivorous “problem animals”, such as telodrin, thallium, sodium fluoroacetate (1080 poison), and some anti-fertility agents such as stilbestrol, but in the end, he and the other ecologists with NTB advocated for restoring predator-prey relationships. These requests, however, tended to fall on deaf ears, as jackals continued to be eradicated on farms (both white- and black-occupied) throughout this period; many farmers were looking to short term goals.

The dassie situation, however, revealed itself to be more complex and harder to manage, yet less serious. On several farms in Karasburg and Keetmanshoop districts, Lensing examined stomach contents to analyse exactly what the feeding patterns of dassies were in this “plague”. He found that, while it was true that in dry seasons dassies competed with sheep for grazing, dassies also utilised browse, which karakuls tend to not feed upon. Furthermore, dassies rarely go far from the stony outcroppings which provide them protection from birds of prey; therefore the only overgrazed areas of the farms would be near the rocks (not the highest quality grazing anyway).\textsuperscript{156} Finally, Lensing ran calculations to see what percentage of the profitability of the farm was being lost to competition with the dassies, and he concluded that it could not have been more than a one or two percent of profits were not realised because of poorer grazing.

This is crucial because, while farmers complained about all sorts of “problem animals”, they seemed to recognise that the jackal was the most serious of them, and restoring “predator-prey relationships” would not be overly beneficial for the farm's profitability. And if an immense vertical predation rate can be negated with the caveat that 1\% might be lost through horizontal grazing


competition with dassies, most farmers would take dassies over jackals any day. Furthermore, the actual process of eradicating dassies is maddening, because dassies lived not in burrows but in outcroppings; thus, fumigation was not possible (like with gerbils), leaving either manual killings with rifles and hounds, or the laying of poisoned grain, which could damage livestock as well. The labour implications involved in non-carnivorous “problem animal” control are immense if poisoning were not to be used; poison was still used though, especially on baboons.

Efforts were made to research the economic potential of hunting dassies for pelt production, which could potentially lead to a factory being built in Namaland (southern Namibia's apartheid homeland). NTB engaged in partnerships with the administration and a few private corporations to experiment with de-fleshing and dying of the pelts for luxury goods production, but the pelts lacked under-fur, making them impractical in cold climates. The leather was not terribly strong, and the guard hairs were irregularly placed, making uniformity difficult for garment manufacturers. After preliminary tests, the scheme was abandoned as unprofitable, especially when the labour costs of production (hunting with guns and hounds) is taken into account.

Over the course of the late-1960s until the 1980s, it is clear that farmers and administrators grew to adopt a more sophisticated stance on vermin control. Numerous South African and Namibian ecologists developed the term Superjakkals: black-backed jackals who had encountered so many different control measures that it was now immune to most. Farmers recognised that jackals are intelligent canids, capable of observing traps and poisons, avoiding them in the future. Furthermore, with the rise of problem animals like dassies and hares, farmers began to look upon strychnine and 1080 (sodium fluoroacetate; blou-gif) with more scepticism, as secondary poisoning

to vultures and birds of prey also contributed to the growth of these small mammals.\textsuperscript{162} Slagysters began to be more criticised for catching more aardwolves than jackals and rooikat.

With that being said, it would be incorrect to claim that with the decline of karakul sheep farming in the early 1980s – to declining purchasing power in Europe, animal rights activism, and intense drought in Namibia – led to declined vermin control. Most farmers simply switched to mutton production, via the fast growing and fast reproducing Dorper breed, and predator control continued as before, but with a few more restrictions on poison. In 1988, jackals, rooikat, dassies, wild dogs, and baboons remained on the problem animal list; if your farm was jackal proofed, honey badger and aardvark were included as well.\textsuperscript{164} Even though aardwolves were no longer proclaimed vermin, farmers throughout southern Namibia would still kill them – to the detriment of wooden fencing posts – on grounds that they passively aid predation by digging under jackal-proof fences. Furthermore, \textit{giskaters} were still distributed by NTB, and \textit{jakkalskanonne} (set gun traps utilising a 16-bore shotgun cartridge) were recommended for use. Finally, farmers began to

164 NAN BB/3587: Departement van Landbou en Natuurbewaring, Jaarverslag, 1988-1989.}
construct electric wires running along the bottom of the fences (to prevent jackals from digging) and along the top of fences (to prevent caracals from climbing); while this was an additional capital investment, it had the effect of further reducing predation and the number of camp walkers.\textsuperscript{165}

**Conclusion: Vermin, Technology, Labour**

Steven Stoll recently made an impassioned plea to environmental historians to engage more critically on a structural level with capitalism and wage labour. He notes that “documenting the effects of capital without confronting its architecture and foundation seems like an ineffective scholarly project.”\textsuperscript{166} Environmental historians, according to Stoll, must historicize capitalism. He concludes his study with a riddle: what is the difference between a scythe and a John Deere combine harvester? He answers: “the differences between a scythe and a harvester are not merely technological, but also social and environmental. \textit{They are tools that represent different assumptions about the purpose of production.”}\textsuperscript{167}

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\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., 390.

\textsuperscript{168} Bravenboer, \textit{Karakul}, 129. Photo by Berndt von Kunow.
This provides a useful framework for understanding labour and environmental transformations in southern Namibia, particularly our focus on vermin destruction and the transition from guard-dogs to fences and poisons. They represented fundamental differences in productive forces, and like capital, concealed within them fundamental differences in power relations. We must be careful not to view technologies of vermin control merely as form and function; offensive vermin control post-1956 was not just an intensification of existing patterns of control. Rather than a quantitative shift, this was qualitative and dependent on the maintenance of a labour regime bereft of shepherds. The structural implications of jackal-proof fencing and gifskieter technology was just as much about culling wagters as it was about culling jackals.

Sustaining settler colonialism and apartheid necessitated sustaining settler colonial and apartheid agriculture; this was the case throughout Southern Africa. Indeed, the Long Term Agricultural Policy Commission admitted that if the South West African agricultural sectors were operating without subsidies, they would simply collapse under the weight of the South African agricultural behemoth. They conclude:

Agriculture must therefore be maintained, not to satisfy hunger only, but to prevent collapse of the social and economic structure which in SWA rests foremost on the prosperity of agriculture - precious stones and base metals together with Bokhara black roses [karakul pelts] cannot be relied upon to the end to earn the food for the nation.169

With the development of mining, urban industry, and Angolan karakul, sheep farmers in Namibia could no longer rely on the existing labour system of destabilising African agriculture and reserves to create a larger proletariat. The Administration now directed these funds and efforts towards subsidising and propping up white agriculture through labour-saving technological inputs. The goal was to make white agriculture as independent of black labour as possible. And interestingly, only once this process was complete did the administration and settler farmers begin to accept the idea that the homeland/Bantustan system could apply in Namibia, particularly in the South. While Nama reserves in the former years were looked at as locations of potential proletarians hiding from wage work, Namaland now became a location for a de-proletarianised rural underclass, most of which was no longer needed by sheep farmers.

169 LTAPC, 103.
Finally, with the downfall of the labour intensive karakul industry in the 1980s, many farmers began to adopt the Dorper sheep for mutton production. This breed lacks a herd mentality and grazes in no more than pairs. Adopting this breed pre-jackal-proofing would be practically impossible as shepherds would have to look after much smaller flocks, drastically increasing labour costs. Furthermore, the spread-out nature of Dorper grazing behaviour renders it more susceptible than karakul to predation when the jackal-proof fencing is breached. Today, it is estimated that upwards of 70% of small stock in southern Namibia are now Dorper, and white Afrikaans-speaking farmers still dominate the industry (many of them were former karakul farmers). It is reasonable to state that these technological interventions of the 1950s and 1960s set the stage for racial and economic inequality in post-independence southern Namibia.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ One farmer remarked to me that it would cost nearly the sale price of the entire farm to re-fence it. Jackal-proof netting sells for N$900 per fifty meters. A perimeter fence worth of netting alone for his 26,800ha farm would cost at least N$1,296,000. This does not include the cost of labour or the other materials needed to construct jackal-proof fencing: galvanised wire, barbed wire, droppers, standards, wooden posts, restraining posts, etc. Furthermore, this does not include the cost of interior stock-proof camp fencing. Personal Communication, Henrik Nieuwoudt, Geenriviere, September 2017.