

**REPORT ON ILLEGAL DEVELOPMENT OF FARM PROTECTION MOATS IN
LAIKIPIA RANCHES AND INCREASED CONFLICT BETWEEN WILDLIFE
AND CATTLE IN ADC MUTARA RANCH AND OTHER RANCHES WITHIN
LAIKIPIA COUNTY.**

By

James Mathenge and Richard Chepkwony

October 2016

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1 INCREASED ILLEGAL MOAT CONSTRUCTION IN LAIKIPIA COUNTY.

1.1 Introduction

Laikipia county covers an area of 10,000km² (Fig. 1). The area is characterized by the semi-arid conditions ideal for pastoralism. In the recent past, there has been a massive influx of domestic livestock from the adjoining counties of Samburu and Isiolo, which are relatively more arid. As a result of livestock influxes, there has been increased cases of general insecurity characterized by banditry, cattle rustling, proliferation of illegal firearms, poaching and vandalism of private and public property. To combat vandalism of private property, several privately-owned ranches in Laikipia have resorted to development of moats as a desperate measure to combat livestock incursion into their properties by illegal livestock herders.



Fig. 1: Map of Laikipia showing land uses (**Source:** laikipiawildlifeforum.org).

1.2 Development of Moats

The development of moats started around September 2015 at ADC Mutara, by private investors leasing the government-owned facility. But following public and government agencies' appeal against the development of moats, NEMA in Laikipia stopped further developments of the moats till EIA's are conducted. However, beginning June 2016, other

private land owners have resorted to the same approach most probably motivated by the inability of the responsible institutions to contain destruction of private properties, mostly the electric fences. The development of moats and proliferation of arms may have grim consequences on conservation and protection of wildlife.

Following a site visit that we conducted this month, other properties that have developed moats include: Endana, Ol Maisor in Rumuruti and Segera ranch in Laikipia East and the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) Camp in Nanyuki. The moats vary in sizes and depth from about 4-10 feet in depth (See plate 1 to 3). There has been some reports that these moats have endanger wildlife movement and security, affects environment integrity and aggravates human-wildlife conflicts. (Plate 4)



Plate 1: A section of the moat estimated total length of this section is about 16km where fence was destroyed by illegal grazers



Plate 2: A section of the moat in segera ranch



Plate 3: Showing the depth of the moat in segera ranch



Plate 4: Evidence of dead wildlife inside one of the illegal moats in Laikipia

1.3 Mitigation of the development of moats

To address these issues we have done taken the following steps in the interim:

1. Complained to NEMA on the consequences of the moats and as a result they have issued a stop-orders to the developers pending EIA's to be submitted by the project proponents.
2. We raised the issue with the county security committee and have bolstered security in the several properties in Laikipia.
3. NEMA has asked any proponent of such projects to develop EIAs before any other such projects are initiated.
4. We intend to negotiate with the land-owners and the county security committee on other most appropriate means of addressing destruction of private and public property to control the desperate development of moats in the area.

2 Increased human Wildlife conflict in ADC Mutara Ranch

2.1 Introduction

Mutara Ranch is one of the 18 farms listed under the ownership of Kenya Agricultural Development Corporation (ADC) and covers an area of approximately 63,000 acres. ADC Mutara lies within Laikipia County, about four hours' drive North of Nairobi on the Laikipia plateau between Mt Kenya and the Aberdare ranges at an altitude of 1800m a.s.l. ADC Mutara is neighboured to the south by Ol Pajeta Conservancy, Eland Downs and to the north by Ngorare and Kifuko Ranches. Mutara conservation area(MCA) is approximately 20,000 acres and is demarcated from the rest of the ranch by the Sugorui river which traverses the property almost mid-way along the east- west with the Nanyuki-Rumuruti road forming the southern boundary adjacent to Ol Pajeta Conservancy.

Mutara Ranch is a dry savannah ecosystem in ecological zone IV. Rainfall can sometimes be unreliable and water is a critical resource for maintenance of life systems. Moisture levels, soil type, drainage and temperature are important to maintain growth and support the food webs in the ecosystem.

2.2 HABITATS OF MUTARA CONSERVATION AREA

Mutara conservation area has diverse habitat types typical of a dry savanna system, mostly defined by moisture levels. Most wildlife are very habitat specific and habitat choice is influenced by factors such as diet, shelter from weather and predators and social organization among other factors. Habitat diversity influences species diversity when animals show habitat preference.

There are six habitat types; *A. drepanalobium* closed woodland, *A. drepanalobium* open woodland, *A. xanthophloea* riverine habitat, *E. divinorum* bush, mixed *A. drepanalobium* *E. divinorum* and open plain grassland.

2.3 Wildlife species in Mutara Ranch.

Mutara ranch and its environs has a diverse range of large mammals distributed across the the whole range due to its richness and good climate to the various species. Large herbivores at the study site include elephants (*Loxodonta africana*), giraffes (*Giraffa camelopardalis*), cape buffaloes (*Syncerus caffer*), elands (*Taurotragus oryx*), Grevy's zebras (*Equus grevyi*), Burchell's zebras (*Equus burchelli*), Beisa oryx (*Oryx beisa*), Jackson's hartebeests (*Alcelaphus buselaphus jacksoni*), Waterbuck (*Kobus defassa*), Grant's gazelles (*Gazella granti*), steinbucks (*Raphicerus campestris*) and domestic cattle. Predators include Lion (*Panthera leo*), leopard (*Panthera pardus*), cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*), wild dog (*Lycaon pictus*), Silver-backed jackal (*Canis mesomelas*), Spotted hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*). Primates include Olive baboon (*Papio anubis*), Patas monkey (*Erythrocebus patas*), Vervet monkey (*Cercopithecus aethiops*) and Lesser bushbaby (*Galago senegalensis*).

3 Summary of the Main Findings on the Conflict and Conclusions

1. Fence Status :

Only some sections of the Leased ADC Mutara Ranch is fenced.

Depending on the land use the managements leasing different sections of Mutara ranch have fenced their lands and some are constructing moats to act as deterrent to illegal grazers.

2. The main Land use on the leased parcels of land are livestock keeping on majority of the ADC mutara land. However, further West of ADC large scale farming is on-going and the owners have constructed very comprehensive fences to protect their property.
3. The areas is rich in wildlife species as earlier indicated and have been recorded to be actively using this part of the Laikipia County to migrate from OPC, Mutara conservation area towards and Rumuruti forest.
4. Livestock and wildlife have co-existed for many years with no major cases of conflict since the land use have generally been compatible with wildlife conservation. However with the recent land use changes happening in the area and specifically in the ADC Mutara ranch with different leaseholders introducing non compatible land uses, conflict is bound to increase. In addition recent cases of drought in the north have continued to worsen the situation forcing pastoralists from Samburu and Isiolo counties to move with their cattle in search greener pastures thereby worsening the situation.

A recommendation of how co-existence of both wildlife and livestock can be sustained in Mutara ranch and in the whole of laikipia need to be formulated.

5. This area serves as a buffer zone for migratory wildlife. An EIA needed to have been conducted before leasing out the parcels and also before changing the land uses since The lands act as a refuge to most wildlife that have been displaced by development and land sub division.
6. There is an increasing concern that the county security committee needs to urgently address. Pastoralists have built 'manyattas' next to wildlife corridor connecting OPC and Mutara conservancy. This contributes to Human/wildlife conflict and has in the recent past led to poisoning of vultures last year after lions preyed on their cows.