



# Lion Dog Digest

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Rhodesian Ridgeback International Foundation

**T**here is so much action in 'the dogs in hunting' situation in RSA you would think that we would easily obtain some interaction. We have a very great interest in what can happen to our dogs in the field/veld and also dogs in general.

Well you have seen what suggestions we had put forward and at this stage we have generated no response whatsoever. Before making a point of those approached to date we will go on to the second tier of affected people and they will consist of those individuals who are directly involved rather than organisations representative of some special interest group or other.

There is no doubt whatsoever that dogs in hunting is a 'hot potato' but all we want is a bit of commitment. We can understand that KUSA will back-pedal on such a contentious issue which has nothing whatsoever to do with registrations and showing. But really, there are many bodies at the 'sharp end' who must have something to say about their basic attitude. If they can't share their views with us (and we breed the most effective hound in the bush available in RSA) then how seriously are they approaching the problem? Are we wasting our time trying to co-operate with them. There are other avenues open to us. Can we protect the interests, primarily, of our dogs by approaching them in preference to the non-governmental agencies? That would not seem likely.

It is all very well to 'gnash teeth' and 'pull out hair' about the unfortunate predicament of a grey duiker, but there are other animals out there which constitute a serious risk to our dogs. Is discrimination so deep-seated in current thinking that we can only have a knee-jerk reaction to the 'Bambi' scenario.

Our Ridgebacks, some of them, are very competent but those humans out there must realise that in the dog-hunting situation, whether traditional or not, dogs are not omnipotent and that we have as great a concern for the well-being of the dog as we have for a duiker, a leopard, a hyena, or a lion, or whatever.

In the interim we can only request that those people using the Rhodesian Ridgeback in the bush do so with a full appreciation of their capabilities/limitations and what is acceptable, i.e. this magnificent breed can bay but should not bite.

Let them warn you of the proximity of risky encounters. Also let them track down expeditiously any game that has been wounded. They are efficient, they will save you time, and they will protect you from the risks of facing up to a wounded adversary on his terms. But we would certainly not like to see our quality breed used in 'traditional hunting' as it has been depicted on television to date.

**O**n the other hand there is an over-abundance of interaction between animal and human, it seems these days. We start off a year ago with a story, written below, that appeared in the *Citizen* of 28 March 2001:

### **Elephant shot for overturning vehicle**

An incident in which a bull elephant in musth overturned a gameviewing vehicle with 10 terrified hikers on board in the Kruger National Park (KNP) was a 'very rare occurrence', according to an expert.

It had also been unavoidable because the driver had been unable to reverse due to the presence of other vehicles behind him, a veterinarian in the park told *The Citizen* yesterday.

The elephant was shot dead after members of the game catcher unit tracked it down in the bush near the road between Satara and Tshokwane after the incident on Saturday, it was confirmed.

It was also believed the elephant had an abscess on its tooth which would have contributed to its ill temper.

It had gored a buffalo to death after overturning the vehicle in which a group of hikers were travelling with two park employees, one of them ranger Wouter Jordaan.

No one was seriously injured, but the doors of the vehicle were damaged and a trailer was flattened.

"It was quite exceptional. We have not had an incident like this in the Kruger Park for many years," the vet said.

We then follow up with three stories involving (a) tiger, of all cats in Africa, (b) elephant, and how could five of them possibly be wandering aimlessly around in inhabited areas and manage to remain undetected, and (c) a 'rogue' lion:

### **A. Fleeing robber killed by tigers**

An escaping armed robber was killed by tigers at the weekend at the Rhino and Lion Nature Reserve at Kromdraai, near Krugersdorp, police said yesterday.

West Rand Police Superintendent Milica Bezuidenhout said the man scaled a fence at the nature reserve while trying to escape after he and two accomplices robbed the cashier at the reserve's kiosk at about 5.30pm. "One of the men stayed in the car, while the other two, posing as tourists, held up the cashier," said Supt Bezuidenhout. "When they realised there was no money in the kiosk, they robbed the cashier of his wallet, cellphone and two-way radio before running off." She said another worker pursued the two men.

"One man fled towards the car while the other ran into the reserve. The driver of the vehicle and one accomplice were arrested."

Police returned to the reserve yesterday where the body of the third man was found in the tiger enclosure.

"His neck was broken and his skull fractured. The cashier's wallet and cellphone was found on him and returned to the rightful owner," Bezuidenhout said.

All evidence pointed to the man being mauled to death by the tigers.

### **B. Elephants kill illegal immigrant**

A 28-year-old illegal immigrant from Mozambique was killed in an encounter with five elephants near Giyani outside the Kruger National Park on Wednesday, police said.

Inspector Moatshe Ngoepe said the three illegal immigrants from Mozambique had entered South Africa through the Kruger National Park. After making it through the park, they decided to sleep near Giyani. When they awoke they were confronted by five elephants. The men fled. According to inspector Ngoepe the five elephants pursued one of the men, Fernando Shishongi, and trampled him to death.

The other two men alerted local residents who contacted the police.

Inspector Ngoepe said Rangers from the Department of Environmental Affairs went on a search and found the mutilated body of Mr Shishongi. Inspector Ngoepe said the Rangers were searching for the five elephants.

### **C. Rogue lion drags body into town**

In a grisly scene that startled locals, a lion killed a Mozambican illegal immigrant then dragged his body through the town of Phalaborwa on Saturday night, Northern Province (Limpopo) police said yesterday.

Inspector James Ngoepe said the lion has since disappeared and the police and SA National Defence Force were still searching for the animal last night.

Ngoepe said the immigrant, aged about 35, illegally crossed the border to South Africa and then hiked through the Kruger National Park.

About 1km outside the park, he sat down for a rest and apparently fell asleep.

Ngoepe said police believed the lion attacked him while he was sleeping and then dragged his body into town.

“Commandos saw the lion walking in a street in the centre of town, carrying the body. This happened between 10pm and midnight.”

They fired shots at the animal which then dropped the man and ran away.

Ngoepe said the lion was still missing and appealed to members of the public to immediately contact the police if they spotted it.

He said it was not clear whether the carnivore belonged to the park.

“The police have not yet found any holes in the park’s fence where the animal could have escaped.”

Ngoepe said it was possible that the animal could have lived on a game farm near Phalaborwa or Hoedspruit.

## INGWELALA

**W**e were fortunate indeed to be given the opportunity to spend a few days at Ingwelala, in the Umbabat. The last mentioned is the area abutting on the KNP east of Klaserie and north of Timbavati, and of course there are no fences between those various sections.

Most of the time we were less than 10km from Kruger in country which could not have been drier, bushveld at its most formidable. The grass wasn’t even knee-high, but the Mopani was thick, very thick, so visibility was not good nearly all the time.

Our trusty Land Rover did its best during more than 20 hours of driving throughout that weekend to bring us to every animal the area had available, but we were not at all fortunate. We drove into every nook and cranny and up and down every hump and bump the earth’s crust had built into the Umbabat, all to no good effect.



The loo with a view.

One of the well known oddities of the area is its toilet. Located near a bird hide, this particular structure commands a bird’s eye view of hundreds of square kilometres of bushveld, truly a place to commune with nature. And there isn’t even glass in the walls’ open spaces to impede your enjoyment of the scenery. There is no object in giving you a photograph of that view as it is just bushveld for miles and miles all around you; but to the naked eye this site cannot be beaten for type, while the sounds and the scents of the bush waft up to and past you. Mind you, in the heat of the day, the temperature could become pretty unbearable and, on reflection, did that elevated pedestal constitute the longest ‘long-drop’ in the KNP area? And so we drove on pursuing our interest in the fauna, managing to detect two

wildebeest and a duiker who scurried off as quickly as his little hooves could carry him.

Meanwhile, back at the bungalow in the Ingwelala camp, things were quite different. We were involved in an endless war with who knows how many vervet monkeys. One must admit that the vervets at Pilanesberg are more polished in their thieving ways, but it didn’t take long before we recognised at least five of the little pests on sight. Windows were secured carefully every time we went out ‘game-viewing’ and having again seen very little of anything we returned to our low level war of attrition with

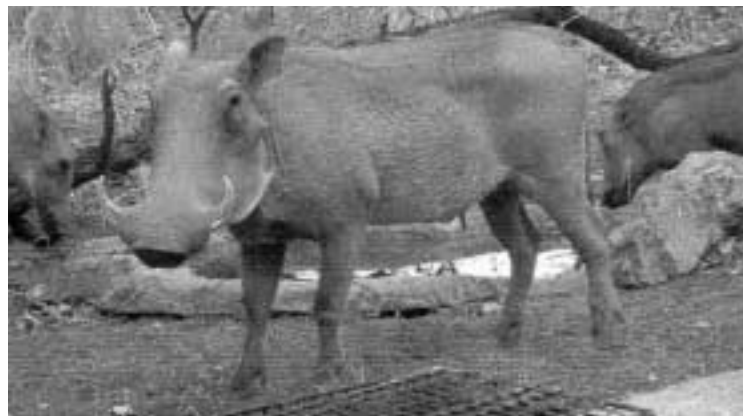
the small four-legged hairy ones. At least they left us alone after dark.

Then there were the Warthogs. Not being one to regard them as ugly, they were quite pleasant to have around. There was an aged male of magnificent proportion who was obviously old and creaky and well past his prime. He was attended to by a pair of younger females who were accompanied by numerous piglets. All would wallow in the 1½ metre diameter water-hole before slaking their thirst, and a grand old time was had by all.

Watching this family exercise it was difficult to imagine why someone would suffer excessive fear for his Ridgeback encountering this type of animal in the bush. Every hunter seems to have a fear for some animal or another out there when accompanied by his dog in the bush, and this one particular friend of mine had warthog as his particular bete-noire. Must admit that he did eventually get over his concern after his Ridgie darted in between mummy and daddy warthog and fetched himself a squealer, with true



The pest of the bush.



Warthog at the waterhole.

leopard finesse, before either parent had moved in defence of its young. When it came down to the line, the warthog had no answer to the Ridgeback's turn of speed, and though those tusks on the male may be capable of inflicting serious damage there just wasn't the remotest chance of him getting the opportunity to use them.

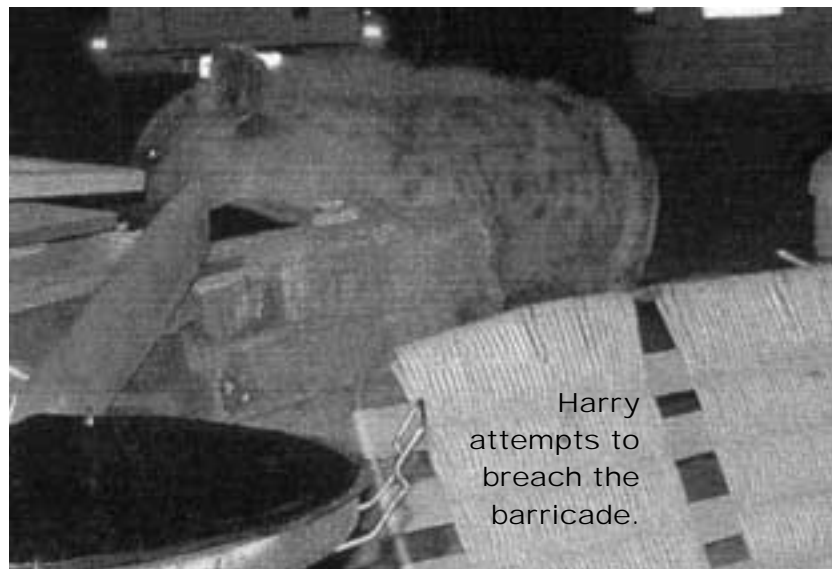
The evening's entertainment was more exciting. We came to call him, or her, Harry. Master of the stealthy approach Harry caught us out every evening. We held a nightly braai on the broad concrete apron in front of the bungalow where we had one fire to sit around

while the food was roasting on a separate fire built for that purpose.

The problem was that Harry was a full grown hyena and a second problem was that our hostess was not at all partial to this particular breed of animal and shrieked at him every time he bounded in. Our host wasn't much better for his part and insisted on illuminating the fellow with my 'million candle power' game-spotting lamp.

The amazing thing was that he could come leaping in, clearing a wall of almost one metre in height, with us being completely unaware of his approach. We heard him lapping at the water-hole once and there was a rustling of the undergrowth on another occasion, but we still failed to locate him with the torches and lamps we kept ready next to our chairs.

The one evening he visited us six times and we only caught him once before he sneaked past, occasionally moving within two metres of us. Our hostess was already hoarse, but Harry



Harry attempts to breach the barricade.

was obviously unabashed and was only interested in sharing our victuals. We had no intention of joining in on this ecological togetherness exercise and were determined to protect our food resources and consume them devoid any outside assistance.

We had this theory that the food next to and upon the fire would be safe. Some joke that. He was totally undeterred by the heat and flames. All you could do was to leap up, shout, and mock charge him. He was quick, and his departure was so skilful, coming nowhere near us on the way out, that you were convinced he had planned it in detail before barging in.

Harry didn't smell, his ears were not tattered, he carried no scars on his head, or anywhere else for that matter. He looked very clean, in excellent condition in fact, and probably lived off the best steak available. One did feel though that one's evening meal, after a hard day looking at the mopani bushes, should have been enjoyed under more restful circumstances. The ideal solution was to inform dear Harry that we didn't seek his company, quite frankly we would be so much better off without him. However, if he would supplement his daily rations with just a sampling of one or two of our persistent problem, the vervets, then we would be perfectly happy to reward him with a nightly snack of two tasty chops of the best quality the local butchery could provide.

There is an electrified fence around the camp, but it is designed to exclude the larger animals, e.g. elephant and giraffe, as two wires are set at human shoulder height, with another pair just above ground level.

In the very early hours of the morning after Harry's most persistent visiting frenzy, there was a commotion a few bungalows away when a lion cornered an impala and whacked it on the stoep. He had already carried the limp form away before the startled occupants could grab a camera.

Nonetheless they had a ready-made topic of conversation which would last for many a month.

Our close encounters of the bush kind at Ingwelala are pretty mundane matters though when one reads what has happened elsewhere in the country involving tiger, elephant, and lion.



Harry sneaks in for dinner.

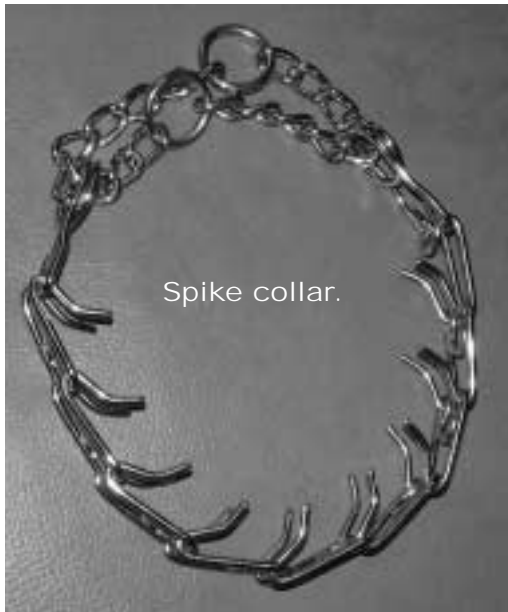


Harry hogs out!

## SPIKE AND ELECTRIC SHOCK COLLARS

**K**USA reminds members in the June issue of their *Dogs in Africa* that the use of spike and electric shock collars is prohibited, and that anyone found using them may be liable to having disciplinary action taken against them.

Few people will know of the spike collar which is available from several speciality dog supply shops, so a photograph is provided on the next page. Any Ridgie used actively is prone to building up neck muscles which negate the effectiveness of the conventional choke chain, and this is particularly true of males.



If that choker drops down at all from right up at the top, under the jaw, it becomes a most comfortable harness. I'm sure that there are a few readers who have been dragged along in cases of extreme provocation to their dog. I well remember once very quickly slipping the lead down around both my legs at calf muscle height when a cat took to spitting at a strong male I was holding at the time – my rubber shoes were dragged across a tarmac surface as a result. The remorselessly advancing Ridgeback fortunately caused the cat to change its foolish act of 'bravery'; he turned on his tail extremely quickly and disappeared into the night.

The conventional leather collar is totally useless if you are seeking a mechanism which will physically restrain your healthy dog should he wish to do it his way – and a choke chain is no improvement. Far better to rely on the urgency/panic in your voice when you shriek out that magic word 'NO'.

As far as that E-collar is concerned I know of no one who has used the 'stimulation' feature more than four times on a Ridgeback. The more useful part of it, the buzzer, is employed by several people for long-range recall. The most consistent user is one of our friends up at Kariba Dam who runs four Ridgies loose on his elephant/lion/etc-occupied game farm and recalls them from upto a mile distance by sounding the buzzer feature of the collar which one of the four always carries under such circumstances. Even though they are most unlikely to get into any trouble it still puts your mind at rest when you see them all wheel around and come romping home in spite of being spread out across 50 metres at the time the buzzer gave them the message. It all goes to prove their remarkable hearing ability, while simultaneously reinforcing your belief that they suffer from auto-induced deafness all too often when well within voice range.

So please remember that your recall mechanism is 'verboden' whereas the choker (which you would never use because you seldom have need for a lead and, more importantly, it can only hang your friend) is more than acceptable.

## HUNTING WITH DOGS

In *Magnum*, 2nd February 2002, Tony S Marsh tells us about '*Hunting with Dogs*' in an absorbing story as follows: Much has been discussed of late on the ethics of hunting game with dogs. Some maintain that it is both cruel and unethical, while others deem it necessary to bring marauding stock killers to book. Surely both points of view are right within the circumstances dictated. Hunting a trophy with dogs is only to be condoned if it is the best way to follow-up and put a wounded animal out of its misery as soon as possible. Conversely, it is often the only way in which certain animals can be controlled speedily and cheaply.

My personal experience of using dogs for game control is mainly limited to buffalo eradication in Kenya during the 1960s. A government edict had directed that, to provide for the expanding Kikuyu tribe, the upper limits of cultivation must be extended into the indigenous forests. The effect was that 'islands' of forest, surrounded by oceans of cultivated fields and villages, were created. Buffalo were imprisoned on these islands and emerged (mainly at night) to graze the newly planted crops. Women gathering firewood were often chased and occasionally gored. As a warden with the Kenya Game Department at the time it was my job to eradicate problem animals.

At our Thompsons Falls base we kept as many as sixty dogs for finding and baying the buffalo. Most of the dogs, which were due to be destroyed, were obtained from Nairobi and were inexperienced. Unfortunately, many of them were killed during these hunts, or were so badly gored they had to be put down by a game scout with a .22 rifle.

These encounters usually occurred at an elevation of 7000 feet and above, and anyone who has not undertaken the control of buffalo with dogs in the thick dark Kenyan forests which occur at this level could be mistaken in thinking that it is a non-dangerous and somewhat cowardly way of dealing with the problem. Nothing could be further from the truth. Although I have not hunted buffalo in the southern part

of Africa and my conjecture comes mainly from the written word – principally articles in *Magnum* – I am sure that Syncerus caffer of the northern races are considerably more vicious than those in other parts of Africa. And, those that are persistently harassed – like those we had to control – become even more so.

Kenyan buffalo will not only use the ‘usual’ methods of horn and hoof to exact retribution, but will also bite when occasion demands. JA Hunter in his book ‘Hunter’, tells of a tribesman who was treed by a bull when out looking for honey. When one of his legs became cramped, he extended it to ease the pain – the waiting bull reared up and bit off his heel ‘as if it were a twig’.

I have seen cornered buffalo, even though downed by bullets, still lunge with their horns at the tormenting dogs. And it is not just the wounded ones that will charge. I have been charged by more animals that have not received a bullet, than by those that have. And the charging animal usually only appears from the heavy forest undergrowth at a range of a matter of yards. In these conditions all shooting is instinctive; if time allows, snap a bullet onto the point of the buffalo’s outstretched nose, but mostly there is time only to point your rifle at the center of the black mass and hope for the best. And the buffalo cows will go for you just as ferociously as the big bulls.

Another facet of hunting these buffalo is that they will charge a scent. Elephant will follow a scent at times if they have been harried, but I have never been charged on scent alone other than by buffalo. On one occasion, in the Ngong hills, I followed a buffalo’s spoor to where it disappeared into a large patch of tight-packed lantana. Not knowing any way to winkle it out, I was prepared to give up.

As the wind was blowing directly from behind, the only way the bull could have known I was there was from my scent. I suddenly heard the loud rustling of a heavy body crashing through equally heavy lantana about 30m away. I saw the tops parting as it charged blind towards me and had time to take a few steps backwards to make room to manoeuvre. I placed a bullet into its brain the instant it appeared.

One thing is certain, when a great beast weighing three quarters of a ton, with a disposition as black as his hide, has a go at you, you have got to stop him. If you do not, you may end up under him – with probably fatal consequences – for you.

I was always on edge on these hunts. During a hunt with dogs, much like any other hunt, there is little or no noise – until your lead dog gets a scent and the pack bays the herd and halts it. Then all hell breaks loose. Dogs barking, buffalo grunting, shots going off and orders shouted. Then one old boy, taking not the slightest notice of the dogs, would charge – and the remarkable thing was that it was almost invariably at me! Was this because my white face was more visible? Or is there some other inexplicable reason?

There was only one occasion when I used a dog to hunt elephant, and that was more by accident than design. A small herd of elephant was causing the government forester grief by coming out at night to browse on the exotic tree species. Sergeant Gichanja, Corporal Wario and I had been trying to come to grips with these elephants for some time, but the underlying foliage in the bamboo thickets in which they hid made our approach too audible. I decided to wait until evening when they moved out and could more easily be detected. We were sitting on a bush track when a passer-by asked what we were doing. On being told, he said, “I have a dog that will move the elephant.” Although I had grave doubts, I lost no time in asking him to fetch it. Most dogs I have known are terrified of the great pachyderms. A short while later, he reappeared with the most magnificent dog which obviously had both mastiff and boxer in its breeding. The owner told us to wait where we thought the elephant would break out and he would send his dog in. There was an obvious pathway frequented by game animals where my scouts and I waited and in a short while the distant barking of a dog could be heard followed by the sounds of elephants coming through the bamboo.

I positioned myself on the path, with Wario on my left and Gichanja on my right. Just as if ordered, the elephants appeared on cue and I fired the right barrel of my .500 double into the chest of the leader, at which it did a complete about-turn. I did not know too much about the next few seconds as my rifle, for some inexplicable reason, had ‘doubled’ – both barrels fired simultaneously – and I was seeing stars and blank spaces.

Gichanja and Wario had fired at their own targets to the right and left as the elephants split; Gichanja’s aim was true and his beast fell, but Wario’s shot was slightly too far back and the elephant took off. Within a very short time the dog could be heard barking again and when we reached him there was our new canine friend facing up to a large bull which was feeling the effects of its wound. It was a simple matter for me to go alongside it and put a bullet in its brain.

I bought the dog (at a vastly inflated price but he was worth it) and took him back to Ngong where he quickly asserted his authority and became the leader of the pack. Jack was the name of our new dog and he performed one outstanding feat before he too was killed.

For reasons which now escape me, Jack was left on his own at a scout camp some 15km from headquarters. After a visit to the Ministry, I returned to HQ to be told that Jack had cornered a buffalo at about 10 o'clock that morning. I hastily drew my rifle and a handful of ammunition from the armoury and went to find Jack. The scene that met me was most unusual – the two combatants were both in the final stages of exhaustion. Every time the buffalo moved, Jack bit him on his nose, which was by this time covered in blood. The flattening of the surrounding bush indicated there had been something of a battle royal, which is not surprising – they had been at it for over two hours. A quick bullet finished the combat in short order. Although obviously pleased with the outcome, Jack was barely able to walk back to camp.

Jack died on the horns of a buffalo, as I am sure he would have preferred, in the Mount Margaret Estates, doing his job to the last.

Mount Margaret Estate was also the scene of the only time I used dogs for hunting lion. The settlers had been complaining bitterly that the Game Department was failing in its duty. Lions are usually quite easy to deal with – they will enter a box trap and can be simply relocated. But this lone male confounded me on several occasions – it would not enter the box trap and I had spent quite a few sleepless nights waiting over baits to no avail. I even had a hole dug and a tarpaulin stretched over to hide both myself and my scent right in front of one of its kills. The lion circled the site on and off all night making threatening growls – obviously trying to frighten me off. My vigil was negated by the fact that the lion was a ventriloquist. It would growl to my left and when I switched on my light I would see the wretched beast running out of the illuminated area over to my right! This happened several times during the night from all points of the compass so I left in disgust admitting defeat.

The only remaining option was to use dogs, although I knew how devastating a lion's claws could be to any animal that gets within range. Five game scouts and I swept the area where the lion had last been active and at about 10 o'clock came upon fresh tracks. We opened up into a roughly straight line and it was not long before there was an almighty roar from my right front and I saw a yellow flash between two mswaki bushes. Very shortly afterwards, amidst the yelping from obviously wounded dogs, three shots rang out. Shouting to my scouts that I was running forward, I soon came upon the lion breathing its last. One of my scouts, Dululu, had managed to put three shots into the lion's 'boiler room' as it was being chased by the dogs. I had not fired a single shot, which makes the accompanying clip from the *East African Standard* wrong on two counts. The 'hob-nail booted lion' as well as the thorn in its foot were all products of the reporter's imagination:

### **Crafty killer dead at last**

One of the most cunning and determined stock raiders known in Kenya has finally been brought to book.

He was an elderly lion which killed cattle worth thousands of pounds in the Kijabe area over the past few years. The lion was himself killed by a Game Department team using tracker dogs, on Mount Margaret Estate.

Over the years he defied repeated attempts to kill him, avoiding baits and staying away from kills which were being watched. Once, when being chased by a Land Rover, he led his pursuer over a deep hole and escaped while the vehicle was still being pulled out.

Justice, in the shape of the Thomson's Falls Game Warden, Mr Tony Marsh, and a team of game scouts and tracker dogs, finally caught up with him on Wednesday. They followed his trail, and came up on him while he was sleeping. Even so, he mauled two of the seven dogs severely.

Some years ago more than 50 cattle a year were being taken on Mount Margaret Estate alone. This lion, which hunted alone, was believed to be the main culprit. Recently the number has dropped to about 20 a year, but other neighbouring estates have also suffered.

Nicknamed the 'hob-nail booted lion' from his distinctive, deliberate gait, he was found to have a thorn embedded in his paw which had apparently been there for a considerable time. Also, after so many meals of beef, he was very fat.