Natshoot Conservation Hub Newsletter



BLUE WILDEBEEST SUBSPECIES

Five recognised subspecies occur across Africa:

- Blue Wildebeest *(Connochaetes taurinus taurinus)*
- Cookson's Wildebeest *(C. t. cooksoni)*

Eastern White-bearded Wildebeest *(C. t. albojubatus)*

- Johnston's Wildebeest *(C. t. johnstoni)*
- Nyassa Wildebeest *(C. t. mearnsi)*

THE CLOWN OF THE AFRICAN PLAINS

Few animals embody the spirit of the African savanna quite like the Blue Wildebeest. Its distinctive appearance, seemingly erratic behaviour, and remarkable endurance have earned it the nicknames "the Clown of Africa" and "the Poor Man's Buffalo." Despite these humorous titles, the Blue Wildebeest is one of Africa's most iconic and ecologically important plains game species.



South Africa is home only to the Blue Wildebeest, while its closest relative is the Black Wildebeest, a separate species endemic to southern Africa.

Over the past few decades, selective breeding has resulted in several colour variants becoming established on South African game ranches, including the Golden Wildebeest and the King Wildebeest.

2025 HUNTING SEASON NATSHOOT STATS

During the 2025 hunting season, Natshoot members harvested more than 3,200 Blue Wildebeest across South Africa.

These figures demonstrate the significant role that regulated, science-based sustainable utilisation plays in wildlife management, contributing to healthy populations, habitat conservation, and the long-term protection of South Africa's natural heritage.

FIELD IDENTIFICATION

Correctly identifying the sex of your quarry is an essential responsibility of every responsible hunter. Before taking a shot, slow down and carefully assess the following characteristics:

Bulls

- A prominent penile sheath is visible on the underside of the abdomen.
- Thick, muscular neck.
- Horns are noticeably heavier with a broad, well-developed boss.
- Larger, more robust body.

Cows

- Slender build with a narrower neck.
- Horns are noticeably thinner and more delicate.
- Commonly remain within the breeding herd and are less frequently encountered alone.



WILDEBEEST & CATTLE

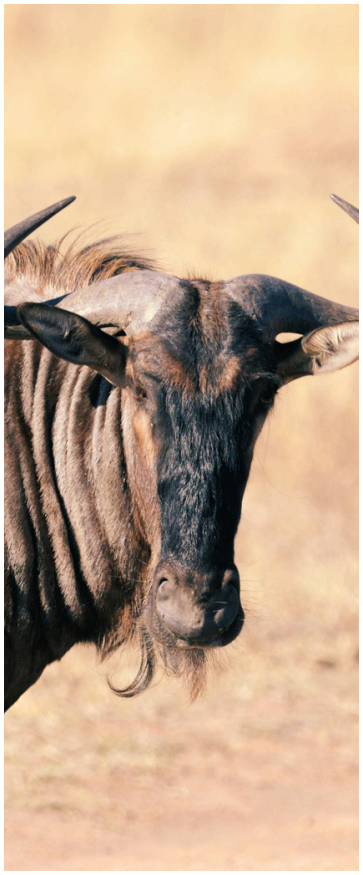


Wildebeest are natural carriers of Malignant Catarrhal Fever (MCF), commonly known in South Africa as "Snotsiekte." Although wildebeest rarely exhibit clinical signs of the disease, they can transmit the virus to cattle.

Transmission occurs primarily when young wildebeest calves shed the virus from shortly after birth until weaning. Cattle are highly susceptible to infection, and the disease is almost invariably fatal.

Blue Wildebeest should not be kept in close proximity to domestic cattle, particularly during the calving season.

NASAL BOTS



Many hunters notice large, cream-coloured larvae within the nasal passages of Blue Wildebeest. These are commonly known as nasal bots and are the immature stages of bot flies belonging to the genus Gedoelstia. Although their appearance may be unsettling, they are a normal component of the natural parasite–host relationship found in healthy wild populations.

Adult female bot flies deposit live larvae around the nostrils of wildebeest. The larvae migrate into the nasal passages and sinuses, where they develop over several months before leaving the host to pupate in the soil. The cycle is then completed when the adult flies emerge and seek a new host.

Healthy adult wildebeest generally tolerate low numbers of nasal bots with little or no measurable impact on their health. However, heavy infestations may result in sneezing and frequent head shaking, nasal discharge, irritation of the nasal passages, difficulty breathing in severe cases, and reduced body condition where infestations are exceptionally heavy.



Did You Know?

- **Both male and female Blue Wildebeest have horns.**
- **Blue Wildebeest can run at speeds of up to 80 km/h.**
- **The famous Serengeti migration involves over 1-million Blue Wildebeest.**
- **South Africa's private wildlife ranches play a critical role in conserving healthy Blue Wildebeest populations outside formal protected areas.**

ARE NASAL BOTS DANGEROUS TO HUMANS?

No. Nasal bot larvae found in wildebeest are considered host-specific parasites and do not normally infect humans. They are not regarded as a food safety risk when harvesting game for consumption.

As with all harvested game, hunters should always follow good hygiene practices:

- Wear disposable gloves when field dressing game.
- Avoid unnecessary contact with blood and bodily fluids.
- Wash hands, knives, and equipment thoroughly after processing the carcass.
- Ensure venison is handled, transported, and cooled according to good meat hygiene practices.

While the presence of nasal bots may appear alarming, they are a naturally occurring parasite of wildebeest and, in most cases, have little effect on the health of the animal or the quality of the meat.

SUCO
SUSTAINABLE USE COALITION
Southern Africa

GOLF DAY

UNITING CONSERVATION THROUGH COLLABORATION

The SUCo Golf Day, held on 6 August 2026, proved to be an outstanding success, bringing together a remarkable cross-section of South Africa's conservation community in support of a common purpose, *the sustainable utilisation of our natural renewable resources.*

The event attracted an impressive gathering of influential South Africans, including well-known personalities from the worlds of sport, entertainment, and business, alongside conservation leaders, wildlife ranchers, professional hunters, outfitters, game breeders, researchers, and representatives from organisations committed to safeguarding South Africa's wildlife heritage. The strong attendance reflected the growing recognition that the future of conservation depends on collaboration across all sectors.

Beyond an enjoyable day on the course, the event created valuable opportunities to strengthen relationships, exchange ideas, and reaffirm a shared commitment to Conservation Through Sustainable Utilisation. These partnerships are essential in ensuring that science-based conservation policies continue to support both biodiversity and the people who depend on wildlife for their livelihoods.



Natshoot is proud to be a founding member of SUCo-SA (Sustainable Use Coalition) and remains committed to supporting the Coalition's vision of presenting a united, credible, and informed voice for sustainable wildlife utilisation in South Africa.

As conservation faces increasing local and international challenges, it has never been more important for responsible hunters, wildlife ranchers, conservation organisations, scientists, and industry stakeholders to actively participate in SUCo's initiatives. By speaking with one voice and working together, we strengthen our ability to influence policy, promote sound science, and ensure that sustainable utilisation continues to deliver measurable conservation success.

The overwhelming success of this year's Golf Day serves as a reminder that conservation is built not only in our reserves and on our game ranches, but also throughthe relationships, partnerships, and shared purpose that unite everyone who believes in South Africa's wildlife.

"CONSERVATION IS NOT ACHIEVED BY PROTECTING WILDLIFE FROM PEOPLE.
IT IS ACHIEVED BY GIVING WILDLIFE VALUE TO THE PEOPLE WHO SHARE THE LANDSCAPE WITH IT."

