The AfriCat veterinarian supervises and ensures scientifically sound ‘Large Carnivore Research Projects’, manages and monitors the animals at our AfriCat Carnivore Care Centre and supports farming communities in conflict zones.

AfriCat’s first part-time Research Veterinarian, Dr. Diethardt Rodenwoldt, joined us in August 2015. Dr. Rodenwoldt is responsible for monitoring the health and welfare of AfriCat’s long-term residents, as well as several of the carnivores in the Okonjima Nature Reserve.
Together with Ms. Jenny Noack and Dr. Sarah Edwards, he also heads the current ‘Okonjima/AfriCat Leopard Density Study’ and the ‘Behavioural Ecology and Management-induced Niche Shift of Brown Hyena in a closed Nature Reserve.’

Dr. Rodenwoldt also takes time out to assist the AfriCat North Lion Research team, immobilizing lions designated for collaring under the AfriCat Hobatere Lion Research Project (AHLRP).

Dr. Rodenwoldt and a number of other veterinary specialists support Team AfriCat in achieving the ultimate goal for wild felines, canines and herbivores in terms of conservation, education, veterinary care and research. AfriCat’s large carnivore research projects have been taken to another level with a qualified research veterinarian on board. Present and future projects are now scientifically sound and effectively supervised, contributing to the long-term survival of these species.

**Why the need for a veterinarian?**

Animals sustain injuries from time to time. They fight while defending their territories or get hurt while chasing their prey. The acacia thorns that are part of the harsh Namibian environment can be a hindrance to animals whilst hunting, especially cheetahs who chase their prey through thick bush. The cheetahs’ preferred habitat is open plains. Here, their speed and binocular vision give them the advantage over their prey and competitors. In areas where the bush has become too thick, the cheetah is suddenly at a disadvantage, and injuries happen.

Dr. Rodenwoldt is involved with the workings of The AfriCat Foundation from both a veterinary and a conservation perspective as well as several of the research projects.
More Background:

1. Official ruling by the Namibian Veterinary Association:
The current Namibian legislation defines the act of anaesthesia in animals as a “veterinary only” procedure, and can therefore only be carried out by a Namibian registered veterinary surgeon. Likewise the drugs required to produce a state of anaesthesia may only be used by a Namibian registered veterinary surgeon.

2. Frequency of immobilization by a qualified wildlife veterinarian:
2.1. At AfriCat HQ | Okonjima, the darting needs within the 20 000 ha (200km²) nature reserve for the short to medium term (3-5 yrs.) are:

Approximately 7 cheetah, 35 Leopards, 20 Hyena + 5 Wild Dog (note that the numbers mentioned are not the totals at present, but rather the potential in the medium term)

Each of these animals may have to be darted due to the following reasons: injury – for examination in the field; removal from the field and surgery at the clinic; post-operative anaesthetic for follow-up treatment or examination; annual health checks; removal or replacement of telemetry collars; immobilisation for removal to relation site; other research purposes.

The frequency of these opportunities cannot be assessed at this point, but a vet is needed on-site or within travelling distance of approx. 3-5 hours.

2.2. At the AfriCat Carnivore Care Centre on Okonjima: depending on the number of 'ambassador carnivores' resident at AfriCat, a vet is needed for the annual health check, any injuries or health issues on a day-to-day basis.
2.3. At AfriCat North: the Communal Carnivore Conservation Programme (CCCP) – this project requires a vet whenever a lion or other carnivores are immobilised either for removal off of commercial or communal farmland or for research purposes (collaring/brand-marking); the frequency thereof cannot be determined, but the approximate number of known lions leaving the Etosha Park annually (most of which are destroyed by farmers) = approximately 60 – 100.

Not all lions are found nor immobilized, but should the opportunity arise to either return lions to the park, to monitor research lions or quarantine lions prior to relocation to other areas within Namibia, a vet should be onsite within 2-3 hours and be prepared to remain with the unit for at least 2-4 days, before the capture opportunity is reduced.

2.4. General or Carnivore Research: The CCCP has included a Lion Research section, (for which a research Permit has already been granted), which includes immobilising, collaring and/or brand-marking a number of trans-boundary lions (lions leaving and returning to Etosha) to establish their movements, etc.

2.5. Any other research projects which may be initiated within the Okonjima Nature Reserve, along the borders of the Etosha National Park or in communal conservancies. The Research requirement is a pre-requisite for employment of the AfriCat Veterinarian.

2.6. Where necessary the AfriCat Vet could assist the Ministry of Environment & Tourism or another like-minded charity or organisations (UNAM), with either restricted research needs or short-term immobilisation requirements.

2.7. A community service (large and small animals from surrounding farmland) is included in the programme.
3. Lack of available Veterinarians:
AfriCat comprises a number of sectors requiring immediate veterinary expertise, i.e. injury to a carnivore in our Carnivore Care Centre on Okonjima, injury to a carnivore within the Okonjima Nature Reserve, research needs of the AfriCat CCCP, immobilisation needs of the CCCP, (either for relocation or monitoring).
In each of the above-mentioned cases, the fact that there exists only two veterinary clinics employing only two veterinarians in Otjiwarongo, the closest town to AfriCat Okonjima – these vets are seldom available for cases which require them to leave their clinics unattended (AfriCat North lies 260 km north of Otjiwarongo and AfriCat HQ, 74 km south of Otjiwarongo). There are no private wildlife vets available to assist AfriCat North. The state veterinarian, based in Okaukuejo, (Etosha National Park), is seldom available for carnivore-related cases along the boundaries of the Park, as he is responsible for all veterinary needs within the Park.

4. Research:
There is also a research angle to this position, where we need the vet to engage in large carnivore research to assist us in the research projects (i.e. the projects running within the Okonjima Nature Reserve, support the National census when they are due, lion research along the Etosha borders and elsewhere).

The request
A salary for a part-time research veterinarian, who operates both at AfriCat HQ and within our northern projects, must be secured.
Please bear in mind, AfriCat requires funding to cover the salary for a veterinarian for at least 2 years for the benefits of sustainable research.
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