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The White  Horse Press

‘It is no use advising us! Command us and we will obey’:

Livestock Management, Soil Conservation and the State in Southern Rhodesia, c.1930–50

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ABSTRACT

This article examines state imposed centralisation and soil conservation policies as pursued by the Southern Rhodesian Department of Native Agriculture, and argues that these were at variance with the state’s own veterinary policies. It argues that in the 1930s the state failed to deal with the contradictions caused by shifting and competing agendas between the Departments of Native Affairs, Native Development, Entomology and Veterinary Services. This was compounded by the implicit and enduring acceptance by officials that the problems were precipitated almost exclusively by ‘primitive’ African farming practices. This resulted in the state’s resuscitating in the 1940s the ideology of livestock improvement first conceptualised in 1912 and introducing compulsory destocking from 1945. It concludes that these intrusive latter measures had a significant impact on the African rural socio-political and physical landscape in general and livestock management practices in particular.

KEYWORDS

Southern Rhodesia, Colonial Zimbabwe, centralisation, livestock improvement, destocking, veterinary, conservation, soil erosion, cattle breeding

INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1990s, the attempts by Zimbabwe (formerly Southern Rhodesia) to solve the land question through agrarian reform, and its attendant economic decline, have attracted widespread academic interest.¹ However, the political manipulation of natural resources is not a postcolonial phenomenon. From the 1930s, colonial governments in Africa were particularly concerned by environmental challenges, especially soil erosion, which faced many African reserves. In Southern Rhodesia, these measures generally involved the prevention of extensive African farming practices through the establishment of permanent homesteads and fields – centralisation. Centralisation was introduced in 1929 by an American agricultural missionary, A.E. Alvord, who later became the Director of Native Agriculture. Despite receiving significant scholarly attention, the impact of state-led conservation policies (with which centralisation came to be closely associated) on animal husbandry and veterinary policies in the reserves has been treated only tangentially.² Apart from examining how the reorganisation of land into farming and grazing areas and the reduction of livestock numbers (to meet the perceived carrying capacity of the land affected by livestock management in the reserves), very little has been written regarding how centralisation and veterinary policies related to each other from the 1930s.³ While studies have shown that state intervention in African reserves

1. T.K. Chitiyo, 'Land Violence and Compensation: Re-conceptualizing Zimbabwe's War Veterans' Debate', *Track Two* (1) (2000), http://ccrweb.ccr.uct.ac.za/archive/two/9_1/zimbabwe.html; S. Moyo, 'The Political Economy of Land Acquisition and Redistribution in Zimbabwe, 1990–1999', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26(1) (2000): 5–28; D. Moore, 'Is the Land the Economy and the Economy the Land? Primitive Accumulation in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 19(2)(2001); J. McGregor, 'The politics of disruption: War veterans and the state in Zimbabwe', *African Affairs* 101 (2002): 9–37; J. Chaumba, 'New Politics, New Livelihoods: Agrarian Change in Zimbabwe', *Review of African Political Economy* 30(98) (2003); W. H. Shaw, '"They Stole Our Land": debating the expropriation of white farms in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 41(1) (2003): 75–89; E. Chitando, '"In the Beginning Was the Land": The Appropriation of Religious Themes in Political Discourses in Zimbabwe', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 75(2) (2005); J. Muzondidya, 'Jambanja: Ideological Ambiguities in the Politics of Land and Resource Ownership in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 33(2) (2007): 325–341; N. Sibanda, 'Where Zimbabwe got it wrong – lessons for South Africa: A comparative analysis of the politics of land reform in Zimbabwe and South Africa', Master of Arts (International Studies), Stellenbosch University, 2010; W.Z. Sadomba, *War Veterans in Zimbabwe's Land Occupations: Complexities of a Liberation Movement in an African Post-Colonial Settler Society*, (London: James Currey, 2011).
2. See Kramer, 'The clash of economies'; A. Shutt, 'The Settlers' Cattle Complex: The Etiquette of Culling Cattle in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1938', *Journal of African History* 43(2) (2002): 263–286. For more on the relationship between state veterinary services and African livestock regimes, see W. Mwatwara, 'A history of state veterinary services and African livestock regimes in colonial Zimbabwe, c.1896- 1980', Ph.D. Thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2014.
3. Kramer, 'The clash of economies'; A. Shutt, 'The Settlers' Cattle Complex'; I. Phimister, 'Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context: Conservationism and Ideas about

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was motivated by the idea that African agriculture and livestock management practices were the causative agents for soil erosion, the way this intervention informed, shaped or affected African livestock regimes is yet to be subjected to historical analysis.

This study is part of a long historiographical conversation that has discussed relations between the state and its subjects over land, and offers fresh voice in analysing nuances in that 'relationship' – showing how it was actually continually shifting. It also discusses how veterinary and entomological arguments interfaced with the soil conservation discourse. By doing this, it also argues that the environmental protection activities involved a number of state officials other than those from the Native Affairs Department (NAD). Historians have systematically undermined the contemporaneous view of powerful and homogenous colonial states, exposing local government as both less hegemonic and more heterogeneous in ambition than previously supposed.⁴ Equally, there were competing agendas and attendant tensions within white society.⁵ We also offer new evidence of the heterogeneity within the colonial administrations especially the bureaucratic conflict involving the Veterinary, Native Development, Entomological and Native Affairs Departments. Through examining the key problems generated by the colonial state's attempt to match conservationist agricultural interventions with veterinary controls, we will also show how misguided were the scientific assumptions that lay at the very heart of state intervention. Understanding how the activities of the colonial state contributed to environmental degradation must include an assessment of its livestock disease management policies. We will argue that the history of

development in Southern Rhodesia 1930–1950', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 12(2) (1986): 263–275. See also Delius and Schirmer, 'Soil conservation in a racially ordered society'; I. Scoones and W. Wolmer, 'Land, Landscapes and Disease: The Case of Foot and Mouth in Southern Zimbabwe', *South African Historical Journal* 58 (2007): 42–64; W. Wolmer and I. Scoones, 'The science of "civilised" agriculture: The mixed farming discourse in Zimbabwe', *African Affairs* 99 (2000): 575–600; Scoones, 'Economic and ecological carrying capacity implications for livestock development in the dryland communal areas of Zimbabwe', Paper presented at a Seminar, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Zimbabwe, 24 September 1987. For regional studies see W.G. Morapedi, 'The State and its Failure to Transform African Crop Production in Botswana, 1930–1939', *South African Historical Journal* 65(2) (2013): 199–221. See also C. De Wet, 'Betterment planning in a rural village in Keiskammahoek, Ciskei', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 15(2) (1989): 326–345; P. Delius and S. Schirmer, 'Soil conservation in a racially ordered society: South Africa, 1930–1970', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26(4) (2000): 719–742; A.S. McKinnon, 'Chiefs, cattle and "Betterment": Contesting Zuluness and segregation in the Reserves', in B. Carton, J. Laband and J. Sithole (eds), *Zulu Identities: Being Zulu, Past and Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 250–255.

4. See D. Jeater, 'Imagining Africans: Scholarship, Fantasy, and Science in Colonial Administration, 1920s Southern Rhodesia', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 38(1) (2005): 1–26. For a similar context, see J. McCracken, 'Planters, Peasants and the Colonial State: The Impact of the Native Tobacco Board in the Central Province of Malawi' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 9(2) (1983): 172–192.
5. See, for instance, Shutt, 'The settlers' cattle complex'.

environmental degradation in Southern Rhodesia has been fragmentary and thus requires a more nuanced examination of the activities of colonial experts.

Soil conservation and livestock disease management c.1930s

The challenges facing the reserves partly emanated from the very land policy imposed by the colonial state. By the 1930s, new land patterns were enshrined in legislation, particularly the Land Apportionment Act (LAA).⁶ This Act divided the country's 96 million acres into 49 million acres for settlers (who were a tiny minority), only 29 million acres for Africans (who formed the vast majority), and the remainder was either unassigned to any racial group or was designated game reserve or state forest.⁷ By 1931, whites held fifty per cent of the land under freehold, while the state held approximately 23 per cent, small-scale commercial (black) farm areas held five per cent and the Communal Areas held 22 per cent of the land.⁸ This skewed land ownership meant that the overstocked and overpopulated African reserves faced soil erosion and lack of grazing. Indeed, by the 1930s, about sixty per cent of the entire surface area of the African reserves were classified as 'badly eroded'.⁹ As we will show, state intervention was premised on the belief that the land it had allocated to Africans in the reserves was 'adequate'; hence the only solution was to increase productivity through new farming techniques, soil conservation and 'modern' cattle management.¹⁰

A number of colonial state officials, as we will show, came to play critical roles in the attempt to reverse the environmental deterioration. The most important of these were NAD officials who took direct control of land allocation in the reserves, using the restriction on acreages as a lever to force Africans to adopt intensive farming methods. They introduced soil conservation measures to protect the land from the increased risk of erosion that came with permanent

6. See, for instance, R. Palmer and N. Parsons (eds), *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1977); K.D. Manungo, 'The role peasants played in the Zimbabwe war of liberation, with special emphasis on Chiweshe district', Ph.D. Thesis, Ohio University, 1991.

7. V.E.M. Machingaidze, 'Agrarian Change from above: The Southern Rhodesia Native Land Husbandry Act and African Response', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 24(3) (1991): 558. See also I. Scoones and W. Wolmer, 'Land, Landscapes and Disease'; I. Phimister, 'Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context: Conservationism and Ideas about Development in Southern Rhodesia 1930-1950', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 12 (2) (1986): 263-275.

8. S. Moyo, *The Land Question in Zimbabwe* (Harare: Sapes Books, 1995), p. 81.

9. NAZ ZAZ 2/1/4 Natural Resources Commission: Oral Evidence, Native Agriculture Department, E.D. Alvord, 7/11/1938.

10. M. Drinkwater, 'Technical Development and Peasant Impoverishment: Land Use Policy in Zimbabwe's Midlands Province', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 15(2) (1989): 292.

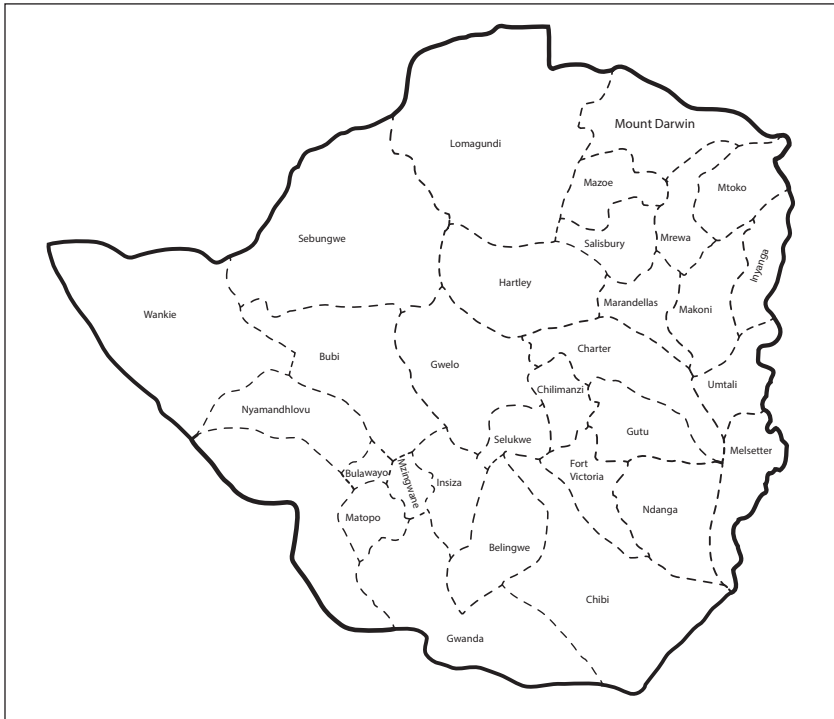
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cultivation.¹¹ They discouraged large African-owned cattle herds as these grazed extensively and thus interfered with white cattle ranching activities. Furthermore, large cattle holdings enhanced African economic security and so tampered with the state's intention to turn them into a cheap labour force.¹² As we will argue, these technocratic development policies interfered with veterinary and entomological measures, which created both numerous conflicts and exacerbated some of the environmental challenges they were intended to curtail.¹³

These colonial efforts to 'improve' African farming practices were replicated in different forms in southern Africa but the Southern Rhodesian state pioneered intervening intensively in 'centralising' African reserves. Similar activities, as Beinart has shown, had been effected previously in the Cape but amongst white farmers.¹⁴ The Southern Rhodesian example of intervention in the reserves was later adopted in Bechuanaland and South Africa in the 1930s and late 1940s respectively, under the classification of 'betterment'. Although the American Dust Bowl experience of the same period came to play an important role in shaping this sense of environmental degradation among colonial experts and certainly provided further justification for centralisation, we argue that its introduction as a policy predated the American Dust Bowl.¹⁵

The formalisation of the steps to stop environmental degradation in the reserves coincided with the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in south-eastern parts of the territory in 1931.¹⁶ This outbreak originated at Nuanetsi Ranch along the Fort Victoria-Beitbridge road in the southeast, then

11. L.L. Bessant, 'Coercive Development: Land Shortage, Forced Labor, and Colonial Development in the Chiweshe Reserve, Colonial Zimbabwe, 1938–1946', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 25(1) (1992): 40.
12. For more on the 'proletarianisation' of Africans, see Davis and Döpcke, 'Survival and Accumulation in Gutu', 91; G. Arrighi, 'Labour supplies in historical perspective: A study of the proletarianization of the African peasantry in Rhodesia', *Journal of Development Studies* 6 (1970): 197–234; I.R. Phimister, 'Peasant Production and Underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia, 1890–1914', *African Affairs* 73(291) (1974): 217–228.
13. Drinkwater, 'Technical Development and Peasant Impoverishment', 295.
14. W. Beinart, 'Soil Erosion, Conservationism and Ideas about Development: A Southern African Exploration, 1900–1960', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 11(1) (1984): 52–83.
15. The Dust Bowl, or the Dirty Thirties, was a period of severe dust storms causing major ecological and agricultural damage to American and Canadian grasslands in the 1930s. The phenomenon was caused by severe drought combined with a failure to apply dryland farming methods to prevent wind erosion. See, for instance, Z.K. Hansen and G.D. Libecap, 'Small farms, externalities, and the Dust Bowl of the 1980s', *Journal of Political Economy* 112(3) (2004): 665–694.
16. Foot and Mouth Disease is a highly contagious viral disease of cattle and sheep, causing ulceration of the hoofs and around the mouth. This disease is endemic in certain parts of Zimbabwe inhabited by African buffalo, which harbour the virus. For more, see T.F. Randolph, J.A. Morrison and C. Poulton, 'Evaluating Equity Impacts of Animal Disease Control: The Case of Foot and Mouth Disease in Zimbabwe', *Review of Agricultural Economics* 27(3) (2005): 465–472; I. Scoones and W. Wolmer, 'Land, landscapes and disease: The case of Foot and Mouth in Southern Zimbabwe', *South African Historical Journal* 58 (2007): 42–64.



Map 1. Administrative Districts in Southern Rhodesia (1930s). Based on: J. Iliffe, *Famine in Zimbabwe: 1890–1960*, (Harare: Mambo Press, 1990), Appendix.

spread to Victoria, Enkeldoorn and Gwelo. In Bulawayo, the disease broke out at Liebig's Ranch from where it spread to surrounding areas: Beitbridge (Chibi), Tuli (Gwanda), Dendele (Chibi) Siyoka (Belingwe District), Insiza District, Bubi District and Gwelo District (see Map 1).¹⁷ For fear of losing the export markets for its beef industry, the state considered FMD control to be a matter of high priority and implemented radical measures to curb it. As we will show, veterinary measures, while checking the further spread of diseases, actually accelerated environmental degradation in the reserves. Thus, FMD outbreaks and state veterinary measures adopted to combat these added a new dimension to the fight against ecological degradation in the reserves. However, while 48 reserves were subjected to centralisation and attendant soil conservation policies, four escaped these measures: they were all in the tsetse-fly prone, cattle-poor Sebungwe District (Sanyati, Sebungwe, Sibaba and Pashu).¹⁸

17. NAZ SRG3/VET 2 Veterinary Report, 1931, 2.

18. See E. Worby, "Discipline without Oppression": Sequence, Timing and Marginality in Southern Rhodesia's Post-War Development Regime', *Journal of African History* 41(1) (2000): 101–125.

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When the first FMD outbreak occurred in 1931, veterinarians assumed that the infection rate of the virus would be as rapid as that in Europe. This turned out to be wrong, since the infection was spread by direct contact with infected cattle, and not through other vectors like equines, mechanical transport, humans, game, wild animals, drinking water or foodstuffs.¹⁹ Thus, equines continued to enjoy free movement throughout the district. Game, especially the larger antelope, played no part in spreading infection despite rare cases of game being shot and exhibiting typical lesions of FMD.²⁰ Its mildness meant that Africans hardly considered it a dangerous disease – so they were sceptical of its vaunted severity and reluctant to report outbreaks.

At first, the administration of veterinary control measures proved difficult, since the disease occurred during the dry season when cattle in the reserves were neither herded nor kraaled but rather roamed the pasture lands. Trial and error methods were adopted by veterinarians – some of which interfered with their own state-mandated veterinary disease control methods. Their initial reaction was to suspend dipping (a weekly ritual meant to control infective ticks, introduced in 1904) for fear that the regular agglutination of cattle from different areas could result in the spread of the disease.²¹ However, this was a dangerous decision, as it later transpired that FMD generally disappeared a few weeks after resuming dipping.²² This realisation resulted in weekly dipping being reinstated and kraaling being made compulsory by the Veterinary Department in 1931.²³ In areas where dipping was not immediately resuscitated (such as the Bulalima-Mangwe, Gwanda, Matobo, Bubi and Belingwe Reserves), high mortality due to tick-related diseases such as Screw worm and Heartwater was reported.²⁴ Despite the short term benefits, as will be shown, cattle trekking to dips and also the location of dips turned out to be hazardous to the environment.

The Veterinary Department also started a system of inoculating cattle on a large scale in areas adjoining active infection in the Victoria region, with satisfactory results.²⁵ By 1933, the total number of cattle inoculated was 185,388 and the results were ‘practically 100 per cent., excluding calves, and all signs

19. NAZ SRG3/ VET 2 Veterinary Report, 1931, 2.

20. NAZ SRG3/ VET 2 Veterinary Report, 1931, 2.

21. Initially introduced as a method to control East Coast Fever, dipping cattle in tick destroying agents (acaricides) became a popular way of controlling other tick-borne diseases such as Redwater and Heartwater, which were prevalent in most of parts of Southern Rhodesia. See W. Mwatwara, “‘The tick was not slow to take advantage’”: Conflicts in the struggle against East Coast Fever in Southern Rhodesia (1901–1920)’, *South African Historical Journal* 65(2) (2013): 249–270; W. Mwatwara, “‘Even the calves must dip’”: East Coast Fever, Africans and the imposition of dipping tanks in Southern Rhodesia, c.1902–1930’, *South African Historical Journal* 66 (2) (2014): 320–348.

22. NAZ SRG3/ VET 2 Veterinary Report, 1931, 4.

23. NAZ SRG3/ VET 2 Veterinary Report, 1931, 4.

24. NAZ SRG3/ VET 2 Veterinary Report, 1935, 3.

25. NAZ SRG3/ VET 2 Veterinary Report, 1932, 11.

of active infection had generally disappeared in less than four weeks from the date of inoculation'.²⁶ Since inoculation could not be successful unless there was a *cordon sanitaire* between infected and the surrounding 'clean' country, veterinary officials created what they called 'cattle concentration camps' inside the infected zone for inoculation purposes.²⁷ In order to ensure a strongly guarded cattle-free belt, cattle not in immediate contact with the infection were moved further away from the centre of the outbreak, while suspected infected herds were shepherded into a centralised area inside the red zone.

A combination of inoculation of infected herds and the creation of cattle concentration areas had, by the end of 1933, checked the spread of FMD, albeit temporarily. However, while Southern Rhodesia was still celebrating its success, fresh outbreaks occurred along Southern Rhodesia's shared borders with Bechuanaland Protectorate and Barotseland and threatened to reverse the gains.²⁸ Hardly a year later, a new outbreak, suspected to have originated in Portuguese East Africa, resulted in an inter-state agreement between Southern Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa that cattle were to be kept away from the Limpopo River where possible.²⁹ In 1937, after a three-year hiatus, new outbreaks in Mtilikwe Native Reserve and Victoria Native Reserve resulted in changes to the inoculation method. It now included the slaughter of all calves born during the period of infection after inoculation, and the creation of disinfection stations at all points of exit from infected areas.³⁰ In addition, a policy of fencing prohibited areas was inaugurated in 1937 to allow freer movements of animals, and vegetable products, outside the fence.³¹ That year a fence (about 133 miles long) was erected to prevent contact between immune and susceptible cattle in the Ndanga, Mtilikwe and Victoria Reserves.³² Yet, these veterinary measures, as we will demonstrate, actually interfered with soil conservation activities by other colonial departments.

CONFLICTING POSITIONS OVER ANTI-FMD MEASURES

As the previous section has shown, FMD control measures centred on inoculation, creation of concentration camps and fencing off infected zones. These veterinary policies caused friction mainly between the Veterinary and Native Affairs Departments. Though the measures introduced by the former met the

26. NAZ SRG3/ VET 2 Veterinary Report, 1932, 11.

27. NAZ SRG3/ VET 2 Veterinary Report, 1932, 11.

28. NAZ SRG3/ VET 2 Veterinary Report, 1933, 1.

29. NAZ S1194/SC42/181/1 Foot and Mouth Disease: Correspondence with Pretoria, telegram from Ministry of Agriculture to Agriculture Department, Pretoria, 15/04/1931.

30. NAZ SRG3/ VET 2 Veterinary Report, 1937, 4.

31. NAZ SRG3/ VET 2 Veterinary Report, 1937, 4–5.

32. NAZ SRG3/ VET 2 Veterinary Report, 1937, 5.

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epidemiological need of preventing contact between infected and uninfected cattle, they ignored the environmental constraints which the latter intended to address in the reserves through the centralisation policy. Thus, although NAD officials viewed their intervention in the reserves as motivated by the need to stop environmental degradation caused by ‘poor’ African farming practices,³³ they came to associate veterinary measures with the perceived escalation of environmental challenges.

While promoting centralisation, NAD officials set aside land for grazing purposes based on their understanding of cattle ‘carrying capacity’ (the number of mature animal units each reserve would carry without loss) of a given reserve. Yet veterinary policy required Africans to cede part of their agricultural land to create cattle free belts with no regard to the effect of cattle concentration on pasture, water and soil. Thus, the cattle concentration method was blind to the livestock carrying capacity of the reserves and often resulted in high cattle mortality due to starvation.³⁴ For example, following an outbreak in 1934, Africans in Chibi sub-District lost 1,790 head to starvation out of the 9,900 placed in quarantine.³⁵ Some Africans were forced to drive their cattle between 100 and 116 miles to the quarantine areas where their cattle (5,000 head) were closely herded in small, overgrazed cattle concentration camps.³⁶ Approximately 483 head of cattle from Matsai Reserve and 73 from Sangwe Reserves died, while in June 1935 over 100 had to be left behind in the Ndanga District as they were too weak to travel when cattle were further moved to Bikita Reserve.³⁷ By May 1936, the cumulative number of cattle facing mortality from starvation in the southern Lowveld had risen to approximately 15,000.³⁸ Furthermore, the creation of a cattle-free belt in 1935 along the Northern boundaries of the Zimutu Reserve and the Mshagashe Area (Fort Victoria District) saw the creation of a three-year cattle concentration camp at the heart of Zimutu reserve which caused immense suffering to both locals and livestock.³⁹ The map below is an example of cattle movements from different

33. For more analysis on how the Native Affairs Department utilised state-owned media houses such as the *Bulawayo Chronicle* and *Bantu Mirror* see Shutt, ‘The Settlers’ Cattle Complex’, 273.

34. NAZ S1563 Chief Native Commissioner: Annual Reports for Mashonaland, 1936, Vol. 2, report of the NC Chibi.

35. NAZ S1563 Chief Native Commissioner: Annual Reports for Mashonaland, 1934, Report of the NC Chibi.

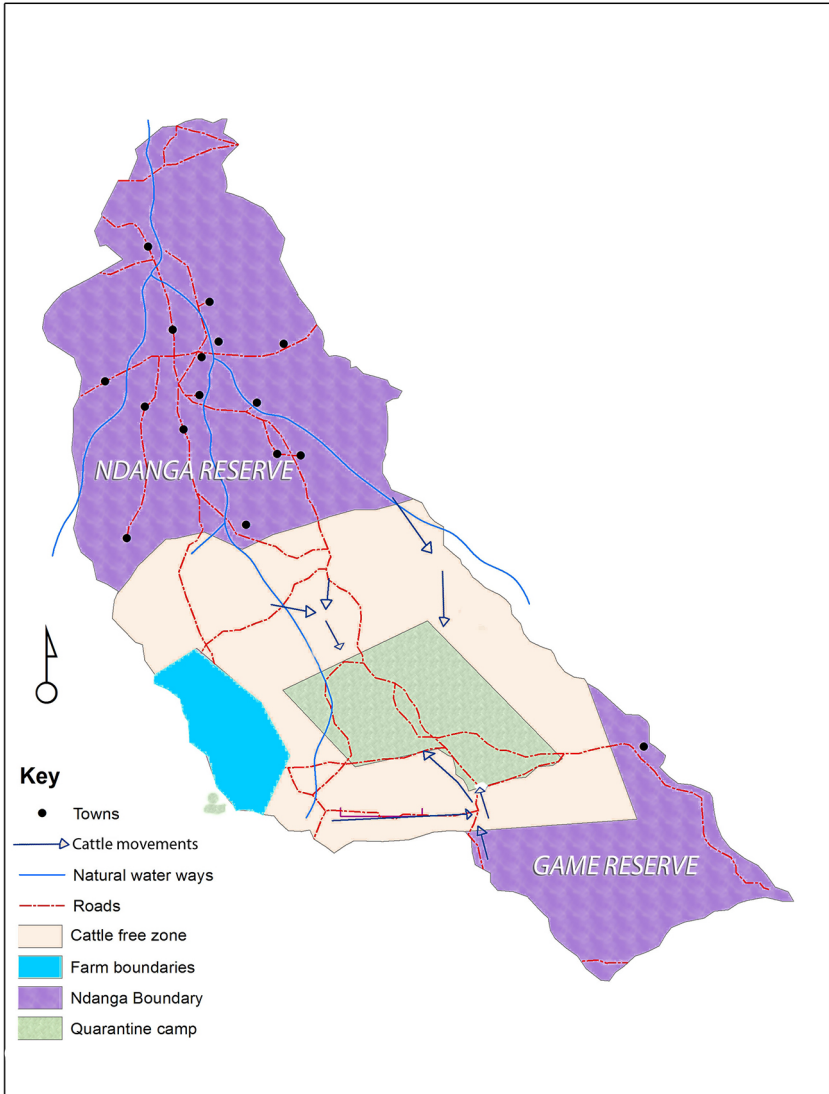
36. NAZ S1563 Chief Native Commissioner: Annual Reports for Mashonaland, 1934, Report of the NC Nuanetsi.

37. NAZ S1542/F11 Foot and Mouth Disease: Chief Native Commissioner, 1934–39, letter from NC Bikita to CNC, Salisbury, 26/06/1935.

38. NAZ S1542/F11 Foot and Mouth Disease: Chief Native Commissioner, 1934–39, letter from NC Ndanga to CNC, 14/05/1936.

39. NAZ S1542/F11 Foot and Mouth Disease: Chief Native Commissioner, 1934–39, Letter from the NC to the CNC, 7/4/1936.

parts of Ndanga Reserve into a very small cattle concentration camp located at the centre of the reserve.



Map 2. Ndanga Cattle Concentration Camp. Source: NAZ S1542/F11 Foot and Mouth Disease: Chief Native Commissioner, 1934–39, Letter from the NC Fort Victoria to the CNC, 7/4/1936

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NAD immediately dissociated itself from this policy for fear of African unrest at its implementation. Indeed, complaints from African livestock owners regarding veterinary interventions in the reserves, especially cattle concentration camps, often drew sympathetic attention from native commissioners (NCs). Generally, NCs demanded the immediate disbandment of all concentration camps in the territory, and equal access for all races to veterinary facilities.⁴⁰ In particular, one NC distanced himself from the cattle concentration policy:

I entirely disassociate myself from the action of the Chief Veterinary Surgeon in insisting on the free belt along the Northern boundaries of the Zimutu Reserve and the Mshagashe Area. I must ask that the arrangements made for creating this belt be immediately cancelled, and that the natives concerned be allowed to drive their cattle home forthwith. The Government should not for a moment countenance this cruelty to animals.⁴¹

This was a case of the state falling prey to its own propaganda. In fact, a few years later the Natural Resources Board, as we will show, pushed for compulsory destocking in the reserves partly on the basis of African ‘cruelty’ to animals. However, this was mere propaganda, since the suffering that befell livestock was largely linked to the creation of cattle concentration camps. Thus, the ‘cruelty’ mentioned by colonial officials was partly a result of their own policy.

The differences within the bureaucracy also involved the Entomology Department, which (like the NAD) also demanded the immediate cessation of anti-FMD veterinary measures, but for very different reasons. Whereas, as has been shown, bureaucratic conflicts were largely between the Native Affairs and Veterinary Departments, a proposal made by the Veterinary Department in 1938 to depopulate certain parts of tsetse-fly zones for purposes of creating concentration camps, faced sustained attacks from entomologists, given its ramifications for their tsetse-control efforts. Moving some African communities from considerable tracts of land in order to create buffer zones interfered with their anti-tsetse fly campaigns. They argued that it would bring back ‘wilderness’ conditions and the concomitant danger of tsetse-fly invasion through the increase of game in the newly depopulated area.⁴² Entomologists considered African settlements in the south-eastern FMD-infested areas zones a (human and bovine) buffer against the spread of the fly.⁴³ The less populated (both by

40. NAZ S1542/F11 Foot and Mouth Disease: Chief Native Commissioner, 1934–39, letter from NC Victoria to CNC, 17/08/1936.

41. NAZ S1542/F11 Foot and Mouth Disease: Chief Native Commissioner, 1934–39, Letter from the NC Fort Victoria to the CNC, 7/4/1936.

42. NAZ S1542/F11 Foot and Mouth Disease: Chief Native Commissioner, 1934–39, Letter from the Secretary for Natives to the Secretary Department of Agriculture and Lands, 21/04/1938.

43. NAZ S1542/F11 Foot and Mouth Disease: Chief Native Commissioner, 1934–39, Letter from the Chief Entomologist to the Secretary Department of Agriculture and Lands, 04/03/1938.

humans and livestock) the country, the more difficult and expensive it was for entomologists to maintain a game-free zone. In particular, the presence of African cattle acted as a safeguard against undetected advance of the fly, since appearance of Trypanosomiasis amongst cattle was the easiest way to detect tsetse-fly advances into the territory.⁴⁴ Like entomologists, NCs challenged the veterinary order to move African cattle into concentration camps but for security reasons. For instance, the NC for Chipinge declined the proposal that, as a protective measure against the spread of the new outbreak of FMD near Zaka, African-owned cattle along the Eastern side of the Sabi River from Wangezi to Mahenye be moved away from their owners' kraals into the higher ground adjoining the European occupied plateau. Such movements were considered overtly unfair to Africans and, therefore, likely to cause unrest – even perhaps precipitate rebellion.⁴⁵

This brewing bureaucratic conflict also involved the Ministry of Agriculture, whose primary interest was protecting the country's commercial beef industry at whatever cost. The Minister of Agriculture considered African livestock the single most important source of disease threat to commercial beef producers, and was open to any system that would ensure that African cattle remained separated from European. Thus, notwithstanding compelling entomological and national security arguments, the Minister of Agriculture favoured the continuation of the cattle concentration policy. He remarked, 'The longer the concentration is delayed, the greater the risks, and in my opinion it should be proceeded without further loss of time.'⁴⁶ An immediate result of this ministerial endorsement was the fencing of the Gutu Quarantine Camp in 1938 albeit amidst complaints from the NC.⁴⁷ The fencing of Victoria Reserve restricted access to grazing land as it was reduced to half of its 1937 size, while the purchase of farms by elite Africans in the new Mshagashe Purchase area meant some less wealthy communal land farmers no longer had access to land they had formerly used for grazing.⁴⁸ Other cattle quarantine camps that were fenced included Chikombedzi, Magudus, Mazuna, Chiduma, and Tshaikembedza. However, in areas such as Chiduma and Tshaikembedza (Ndanga District), the abundance of game rendered the maintenance of the fencing exceedingly costly so it was discontinued in 1940.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, the erection of veterinary

44. NAZ S1542/F11 Foot and Mouth Disease: Chief Native Commissioner, 1934–39, Letter from the Chief Entomologist to the Secretary Department of Agriculture and Lands, 04/03/1938.

45. NAZ S1542/F11 Foot and Mouth Disease: Chief Native Commissioner, 1934–39, Letter from NC Chipinga to the CNC, 16/03/1936.

46. NAZ S1542/F11 Foot and Mouth Disease: Chief Native Commissioner, 1934–39, Letter from the Minister of Agriculture to the Prime Minister, 13/05/1938.

47. NAZ S2136/S58/779/59/2 Foot and Mouth Disease Correspondence: Victoria Veterinary area, 1936–44, letter from the NC Gutu to the CNC, 19/02/1938.

48. Shutt, 'The Settlers' Cattle Complex', 268.

49. NAZ S2136/S58/779/59/2 Foot & Mouth Disease Correspondence: Victoria Veterinary area, 1936–44, Letter from the Secretary Department of Agriculture and Lands to the Secretary to

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fences added – rather than reduced – pressure on the environment through overgrazing and trampling of the soil. Thus, environmental challenges in the reserves were not entirely because of ‘primitive’ African farming practices.

SOIL EROSION AND DIP TANKS

The conflicts over anti-FMD measures also gave an opportunity for other long-standing concerns over veterinary measures to be challenged, especially the location and numbers of dipping tanks as well as the way cattle were driven to the dip.⁵⁰ Indeed, dipping pre-dated both centralisation and cattle concentration policies but at the time it was first introduced no environmental considerations were taken into consideration in determining the location of dipping tanks. Unlike their NAD peers who questioned veterinary policy on account of national security and the overgrazing caused by concentration camps, self-styled state conservationists in the Native Development Department (NDD) questioned the manner in which ‘native’ cattle were ‘causing’ rivers to dry through grazing at the river sources (headwaters) and gully erosion at dip tanks.⁵¹ Contrary to this, the Veterinary Department considered the eradication of FMD a more important matter demanding the observance of dipping regulations, their impact on the environment notwithstanding. By 1938, this subject had become so controversial as to merit the attention of the Natural Resources Commission.⁵² The major issue was that nearly all dipping tanks had been built very close to rivers, and consequently many tracks to dips had turned into dongas while rivers and streams became silted.⁵³ This matter was of particular concern to irrigation officials who protested that efforts to reclaim sources of rivers and *vleis* (swampy, moisture retaining soils), which dried as a result of overstocking and tramping, had been in vain. For instance, one irrigation engineer at Mutsago in S. Maranka Reserve explained how a dip tank was built near a spring while the area around it was turned into a cattle auction centre with the effect that the land became heavily eroded while the spring ceased to flow.⁵⁴ Thus, NDD officials wondered whether the benefits of dipping outweighed those offered by ‘sound’ veld management. As has been

the Treasury, 03/09/1940.

50. NAZ ZAZ 2/1/1 Natural Resources Commission: Oral Evidence, E.J.K. Edwards, the Conservator of Forests, 13/10/1938.
51. NAZ ZAZ 2/1/1 Natural Resources Commission: Oral Evidence, inspector in the Native Development Department, J.H. Farquhar, 31/10/1938.
52. NAZ ZAZ 2/1/4 Natural Resources Commission: Oral Evidence, M.W. Ingram, Dip Supervisor in Plumtree District, 22/11/1938.
53. NAZ ZAZ 2/1/4 Natural Resources Commission: Oral Evidence, M.W. Ingram, Dip Supervisor in Plumtree District, 22/11/1938.
54. NAZ ZAZ 2/1/4 Natural Resources Commission: Oral Evidence, H.W.E. Wallis, an assistant irrigation engineer, 08/11/1938.

shown already, sometimes the cattle in the concentration camps lost so much condition that the negative effect of taking them to the dip exceeded the beneficial effect of getting rid of the tick. Yet, this question was not addressed appropriately at the time – largely because Africans' livestock management and farming practices were considered the major threat to the environment. The result of these contrasting discourses between colonial officials from different departments (especially between the Veterinary Department, NAD, and NDD) was confusing and demoralising to Africans, since they dipped as per regulations, and yet their animals were still considered an environmental hazard. Though showing the development of gully erosion around dip tanks at a later period, Map 3 and 4 vividly illustrate the impact on the immediate environment of bovine agglutination at dip tanks in Mtoko and Mondoro-Ngezi.

Attempts at reconciling conflicting veterinary and conservation agendas proved futile. Some colonial officials suggested that cattle be allowed to approach the dipping tanks by diverse routes. However, it was impossible to approach them by many ways because dip tanks were located near rivers hence the river acted as a barrier which stopped cattle from using a number of approaches. Consequently, cattle converged at some distance from a tank with the effect that the ground around dip tanks became overgrazed.⁵⁵ An enduring solution to this problem lay in reducing the number of cattle using a single dip tank and limiting the distance cattle travelled to the dip tank. However, there were financial and ecological limitations to achieving this. Although the Veterinary Department acknowledged their importance, increasing the number of dipping tanks was not pursued to any great extent due to lack of funding.⁵⁶ The envisaged national ratio of 1,000 cattle per dip tank remained an illusion.⁵⁷ After being asked whether the increase in the number of dipping tanks was part of veterinary policy, King, the acting Chief Veterinary Surgeon responded in an almost off-hand fashion: 'I do not think that policy has been followed to any great extent.'⁵⁸ Thus, it was quite common to find up to 2,000 head of cattle dipping at one dip⁵⁹

In the semi-arid south-western parts of the country (Matabeleland), the situation was even more complicated since watering livestock was also a problem owing to water shortage. In that region, cattle drank water once in three days and were, in some cases, driven all day to drink water and then back to

55. NAZ ZAZ 2/1/4 Natural Resources Commission: Oral Evidence, F.A. Phayre, NC Rusapi, 15/12/1938.

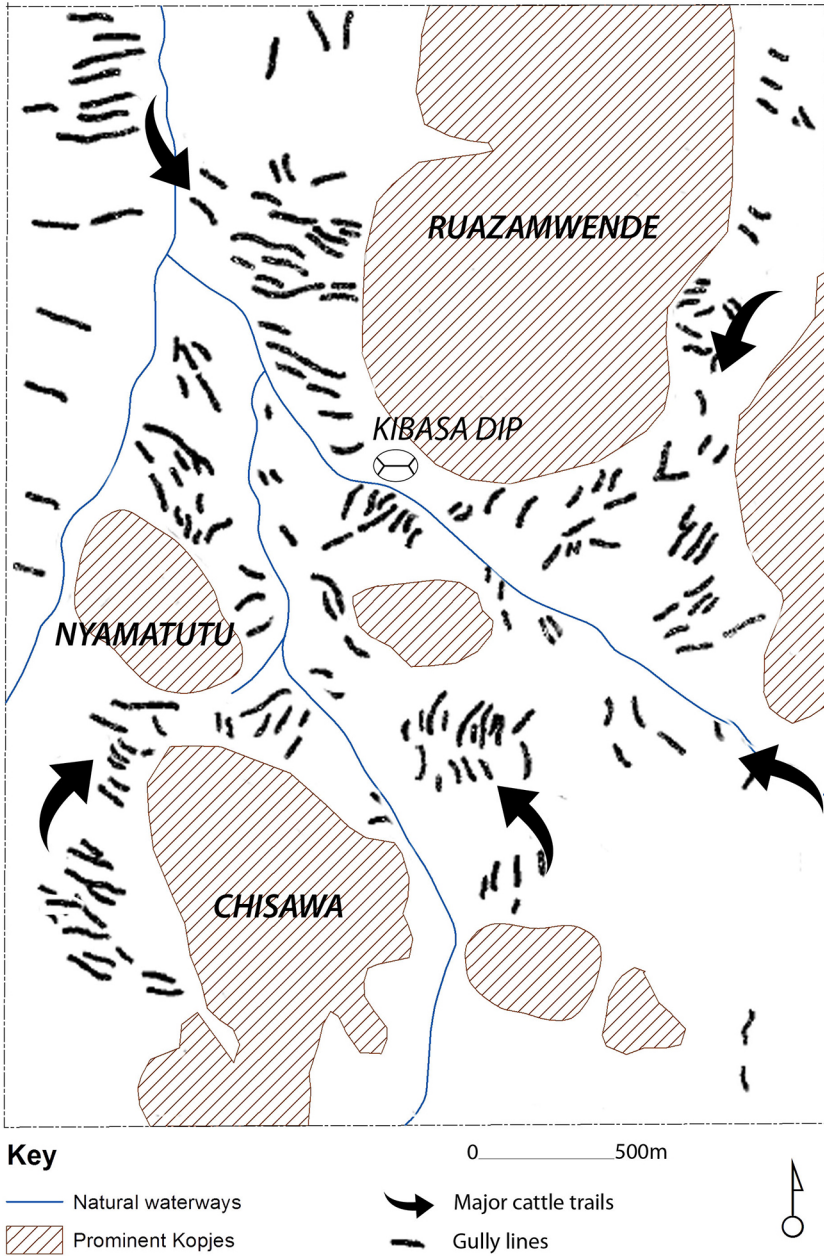
56. NAZ ZAZ 2/1/4 Natural Resources Commission: Oral Evidence, The acting CVS, B.L. King, 29/11/1938.

57. NAZ ZAZ 2/1/4 Natural Resources Commission: Oral Evidence, The acting Chief Veterinary Surgeon, B.L. King, 29/11/1938.

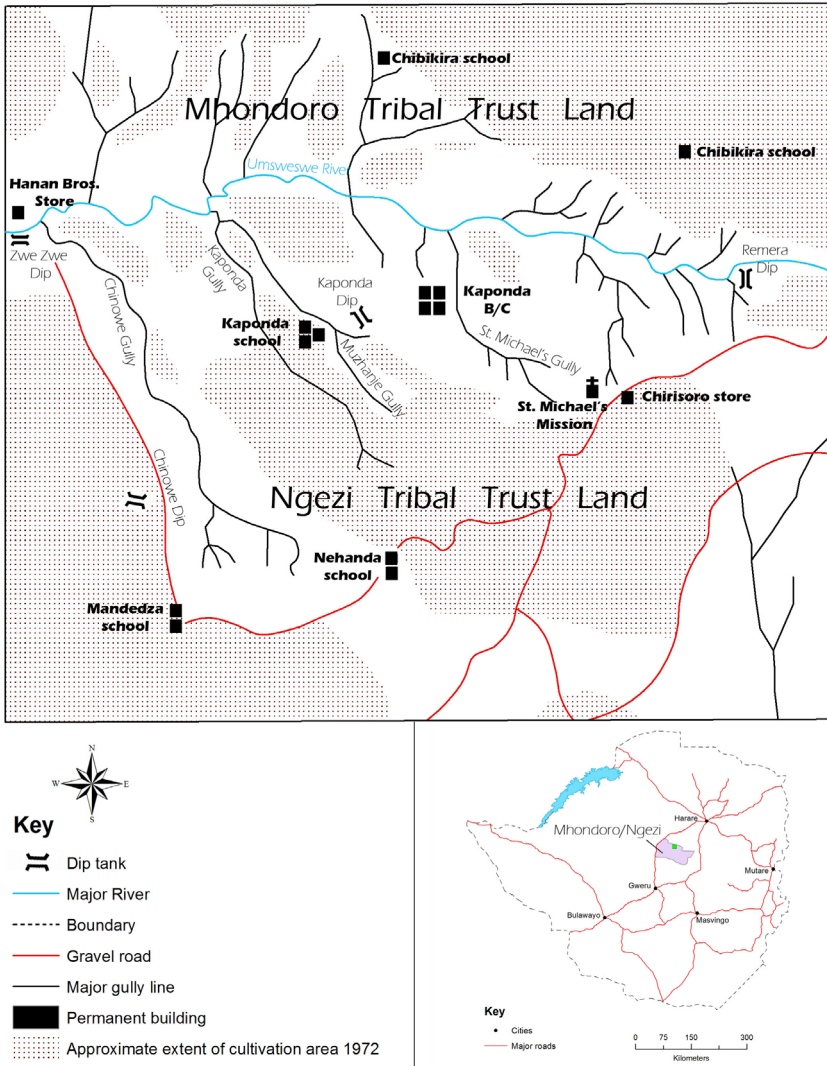
58. NAZ ZAZ 2/1/4 Natural Resources Commission: Oral Evidence, The acting Chief Veterinary Surgeon, B.L. King, 29/11/1938.

59. NAZ ZAZ 2/1/4 Natural Resources Commission: Oral Evidence, the Chief Animal Husbandry Officer, A.E. Romyn, 04/11/1938.

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Map 3. Incidence of gullying around a dip tank in Mtoko, c.1972.
 Source: M.A. Stocking, 'Aspects of the role of man in the spread of erosion in Rhodesia', *Zambezia* 2, 2 (1972): 6.



Map 4. Gulley erosion in Mondoro-Ngezi c.1978.

Source: M.A. Stocking, 'Relationship of agricultural history and settlement to severe soil erosion in Rhodesia', *Zambezia*, 6, 2 (1978): 131.

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the grazing area.⁶⁰ Thus, besides the environmental threat posed by dips, cattle trekking to watering places posed a serious environmental threat in the African reserves.

The Veterinary Department continued with its ecologically dangerous practice of constructing dip tanks close to water bodies, especially rivers. With regard to availability of water at dip tanks, the acting Chief Veterinary Surgeon explained, ‘that is the difficulty, and we have to build our dipping tanks close to a river. I would rather not do it but it would mean getting water by boring or some other means if you go any distance from a river.’⁶¹ He downplayed this matter and chose to blame Africans for keeping ‘too many’ cattle against the advice of veterinary officials. He argued that ‘the Veterinary Department has tried for many years to teach the African that keeping too many cattle is uneconomic but it is difficult for the older generation to depart from tradition, hence we must target the young.’⁶²

By 1939, these issues had become subject of a commission of enquiry set up to inquire into the preservation of natural resources in the colony – the Natural Resources Commission. Despite acknowledging that current veterinary policies were hazardous to the environment, the Committee could not suggest a workable compromise. Instead, it merely papered over the fissures between the Veterinary, Native Development, Native Affairs and Entomological Departments. In response to the environmental threats posed by the dip tanks, it offered an ill-defined prevarication that offered no solution, merely noting that, though an increase in both watering places and dipping tanks, and dipping at less frequent intervals would obviously be beneficial, it was doubtful ‘if the advantages claimed would not be altogether set off by the increased number of days in which dipping took place’.⁶³ Thus, by the end of the 1930s, environmental challenges which the reserves faced were partly caused by state veterinary policies.

AFRICAN RESPONSE TO STATE POLICY IN THE 1930S

Although, as we have shown, veterinary, entomological and environmental policies were actually conflicting, Africans were not privy to the nuances and shifting bureaucratic politics and inter-departmental fractures within the colonial state. In this section, we examine how, in the wake of centralisation and

60. NAZ ZAZ 2/1/4 Natural Resources Commission: Oral Evidence, The Assistant Agriculturist, G.R.R. Palmer, 10/11/1938.

61. NAZ ZAZ 2/1/4 Natural Resources Commission: Oral Evidence, The acting Chief Veterinary Surgeon, B.L. King, 29/11/1938.

62. NAZ ZAZ 2/1/4 Natural Resources Commission: Oral Evidence, The acting Chief Veterinary Surgeon, B.L. King, 29/11/1938.

63. NAZ RG4 Report of the commission appointed to inquire into the preservation, etc., of the natural resources of the colony, 1939 (Chairman: R. McIlwaine), 59.

anti-FMD policies, Africans treated colonial officials as having similar, indeed, shared objectives. We argue that during the 1930s Africans perceived sinister ambitions by NAD and veterinary officials to undermine capitalist accumulation in the reserves.⁶⁴ From as early as 1933, African disillusionment over soil conservation and cattle concentration methods became apparent. Under the centralisation policy Africans were encouraged to keep small herds with the 'excess' cattle being culled. Since driving cattle into concentration camps, as we will show, amounted to a series of difficulties for their owners, hiding livestock from both veterinary and NAD officials was a popular practice which made it difficult for veterinary officials to detect disease in the reserves.⁶⁵ To obviate this, dip supervisors visited the kraals in their dip tank areas to check livestock numbers, and ascertain the FMD mortality rate.⁶⁶

In 1933, a cattle owner named Maplanka was taken to court and found guilty for being contemptuous towards Christie Bertie Twyman, a government cattle inspector after he refused to divulge the number of his livestock to Twyman.⁶⁷ In Umzinyathi, Seka Jaya of the Matshena Dip had 100 of his cattle shot under the state's destocking policy and in reaction demanded that he too be shot – because he had been deprived of his source of living.⁶⁸ Collaborators with state veterinarians were sometimes attacked by some affected African livestock owners. For example, Lonyovu (a cattle owner and collaborator) was assaulted by Sekenyala for assisting colonial officials who took the latter's cattle, and even boasted about it.⁶⁹

An African chief, resigned to the fact that the colonial experts were powerful and that, as subjects, they could not question the state begged (perhaps with a certain amount of irony): 'it is no use advising us! Command us and we will obey'.⁷⁰ Gombero (an ordinary cattle owner) summed up the feeling among Africans: 'We are afraid to say a lot, because it appears to us that the Europeans are more than the natives. I do not want to say much because if I start talking a lot the authorities will say that I am mad.'⁷¹ Nonetheless, complaints from

64. NAZ ZAX 1/1/2 Commission into certain sales of cattle in Native Areas: Evidence, Oral testimony by Gombero, 16/11/1938.

65. NAZ S1542/F11 Foot and Mouth Disease: Chief Native Commissioner, 1934-39, letter from the CVS to the CNC, 12/06/1936.

66. NAZ S1542/F11 Foot and Mouth Disease: Chief Native Commissioner, 1934-39, letter from the CVS to the CNC, 12/06/1936.

67. NAZ S634 Essexvale Civil Cases, 1933.

68. Sihluku Ncube quoted in F.P. Ntabeni, 'Land deprivation – the root of underdevelopment in Mzingwane District: 1930 – 1960', MA History Thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 1986, 26.

69. Sihluku Ncube quoted in F.P. Ntabeni, 'Land deprivation', 26.

70. African Chief quoted by the NC Inyati in NAZ S1563 Chief Native Commissioner: Annual Reports for Mashonaland, Vol. 3, 1936.

71. NAZ ZAX 1/1/2 Commission into certain sales of cattle in Native Areas: Evidence, Oral testimony by Gombero, 16/11/1938.

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Africans whose livestock were put in cattle concentration areas were captured trenchantly in Chief Marozva Mukanganwi’s complaint:

We are aware of the fact that the Government is giving the considerable good help to us natives, we know that the government is giving a big sum of money per month, therefore we do not want to make the Government sorry, as though we do not see what is being done for us, but because of these practical difficulties we beg to submit the following: 1. Cattle are not affected by the disease, but why should they remain there then? 2. We are sorry to hear that people are dying, not knowing why. 3. Cattle are like pests to those people where they are. 4. We are not all have enough food for boys who are herding, some are not sending food to the cattle kraals, this create a lot of trouble in kraals. 5. The grass is getting finished, they go far for grass, calves die on the way. 6. We always buying and selling among ourselves for taxes, this cannot be done this year. 7. As we always go to the cattle kraals, are we not bringing disease to the cattle? 8. May we know when will the cattle come? We will be pleased to be given the right directions in all.⁷²

Mukanganwi’s plea – couched in a rational, dispassionate manner that deployed the state’s own bureaucratic discourse – exposes several key issues. Firstly, it reveals the difficult position African chiefs faced in the system – they were torn between the interests of the state that paid their monthly salaries and protecting their own subjects. It also reveals the suspicion felt by Africans towards cattle concentration camps for seemingly uninfected livestock. Thirdly, question 5 shows that Africans had also grasped key aspects of pasture management as they questioned the very idea of concentrating cattle. Question 7 is evidence of African understanding of contagious diseases and how they spread.⁷³

Africans questioned their own ability to follow settler policy as it seemed to be shifting – at times to the point of absurdity. For instance, the creation of cattle concentration camps effectively put an end to cattle trade among Africans in infected zones, and yet the Veterinary Department allowed white cattle owners within the same area to move their livestock to the cattle market.⁷⁴ Perhaps the biggest anomaly (and most ominous aspect) of the policy to some African cattle owners was that their FMD cattle were sold for human consumption. This followed a 1938 modification to veterinary restrictions, meant to allow Africans to sell their FMD cattle for beef at state-organised cattle sales.⁷⁵ But these sales, scheduled as they were in Foot and Mouth areas, meant that these

72. NAZ S1542/F11 Foot and Mouth Disease: Chief Native Commissioner, 1934-39, letter from Chief Marozva Mukanganwi to the NC Bikita, 04/02/1935.

73. NAZ S1542/F11 Foot and Mouth Disease: Chief Native Commissioner, 1934-39, letter from Chief Marozva Mukanganwi to the NC Bikita, 04/02/1935.

74. NAZ ZAX 1/1/2 Commission into certain sales of cattle in Native Areas: Evidence, Oral testimony by S. Mambe, 10/11/1938.

75. NAZ S1542/F11 Foot and Mouth Disease: Chief Native Commissioner, 1934-39, letter from H. Mundy, Secretary Department of Agriculture and Lands, to Secretary, Department of Natives, 04/04/1938.

beasts were sold for a pittance – something particularly welcomed by colonial officials who were preoccupied with protecting the white cattle producers from African competition.⁷⁶ All the cattle culled in the Victoria and Gutu thus went to the Liebig's meatpacking factory in West Nicholson, which specialised in canning low quality beef for Africans.⁷⁷

Question 2 referred to the death of two youths presumably from malaria. One took place at Mufuwa's cattle post where cattle from Chief Maroza's area were being herded and the other near the Mujichi tank where Chief Jiri's cattle had been placed.⁷⁸ However, Mukanganwi's pleas seem to have fallen on deaf ears since a few months later a similar petition was made to the colonial state by Fort Victorian black residents through a deputation of the local branch of the Southern Rhodesia Native Association. They protested that, among other things, they were deprived of their oxen and could not plough their lands.⁷⁹ Seeing that cattle in concentration camps were not going to be released, some Africans opted for domestic animals that were not affected by quarantine measures. Thus, in 1937, amidst the great suffering of cattle in concentration camps, a new and unprecedented demand for donkeys was reported in Matobo.⁸⁰ Overall, by the end of the 1930s the conflicting positions of the state officials meant that the soil conservation and livestock disease management activities were misunderstood by Africans who perceived sinister ambitions to undermine capitalist accumulation in the reserves. Nonetheless, colonial policies had unexpected effects on human–animal relationships as Africans exhibited an adaptive capacity that was at odds with the 'static' stereotype imposed by officials.

RESTATING THE 'BIGGER, BETTER BUT SMALLER HERDS' ARGUMENT

Conflicts involving different state departments (especially Native Agriculture, Veterinary and Native Affairs Department), African response, and the findings of the Natural Resources Commission revealed the need for a more nuanced and systematic understanding of the challenges faced in the African reserves. In particular, evidence given to the Natural Resources Commission (1939) revealed that environmental degradation was partly a result of dipping tanks and

76. See N. Samasuwo, 'Food Production and War Supplies: Rhodesia's Beef Industry during the Second World War, 1939-1945', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, 2 (2003).

77. Davis and Döpcke, 'Survival and accumulation', 96–7.

78. NAZ S1542/F11 Foot and Mouth Disease: Chief Native Commissioner, 1934-39, letter from Acting NC Bikita to CNC, 05/02/1935.

79. NAZ S1542/F11 Foot and Mouth Disease: Chief Native Commissioner, 1934-39, Letter from NC Victoria to CNC, 06/04/1936.

80. NAZ S1563 Chief Native Commissioner: Annual Reports for Mashonaland, 1937, report of the NC Matobo.

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how African-owned livestock trekked to watering places and dips. This offered an opportunity for state departments concerned to rally and suggest possible interventions.

By the beginning of the 1940s, a number of possible solutions to the challenges in the reserves had been proffered by NAD and Native Agriculture officials, including an immediate stop to the haphazard application of incompatible veterinary and soil conservation policies. Nonetheless, there were different diagnostic processes and interpretation of the problems. The Director of Native Agriculture, E.D. Alvord, thought that the real problem in African reserves was Malthusian. Overpopulation rather than overstocking was to blame – hence his argument that, unless active steps were taken to make more land available to blacks, or to get the surplus people in some manner off the land, the situation would only worsen.⁸¹ On the contrary, these sweeping changes to rural land use were frowned upon by NAD officials on account of their security concerns – that Africans would actively resist such changes. Meanwhile, having failed to address the cattle-dip tank ratio throughout the 1930s, veterinarians came to consider overstocking to be the main problem emanating from the rearing of so-called ‘scrub cattle’ (worthless livestock). Thus, if Africans were forced to keep small cattle herds the cattle-dip tank ratio would be greatly reduced, as would the environmental threat posed by large numbers of cattle trekking to dip tanks. Forging a new alliance with NAD officials, veterinarians argued that a lasting solution to this challenge would be a simultaneous process of destocking and stock improvement.

While the environmental argument informing destocking was clear by the end of the 1930s, the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 added a new dimension to the challenges facing the state during this time. The war saddled Southern Rhodesia with a number of responsibilities, including hosting the Imperial Air Training scheme and housing Allied prisoners of war. These changed circumstances made destocking and the improvement of African livestock very attractive to state for a number of reasons.

Throughout the 1930s, the state had attempted to improve production but with little success. Indeed, in 1937 a public utility company, the Cold Storage Commission (CSC), was established with a primary function of lifting the beef industry from crisis by guaranteeing prices for white beef producers at a time when Africans were denied access to the market through a battery of quarantine and legislative measures.⁸² The white beef industry, which had been shielded from African competition, could not meet the demand for beef after 1939. In fact, the beef industry’s stocks were quickly wiped out in the first two years of the war, thereby precipitating severe shortages on the domestic market.⁸³

81. NAZ S2998/3 Native Reserves: Destocking, 1943, letter from E.D. Alvord to the CNC, 21/02/1945.

82. Samasuwo, ‘Food Production and War Supplies’, 492.

83. *Ibid.*

The Southern Rhodesian state, like other British colonies (South Africa, Bechuanaland and Kenya), increased its extractive capacity so as to secure much needed economic resources to finance the war mainly through introducing tight control measures to stabilise the supply of limited food resources such as beef; and secondly it intensified its assault on African agriculture to extract much needed surplus production.⁸⁴ Destocking regulations became an ideal tool to deflect the cost of the beef shortage onto African farmers. Accordingly, the Cold Storage Commission (CSC) and *Liebig's Extract of Meat Company* (LEMCO) were given preferential buying rights at all cattle sales held in the reserves.⁸⁵ Furthermore, the livestock improvement argument of the 1940s also resonated well with the war-time needs; if Africans reared 'better' breeds, more meat, it was argued, could be produced.

Thus, from the 1940s, destocking and livestock improvement were implemented simultaneously. That veterinarians took part in these activities was not unusual since state veterinary services were not limited to pharmacological drugs and the administration of inoculants but also extended to breeding and other livestock improvement activities such as pasture management. In fact, the livestock improvement which NAD officials and vets promoted in the 1940s had been encapsulated almost a generation earlier in the African Cattle Clause (1912) – an *ad hoc* policy started by NCs and veterinarians to encourage smaller cattle herds among Africans.⁸⁶ Yet, it was only in the wake of the Natural Resources Act (1941) that these measures were implemented to great effect.

Unlike in the pre-1930 period, when introducing exotic breeds was thought to be the best way to assist Africans in adopting 'economic' herds, a new school of thought rose in the post-1930 period.⁸⁷ In the 1930s, Alvord's centralisation policy side-lined this aspect as it was perceived that 'it would be of no avail to introduce the best imported pedigree bulls into the Native Reserves, if their progeny are to starve.'⁸⁸ In fact, since 'demonstration work' (the teaching of Africans to farm using western methods by officials from the Department of Native Agriculture) began in 1927, demonstrators merely castrated large numbers of 'scrub' bulls, which, by December 1940, totalled approximately 140,000 head.⁸⁹ This meant that, by 1939, no proven 'breed' strong enough to withstand environmental conditions in the reserves, and compete on the cattle

84. *Ibid.*, 496.

85. *Ibid.*, 497.

86. For more, see W. Mwatwara, 'A history of state veterinary services and African livestock regimes in colonial Zimbabwe, c.1896–1980', Ph.D. Thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2014.

87. See W. Mwatwara, "'Where nature objected to anything imported": Africans and the Cattle Quality Clause in Southern Rhodesia, c.1912–1930', Paper presented to the Southern African Historical Society Biennial Conference, University of Botswana, 27–29 June 2013.

88. NAZ S2998/3 Native Reserves: Destocking, 1943, Circular No.29, 17 August 1932.

89. NAZ S2997/2/4 Animal husbandry: improvement of methods and stock, 1941–1942, letter from the Agriculturist for Natives, E.D. Alvord, to the CNC, 10/11/1941.

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market existed.⁹⁰ Animal scientists and veterinarians decried the fact that during centralisation work towards the improvement of local livestock had not gone beyond castration.⁹¹ Some colonial officials accepted the fact that African reserves were located in inferior environments where it was difficult to rear livestock; thus they argued that the poor type and quality of 'native' cattle was largely due to the very low level of nutrition on which they were maintained. They argued that reserves were 'hopelessly' overstocked and hence animals lived on practically 'a starvation ration'.⁹² Therefore, to them, introducing exotic breeds was a waste of money and effort.

In order to address these concerns, the state took a serious step in 1941 towards 'creating' a standard type of 'Native' beast by selection and breeding. Such an animal was to 'breed true to type and prove itself eminently suitable to the conditions and management under which Native cattle are required to live'.⁹³ In particular, Alvord, the Director of Native Agriculture, castigated the previous sporadic attempts by the Veterinary Department and Native Commissioners to improve the standard of the 'Native' cattle.⁹⁴ The support for a new 'breed' reveals a veiled capitulation of the state bureaucrats who had believed that nature in the end would rectify the balance between stock and feed. That is, they had lost their implicit Darwinian faith that some animals would die due to thirst and hunger and teach the Africans the virtue of raising smaller herds of bigger cattle.⁹⁵ In the 1940s, this thinking had lost currency, partly because of a new sensitivity to animal cruelty and, partly because of the very evident effects of large but surviving herds on the vegetation and soil since 'indigenous cattle are capable of outlasting their food supply'.⁹⁶

This new livestock policy emphasised the rearing of the pure 'Sanga' cattle, which existed in the country before the Europeans arrived. In the spirit of the new policy, Sanga cattle became a protected species from 1944. From that year, NCs were encouraged to make full use of animal husbandry officers in spreading propaganda, and to identify cows which Africans could not sell. The sale of pure (Sanga) cattle as breeding stock was discouraged, and sales were only

90. NAZ RG4 Report of the commission appointed to inquire into the preservation, etc., of the natural resources of the colony, 1939 (Chairman: R. McIlwaine), 50.

91. NAZ S2997/2/4 Animal husbandry: improvement of methods and stock, 1941–1942, Memo written in Sept 1938 by R.L. Cooper (the Land Inspector, Native Affairs Department) entitled 'Improvement of stock and animal husbandry methods in native reserves'.

92. NAZ S2997/2/4 Animal husbandry: improvement of methods and stock, 1941–1942, letter from the Senior Animal Husbandry Officer-in-Charge to the Superintendent of Natives (Matabeleland), 5/5/1941.

93. NAZ S2997/2/4 Animal husbandry: improvement of methods and stock, 1941–1942, Memo written in Sept 1938 by R.L. Cooper (the Land Inspector, Native Affairs Department).

94. NAZ S2997/2/4 Animal husbandry: improvement of methods and stock, 1941–1942, letter from the Agriculturist for Natives, E.D. Alvord, to the CNC, 11/03/1942.

95. This was the fundamental idea behind the African cattle clause.

96. NAZ RG4 Report of the commission appointed to inquire into the preservation, etc., of the natural resources of the colony, 1939 (Chairman: R. McIlwaine), 42.

to be of cows which had distinct indications of European breed blood while 'the best Native cattle should be kept as breeders to improve Native owned cattle'.⁹⁷ Research was also encouraged by NAD officials into the suitability of the Afrikaner breed in 'grading up' 'native' cattle. From 1945, the state expanded work on 'Sanga' breeding projects through establishing five large herd breeding stations as follows: at Makoholi, an all-black type; at Tjolutjo, a red and white spotted type; at Tuli, a light golden dun (a greyish-brown colour) type; at Mzingwane, a red and white 'Nkone' type; and at Buhera, a herd of all varieties of colours.⁹⁸ Herds from these breeding stations were distributed to Africans throughout the country and, as the breeding stock in each herd was 'improved', the surplus heifers and cows were either disposed of to Africans or sold to European stock buyers.⁹⁹

Another important change in livestock policy during this time was the standardisation of breeding practices across the territory. Until that time each district had been treated as a discrete area whose activities and methods of dealing with livestock breeding had no effect on or relation to areas outside its immediate boundaries. Consequently numerous livestock policies were implemented throughout the country, some of which were diametrically opposed to each other. In some districts, a Native Commissioner merely adopted any *ad hoc* scheme idiosyncratically, and his ideas and programme could be upset entirely by the official who followed. Colonial officials thought standardisation would benefit all cattle interests in the country: Africans were expected to benefit from the changes through the elimination of scrub cattle and the resultant better grade of beast, while white cattle traders and commercial farmers were to benefit through the general improvement of 'Native' cattle they purchased from Africans and more hardy cows with which to breed their pure-bred bulls for the production of beef.¹⁰⁰ The country would benefit as a direct result of the benefits to both Africans and Europeans, and in the conservation of natural resources resulting from a 'sound' livestock policy.¹⁰¹

One unforeseen development of the destocking campaign on livestock improvement activities was that Africans sold good type 'Native' bulls for slaughter, which NCs thought should have been kept for breeding purposes in the interests of African livestock improvement.¹⁰² Though prevalent in many areas, this tendency became more pronounced during the 1946–7 drought which forced Africans to sell livestock to sustain themselves. In order to re-

97. NAZ S2998/3 Native Reserves: Destocking, 1943.

98. NAZ SRG3/INT4 Annual report of the Director of Native Agriculture, 1945, 236.

99. NAZ SRG3/INT4 Annual report of the Director of Native Agriculture, 1945, 236.

100. NAZ S2997/2/4 Animal husbandry: improvement of methods and stock, 1941–1942, letter from the Agriculturist for Natives, E.D. Alvord, to the CNC, 11/03/1942.

101. NAZ S2997/2/4 Animal husbandry: improvement of methods and stock, 1941–1942, letter from the Agriculturist for Natives, E.D. Alvord, to the CNC, 11/03/1942.

102. NAZ S2998/3 Native Reserves: Destocking, 1943, Circular No.29 from the CNC to all NCs, dated 7 January 1948.

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duce the destocking of ‘good’ bulls (and to save and redistribute those that were offered for sale), a number of schemes were approved that season. Firstly, there was the establishment of bull camps for the holding of young bulls until they had matured or of matured bulls until sold. Secondly, when culling for destocking purposes, families were permitted to retain one selected bull. Thirdly, NCs were authorised to purchase bulls of ‘good’ type which would otherwise be sold for slaughter. Bulls so purchased were branded as ‘selected’ bulls and made available for sale to Africans at fifty per cent of the purchase price.¹⁰³ This was an important intervention as it reduced the sale of ‘good’ animals that may have fallen to the butcher’s knife. For instance, in 1946 alone breeding efforts were improved when a total of 1,011 bulls and 3,812 breeding cows were selected during the destocking programme.¹⁰⁴ By 1951, three permanent central breeding stations had been established: Tuli (Lowveld Station), Makaholi (Middleveld Station) and Mrewa (Highveld Station). Bull camps were also established in Matabeleland and Southern Mashonaland.¹⁰⁵

Pasture improvement projects were introduced in reserves in Matabeleland, Southern Mashonaland, Midlands and Manicaland circles. Rotational grazing was started in various parts of the country: Southern Mashonaland (at Victoria, Zimutu and Western Gutu reserves), while Midlands grazing areas had been created in Charter District. In Matabeleland, Inyati Reserve was paddock fenced and came under a system of rotational grazing as did Mzingwane and Ntabazinduna Reserve.¹⁰⁶ After years of propaganda, some NCs reported in the late 1940s that Africans were beginning to take a keen interest in their cattle and had begun to replace large herds of scrub cattle with smaller herds of better cattle breeds.¹⁰⁷ However, this change of attitude appeared not to have extended to pasture methods, since some NCs noted, ‘few Africans, however, yet appreciate the value of selective grazing, and too often herds cover the same ground month in month out when there is untouched pasture within easy reach’.¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, the livestock improvement activities demonstrate how state departments which had been at odds in the 1930s, now rallied behind livestock improvement to mount a major assault on African livestock regimes they saw as primitive.

103. NAZ S2998/3 Native Reserves: Destocking, 1943, Circular No.29 from the CNC to all NCs, dated 7 January 1948.

104. NAZ SRG3/INT4 Annual report of the Director of Native Agriculture, 1946, 48.

105. NAZ SRG3/INT4 Annual report of the Director of Native Agriculture, 1951, 104.

106. NAZ SRG3/INT4 Annual report of the Director of Native Agriculture, 1951, 105.

107. NAZ SRG3/INT4 Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs, Chief Native Commissioner, Director of Native Development, 1951, 19.

108. NAZ SRG3/INT4 Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs, Chief Native Commissioner, Director of Native Development, 1951, 19.

DESTOCKING, 1945–51

The previous sections have shown how, by the end of the 1930s, conflicting positions of colonial officials forced the state to consider more intrusive methods to enable it to meet its environmental control objectives. Colonial officials saw the potential role livestock improvement could play in reducing the number of herds in African reserves but they preferred quick fix solutions. Their apocalyptic view of the situation in the reserves resulted in the simultaneous introduction of both livestock improvement and compulsory destocking.

Destocking was not an entirely new phenomenon in the territory as it had been tried in Gutu and Victoria Districts in 1938.¹⁰⁹ In Victoria District, the veterinary argument was the need to eradicate disease but the state position was not static, as it later argued that culling aimed to alleviate over-stocking in cattle concentration camps. In Gutu, overstocking and deterioration of stock rather than quarantine restrictions provided the rationale for destocking.¹¹⁰ Nonetheless, the folly of compulsory destocking without any legislative instrument resulted in widespread discontent, especially among missionaries whose outcry over the unilateral culling of African cattle forced the state to institute an inquiry into destocking activities in Gutu and Victoria Districts in 1939 (see Map 1).¹¹¹

Having learnt from its 1938 mistake, in 1941 the state armed itself with a legislative weapon enforcing compulsory destock across the whole territory.¹¹² From a veterinary point of view, destocking had two advantages: enabling effective control of disease and ensuring sufficient grazing for the cattle.¹¹³ The passage of the Natural Resources Act (1941) marked the beginning of a systematic reduction of livestock in Native Reserves on account of the perceived damage they were causing to the environment through overgrazing. Certainly, grazing animals has some effect, as denuding vegetation leads to erosion, the weight of the animal can compress or compact soil and hooves can dig down below the soil surface, damaging soil structure.¹¹⁴ However, without dismissing the scientific basis for anti-overgrazing measures, it is important to emphasise the state's narrow understanding of the environment problems bedevilling the reserves. The overwhelmingly popular view remaining among colonial officials that Africans were solely responsible for environmental degradation precluded an objective examination of the problem.

109. See A. Shutt, 'The Settlers' Cattle Complex'.

110. Davies and Döpcke, 'Survival and Accumulation in Gutu', 96.

111. For an in-depth discussion of their activities see A. Shutt, 'The Settlers' Cattle Complex'.

112. Davies and Döpcke, 'Survival and Accumulation in Gutu', 95. See also A. Shutt, 'The Settlers' Cattle Complex'.

113. NAZ S138/38 Chief Native Commissioner's 1926 circular on the control of livestock diseases.

114. Showers, *Imperial Gullies*, p.13.

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Soil scientists have since challenged the basis on which soil erosion rates were calculated. In particular, Stocking has shown that soil erosion may not have been man-made but just a result of the changing environmental conditions.¹¹⁵ Indeed, Showers’ findings in Lesotho – a similar colonial context – tallies with Stocking’s argument that perceptions trumped demonstrable scientific data.¹¹⁶ In fact, accelerated erosion was probably almost non-existent in southern Africa prior to the presence of Europeans in the region. Thus, identification of the factors that led to the development of accelerated soil erosion could be found in an analysis of changes in land use activities after colonisation.¹¹⁷ Under the new sedentary non-mobile lifeways necessitated by land shortages in the reserves as well as colonial policies, it followed that the grazing management system used during shifting cultivation could no longer be used. Sedentism meant that the soil was subjected to continuous compaction and soil disturbance by trampling made it more susceptible to erosion.¹¹⁸

From 1945, colonial officials sought to reduce this pressure through obtaining reliable estimates of the carrying capacity of each native reserve. Cattle and small stock numbers were strictly limited to this number with the hope that there would be at least a 25 per cent improvement in the type and quality of the animals, eliminating the main cause of soil erosion and reduced water supplies.¹¹⁹ Indeed, destocking was perceived to be the cheapest method of preventing these environmental problems.

Under the destocking policy, the NC stipulated a certain number of stock to be held by each resident, and animals in excess of this number were to be culled on a selective basis. A culling officer had power to instruct the owner to dispose of or permanently remove from the area all culled animals within three months of the date of culling and it was only when the owner failed to comply

115. M.A. Stocking, ‘Aspects of the role of man in the spread of erosion in Rhodesia’, *Zambezia* 2(2) (1972); M.A. Stocking, ‘Relationship of agricultural history and settlement to severe soil erosion in Rhodesia’, *Zambezia* 6(2) (1978). See also K.B. Showers, *Imperial Gullies: Soil Erosion and Conservation in Lesotho*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005).

116. Normal erosion is defined loosely as that which occurs as a result of the interaction between landscapes and climate; accelerated erosion is soil movement that occurs as a result of human activities. But of course there are differences in delineating the normal from the abnormal. Showers argues that European perceptions of abnormality informed the assumptions on which land use decisions and policies were based. The southern African region was very exotic in the eyes of those accustomed to the humid temperate regions of northern Europe and Britain. See Showers, *Imperial Gullies*, p. 137; Delius and Schirmer, ‘Soil conservation in a racially ordered society’, 721–22.

117. See J. McGregor, ‘Woodland resources: ecology, policy and ideology; an historical case study of woodland use in Shurugwi communal area, Zimbabwe’, D.Phil. Thesis, Loughborough University, 1991; S. Maravanyika, ‘Soil conservation and the white agrarian environment in colonial Zimbabwe, c.1908–1980’, D.Phil. Thesis, University of Pretoria, 2013.

118. Showers, *Imperial Gullies*, p. 23.

119. NAZ S2997/2/4 Animal husbandry: improvement of methods and stock, 1941–1942, letter from the Senior Animal Husbandry Officer in Charge to the Superintendent of Natives (Matabeleland), 5/5/1941.

with the order that that the animals could be compulsorily sold with the owner receiving the proceeds thereof.¹²⁰ Between 1945 and 1961, the state simultaneously carried out a destocking policy to regulate livestock numbers within the reserves' perceived carrying capacity.

The problem with capping the maximum number of livestock at a herd of six (then thought to supply enough manure and draft power for farming) was that African livestock owners disagreed vehemently. For instance, Furusa, the principle headman under Chief Ndema in Selukwe Reserve argued that at least twenty beasts would be needed simply to supply sufficient manure, 'Those who have enough cattle have enough manure to use in their lands, but they don't all have sufficient cattle to make manure.'¹²¹ Mlambo, the agricultural demonstrator in the same reserve, concurred with Furusa, arguing that some African farmers were only manuring a quarter of an acre because that was all the manure they could get from fifteen head of cattle.¹²² However, some Africans re-deployed old socio-political mechanisms of informal redistribution of livestock – *kuronzera* or long-term cattle loaning to patrons enabling some cattle-owners to convert possessions into power. The cattle-rich avoided reaching individual destocking quotas by distributing their livestock among friends, neighbours and relatives. Thus, in 1950, the CNC observed:

The native soon appreciated that the weight of destocking was being borne by owner of large herds and this led to a whole sale redistribution of native cattle holdings amongst the natives with the result that today the number of native owning cattle in these areas is many thousands more than in 1945 and the vast majority of them own small stock.¹²³

This redistribution meant that the herds could not be culled, since doing so would have left Africans with insufficient cattle to meet the perceived subsistence level. In the face of coping mechanisms mobilised by cattle owners to avoid destocking, the state passed a new regulation, the Native Reserves Destocking Regulations (1950), which empowered the destocking officer in the field to decide on an *ad hoc* basis who should be a stock owner. They would evaluate on a subjective, highly-personalised basis the extent to which the stock owner was dependent on his animals as a means of livelihood. The result was that most young men were denied the right to own cattle at all because they could go into waged employment. Besides these redistributive methods, there was also a new spectre: 'ghost' herds – cattle who lived a shadowy existence

120. T.T. Jamu, 'The growth and control of African herds, 1910–1955', M.A African History Thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 1987, p. 37.

121. NAZ ZAZ 2/1/7 Natural Resources Commission: Oral Evidence, Furusa, Principle Headman under Chief Ndema, Selukwe Reserve, 7/02/1939.

122. NAZ ZAZ 2/1/7 Natural Resources Commission: Oral Evidence, Mlambo, the agricultural demonstrator Selukwe reserve, 7/02/1939.

123. NAZ S482/145/3A Second Draft on the Destocking Campaign.

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outside the bureaucratic light. Their very existence was simply concealed from colonial officials.¹²⁴

CONCLUSION

This essay is part of an ongoing historical conversation regarding state environmental protection activities in the African reserves. We have conceded that there were environmental challenges in the reserves which demanded attention but, as we have shown, the oversimplification of the complex situation in the African reserves has concealed other salient issues pertaining to the relationship between centralisation and livestock disease management in the reserves. We discussed how the environmental protection activities of the colonial state in Southern Rhodesia intersected with veterinary measures, demonstrating that centralisation and soil conservation policies, pursued most actively by Alvord in the 1930s, were at variance with the state's own veterinary policies. We argue that the conflicting positions of the Entomological, Native Development, Native Affairs and Veterinary Departments impeded the implementation of policy and caused inconsistencies – sometimes to the point of absurdity. Although the pervasive thinking that problems faced in the colony were largely caused by African 'primitive' farming practices provided a nodal point for different colonial interests, the escalation of the environmental challenges, notwithstanding state intervention, exposed the colonial state to criticism by Africans, and white liberals (mostly missionaries). We demonstrated that bureaucratic conflicts of the 1930s widened the scope of the state's search for solutions by the end of the decade. Indeed, this escalation fuelled the search for answers which revealed that veterinary disease control measures such as the cattle concentration method, the location of dip tanks and the manner in which livestock were driven to the tanks were hazardous to the environment. Rather than stall the environmental protection crusade, conflict incubated new and alternative environmental protection methods. Thus, livestock improvement and destocking, which became the focal points of reducing pressure in the reserves in the 1940s, were by-products of these conflicts and of the heightened sense of environmental degradation in the reserves. We have observed that there were creative and adaptive responses by Africans, which belied charges by colonial officials that Africans were 'primitive' agriculturalists. There is also evidence of confusion and collaboration, and passive resistance emanating from the contradictions in state policy. All these intrusive measures had a significant impact on the African rural landscape in general and livestock management practices in particular. Destocking resulted in changes in livestock ownership patterns and the cattle loaning system (*kuronzera*) as people tried to hide cattle

124. T. Hermans, *Those Were the Days*, http://archive.org/details/ThoseWereTheDays_290, 4, accessed 25 Nov. 2014.

from culling officers. Centralisation impacted on previously extensive grazing habits while livestock improvement practices reshaped the local idea of what a 'good' breed was, and also the type of cattle Africans reared. Thus, by 1951, livestock management regimes and even the human–animal relationship in the reserves had changed significantly.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Phia Steyn, Godfrey Hove, Nancy Jacobs, Mucha Musemwa and Albert Grundlingh for very useful commentary.