

# New snake pit will be a first for South Africa

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the world. Apart from this pride they had been wiped out by hunters.

The Barbary lion is a beautiful species of lion. Their mane is huge and black and stretches to almost their tummy. They are a bit darker and redder than our lions and a bit smaller."

## WHAT ABOUT INBREEDING?

"We need to be very aware of possible inbreeding. For instance with the Barbary lions we have to take into consideration that there was only one pride left.

"The same principle applies to the white lion. We know that the white lion originates from the Timbavati. Most of the white lions in SA come from the Timbavati gene pool.

"Our first white lion was the progeny of two 'ordinary' brown lions. So we hope that it's a differ-

ent strain.

"Two tourists came to us and said they'd seen something strange at the lion enclosure that they thought we should investigate. When we got there it was a new-born white lion cub. Its mother had already discarded it, but it was still alive when we found it.

"We then raised that cub and realised our two brown lion carried the white gene. They later produced more white cubs and that was the beginning of our white lion breeding programme.

"We now cross-breed and exchange with other white lion owners to prevent inbreeding.

"Our breeding programmes are computerised and carefully monitored to prevent inbreeding.

"We imported our first Barbaries from Czechoslovakia. The equivalent of the SPCA in that country approached

us and asked if we would take the lions.

"They had been bought as cubs and paraded around the nightclub circuit where patrons paid to be photographed with them.

"They were kept in the boot of a car until they were too big to handle.

"When they got here we realised they were Barbary lions."

## ANIMAL CRÈCHE

"Our animal crèche is an extension of the breeding project. The animals bred are raised in

stance in the recent icy weather we had, are substantial.

"When they are old enough they are exported. We are very careful and responsible about who we export to. There are very strict regulations in SA about keeping animals, as well as about exporting them.

Until then the public can view these animals at close quarters, or interact with them physically under the supervision of handlers.

"Our purpose with the white lion is to have the largest pride of white lions in the world.

"You have to make sure your gene pool can justify a pride of lions. A pride would consist of say ten lionesses and two or three males. They would not be related at all, and live on the reserve like our existing lions in the large enclosures."

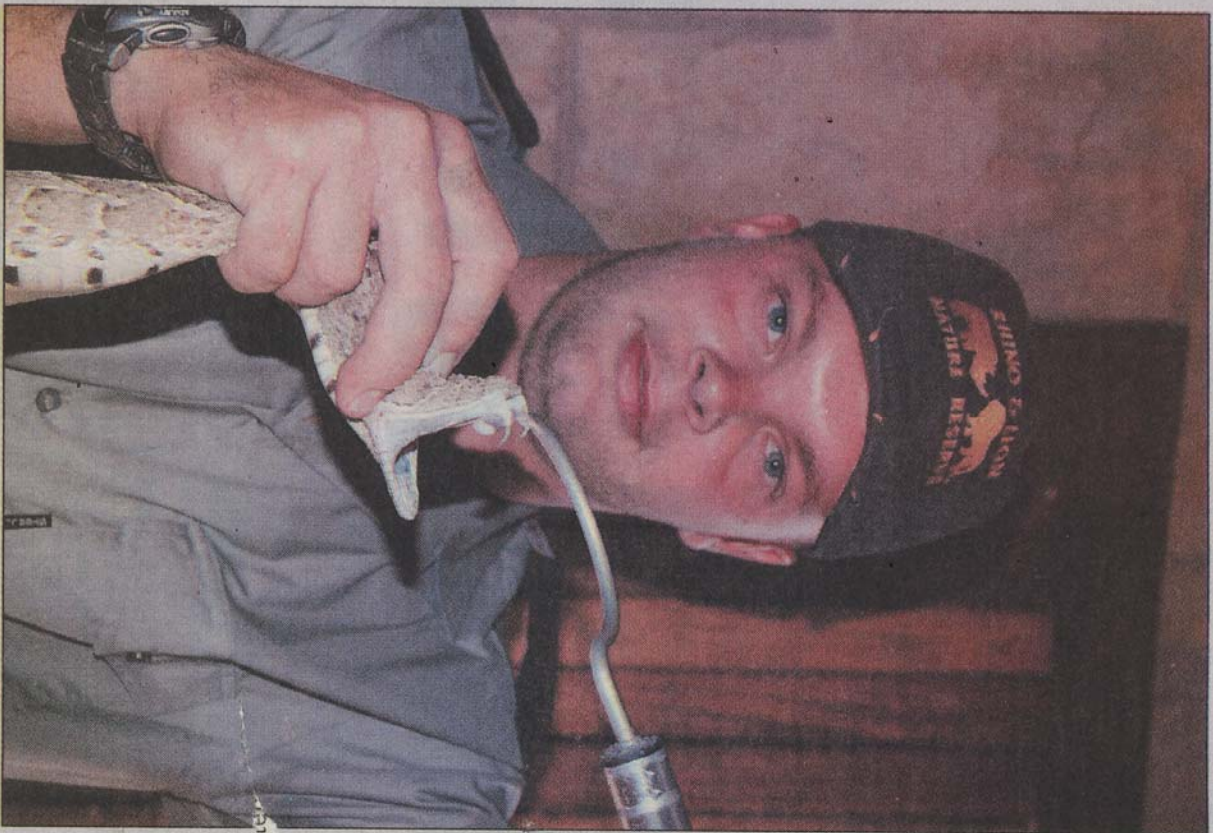
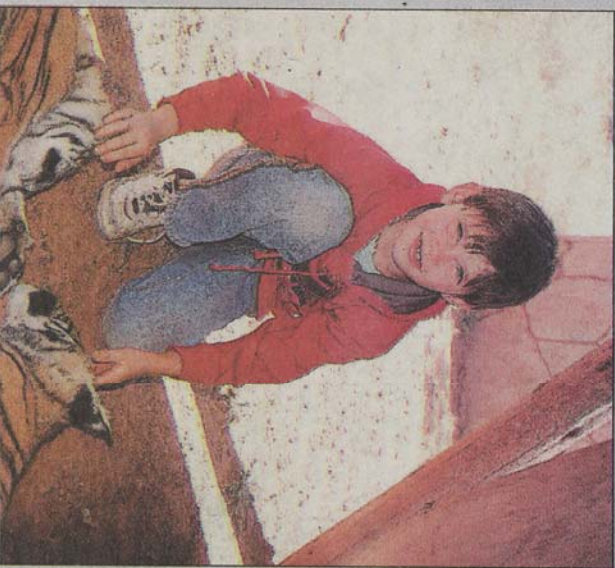
Three white lion cubs born last week are being cared for by manager of the animal crèche, Adele van Biljon.

"There are two males and a female, and they weigh between 1,4 and 1,6kg. They get fed 50ml of special formula milk every three hours. We stimulate them and burp them.

"They sleep in night rooms with infra red lamps and hot water bottles to keep them warm."

Adele is also looking after two other cubs that are nine weeks old. "They are off their milk and eating meat three times a day.

Adele says she started working at the reserve as a student four years ago. She studied botany and zoology and graduated last year.



RAY Gerber, herpetologist at Rhino and Lion, with one of his charges.