

# Game Ranchers Preparing for the World Cup Soccer

No beating  
about the  
ECO-BUSH

Gert Fourie



What does Joel Santana, 75 nations and game ranchers in South Africa have in common? They are all anxiously awaiting the kick-off of the 2010 World Cup Soccer in South Africa.

To what extent are you as a game rancher affected by this event? Some landowners do not necessarily see their involvement in this event, while others have been preparing since the announcement a few years ago.

Approximately three million foreign visitors will come to South Africa between 2009 (Confederation Cup) and 2010 (World Cup). Most of them will stay in South Africa for at least a week or more. Many will travel extensively in the country, since stadiums featuring events will be in Polokwane, Pretoria, Johannesburg, Rustenburg, Nelspruit, Bloemfontein, Durban, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth. Since wildlife is one of Africa's main selling points, a high percentage of these travelers would like to visit a game ranch or reserve. It is expected that during this period of time the southern African game ranch community will not only be affected, but that the event will serve as a marketing event for South Africa in general and that increased tourism can be expected following the 2009 / 2010 events.

Ideally, game farm owners should have already been preparing for this event.

This article serves as an introduction for the landowner who believes he qualifies as an eco-tourist destination during this period. To obtain more opinions, we spoke to Dr Deon Engelbrecht of Leeuwenbosch Game Farm in the North West province, since his farm will offer facilities to eco-tourists from around the world during this period, as well as to a well-prepared Leon Meyer, manager of Zenzele River Lodge near Rust de Winter.



**G&H:** Did you have to prepare your farm specifically for the World Cup?

**Deon:** No, since I have previously catered for the overseas market I try to maintain a high standard anyway. One of the first steps was to register the farm with the South African Tourism Board as well as the AA. They rate your accommodation on the farm and give specific guidelines in terms of minimum standards. Small things are important, e.g. the type of beds, toilet paper of high quality and other aspects that overseas tourists expect.

**Leon:** Yes, we are still busy with preparations. We are planning special events and excursions for our clients. We will, for instance, offer our clients trips to well-developed golf courses in the bushveld area. Special transport will be available to take them to the matches and bring them back. Due to potential conflicting interests, we have cancelled all our hunting events for this period.

**G&H:** What do you suggest in terms of marketing?

**Leon:** We have mainly registered some overseas websites, which will hopefully expose us to potential visitors.

## Gert Fourie's commentary:

Game ranch owners could consider the following preparations for the World Cup and also for other tourists visiting the farm.

### At the lodge:

- The location of the lodge is important. Try and identify the main attraction on the farm and construct the lodge there (bearing in mind practicality).
- Find a theme that can be used at the lodge; to name only one example, if it is close to the Kalahari, a San theme could be appropriate.
- Ensure that the visitors feel safe – if the farm is

not very remote and safety is a concern, a fenced area or guard late at night could be implemented.

- All facilities should offer a high standard of cleanliness and be well maintained.
- Visitors are soccer fans – offer them good television and network facilities in their rooms and even on big screen to follow their favourite matches.
- Internet access in the rooms.
- Additional activities will improve the experience – offer activities like horse riding, mountain biking, hiking trails, archery, quad bikes, bird watching and other excursions, e.g. to see big five animals.
- Leon Meyer of Zenzele River Lodge has a great idea to offer transport facilities to and from the soccer matches.
- Prevent accommodating hunters with pure eco-tourists. The matches will be played during the winter and hunting activities will be well sought after. If possible, put the hunters in a separate camp or book the groups at different times.
- Slaughtering facilities should be well removed from accommodation.

#### *In the veld:*

- Construct hides at the water points or at feeding points. This will drastically improve the experience, especially for bird watchers.
- Replace old cattle troughs with more aesthetically pleasing water holes.
- Avoid game-viewing roads next to

fences or roads that pass old building structures – keep the experience as natural as possible.

- The entrance to the farm is important and especially the main road to the lodge – again, avoid fences and structures along this road; if encroachment occurs, rehabilitate these areas; avoid using old straight fence lines.
- Game viewing roads should be naturally curving; avoid old cattle-fence roads.
- Ensure an element of surprise on the main tourist route.
- Make use of technology – install cameras at water holes with a direct link to the lodge.
- Feeding troughs and heaps of fodder look like any feeding area at a zoo – avoid these structures and keep it as natural as possible.
- Prevent having to drive through fences and camps.
- Bare soils, erosion and thick bush-encroached areas create a poor impression. Tick-off kraals are unsightly.
- Offer a variety of animals, especially of naturally occurring animals that represent the natural state of the ecology.
- Cages, traps and stories of jackal kills are not acceptable to most eco-tourists.
- Well-trained and informed guides will improve the experience.

#### *Marketing:*

- Do not over-promise and under-deliver, but give a true picture of what the farm and accommodation offer.

- Identify the market segment for your farm – your market may consist of hunters, or people who are here just to see the big five, or visitors who enjoy game viewing but prefer other activities on the farm.
- Identify the unique selling point on the farm – it could be the landscape, specific feature like a river, rare game species, specific geological or ecological aspects on the farm, e.g. baobab trees or a cave, unique or special activities, for example mountain biking on a tree trail, etc.
- It is not advisable to offer hunting and eco-tourism together on the same advertising material since these are different market segments.
- Offer the visitor peace of mind in terms of security. Since South Africa is not known for its peace and quiet but game farms are normally remote and relatively safe, it could be a benefit to stay on a game farm.
- Use media that will reach the international market – ideally websites or overseas magazines. When making use of websites, use a company that will optimise the ranking of the website on search engines.
- Excellent marketing consultants are available.



Gert and Nanette Fourie are ecological consultants and game farm specialists with 15 years experience in the game industry. They can help game farmers and eco-destinations with advice that will optimise the utilization of their land and ensure that correct preparations are undertaken for a World Cup tourist market. Contact them at Ekofocus – 082 9295277. See also [www.ekofocus.co.za](http://www.ekofocus.co.za)

## **At the Tshwane Events Centre, (previously the Pretoria Showgrounds)**



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