



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Born Free-backed vaccination campaign prevents extinction for endangered Ethiopian Wolves

International wildlife charity Born Free is delighted to announce that, following a decade of intensive research, field trials and awareness work, the first ever oral vaccination campaign was implemented in the Bale mountains to pre-empt outbreaks of rabies amongst the world's most endangered canids - the Ethiopian wolves.

Led by the University of Oxford's Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme (EWCP) and funded by the Born Free Foundation, this new form of vaccination - using the SAG2 vaccine - will now be utilised for all six extant wolf populations to enhance their chance of survival.

There are fewer than 500 Ethiopian wolves left in the world and they all live in the highlands of Ethiopia. Whilst they are threatened by loss of habitat to subsistence agriculture, the biggest threat to their numbers is from lethal diseases carried by domestic dogs such as rabies and canine distemper.

Professor Claudio Sillero, Chief Scientist for Born Free and EWCP's Founder, said:

*"30 years ago, I witnessed an outbreak of rabies which killed the majority of the wolves I had followed closely for my doctoral studies. We have learnt much about these wolves and their Afroalpine homes since. By the time we detect rabies in a wolf population, many of the animals are already fatally infected and doomed. We now know that pre-emptive vaccination can save many wolves from a horrible death, and help to keep small and isolated populations outside the vortex of extinction."*

Sillero added:

*“Long-term programmes and targeted research are the cornerstones of biological conservation. Today, thanks to funding from Born Free and the generosity of companies such as Virbac, who donated 3,000 SAG2 oral vaccines to our programme, we are prepared to implement a strategic vaccination campaign that will greatly reduce the chances of this rare species extinct. I wholeheartedly celebrate the team’s achievement and encourage other practitioners to embrace this preventive approach as part of their conservation tool kit. We are in a world that demands closer control of pathogens shared by wildlife, domestic animals and humans.”*

**To find out more about Ethiopian wolves and to support Born Free and the EWCP’s ongoing work, visit: <https://www.bornfree.org.uk/animals/ethiopian-wolves> and [www.ethiopianwolf.org](http://www.ethiopianwolf.org)**

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**Images:** High res images available to download from <https://spaces.hightail.com/space/ORO4pZkL6P>

**Video:** Link to video of young wolf eating bait <https://youtu.be/Li2R5SSiWRg>

**Interviews:** Interviews with Professor Claudio Sillero from Born Free are available. Please contact Gemma Hook at [gemma.hook@pmwcom.co.uk](mailto:gemma.hook@pmwcom.co.uk) / 01403 783 400 to organise.

#### **About Born Free:**

Born Free’s mission is to ensure that all wild animals, whether living in captivity or in the wild, are treated with compassion and respect and are able to live their lives according to their needs. Born Free opposes the exploitation of wild animals in captivity and campaigns to keep wildlife in the wild.

Born Free promotes Compassionate Conservation to enhance the survival of threatened species in the wild and protect natural habitats while respecting the needs of and safeguarding the welfare of individual animals. Born Free seeks to have a positive impact on animals in the wild and protect their ecosystems in perpetuity, for their own intrinsic value and for the critical roles they play within the natural world. For more information about Born Free please visit: [www.bornfree.org.uk](http://www.bornfree.org.uk)

#### **About Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme (EWCP)**

The Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme is a WildCRU endeavour in partnership with the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority and the Regional Governments. EWCP has worked to protect the world’s rarest canid since 1988. [www.ethiopianwolf.org](http://www.ethiopianwolf.org)

About Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU). Part of the University of Oxford’s Department of Zoology, WILD CRU is a pioneering, inter-disciplinary research unit. WildCRU underpins solutions to conservation problems through primary scientific research of the highest calibre. WildCRU’s approach includes: research to understand and address the problem; education to explain it; community involvement to ensure participation and acceptance; and implementation of long-term solutions. [www.wild-cru.org](http://www.wild-cru.org)

#### **About Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA)**

The Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA) is a governmental organisation under the Ministry of Culture & Tourism undertaking conservation and sustainable utilisation of wildlife in Ethiopia. EWCA works closely with national and international stakeholders on wildlife conservation.

#### **About Virbac**

Founded in 1968 by a French veterinarian, Virbac is an independent pharmaceutical laboratory present in more than 100 countries. The company offers a comprehensive and practical range of products and services covering the majority of animal species and pathologies. [www.virbac.com](http://www.virbac.com)

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