

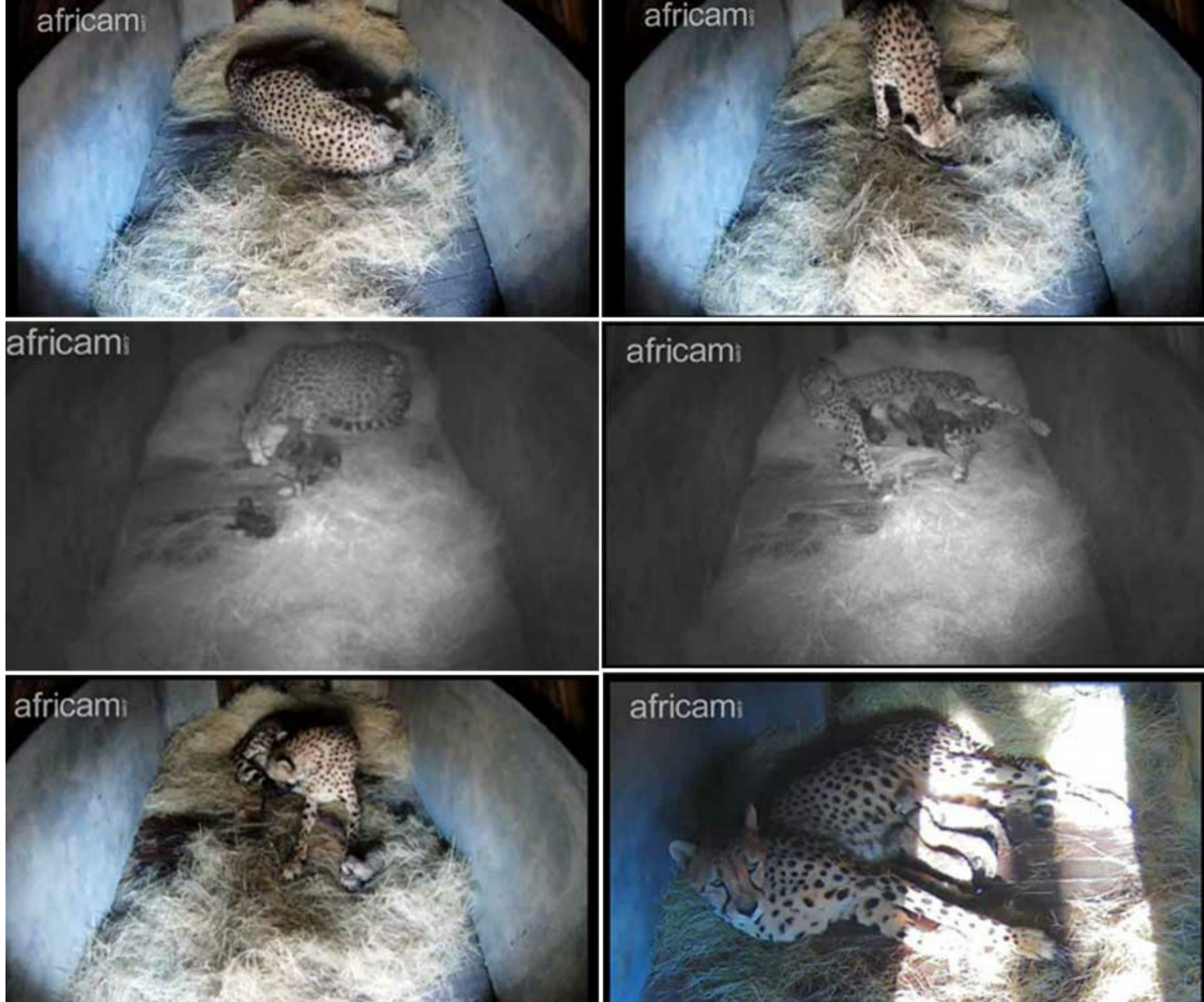


**The HESC welcomes four new cheetah cubs**

**HOEDSPRUIT, South Africa August 1, 2014** - The evening of the 26th July saw the arrival of four tiny cheetah cubs at Hoedspruit Endangered Species Centre's (HESC) maternity ward. Born to mother Meg, what makes this particular litter so special is that the father of the cubs, Tristan, is a king cheetah.

As Meg does not carry the king cheetah gene, none of the cubs will be a king cheetah. They will, however, all carry the gene. If they are paired with another gene-carrying partner in the future, they may well give rise to another generation of kings. King cheetahs have been reported in the wild, including a sighting in the Kruger National Park in 1974, but are incredibly rare, which emphasises the importance of an occasion such as this.

This is Meg's third litter. The four babies arrived just one day later than anticipated after the typical cheetah gestation period of between 90 and 95 days.



*Stills captured from the LiveCam during the birth*

Meg was moved to the maternity ward on the 3rd of July 2014. This facility makes it easier to monitor a pregnant female's movements, and is also warmer and provides better shelter once the babies are born. It is secluded, and neither vehicles nor people are permitted in the vicinity.

At this point, the staff at HESC will not approach the cubs so as not to interrupt the very natural process of mother-to-infant care. However, as monitoring is a very important part of conservation, a 24/7 webcam with live video and sound has been set up in collaboration with the team at Africam.com. Through this device they can monitor the cheetahs, as well as gather valuable information for future conservation efforts.

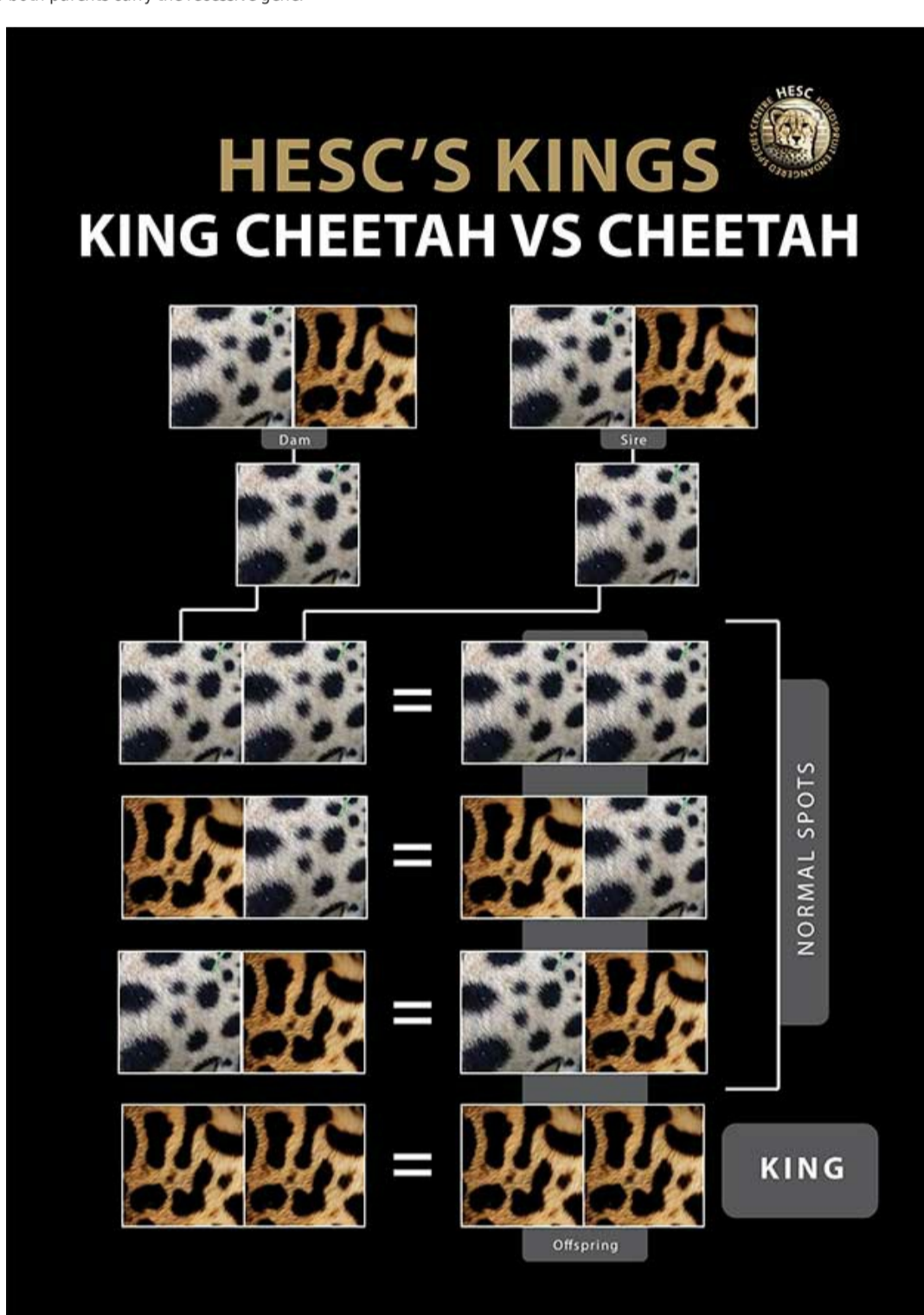
For the HESC, educating about and promoting awareness of the cheetah is paramount. To this end, they have made the webcam available to the rest of the world. Viewers can check in with the cheetah family at any time to see how the babies are doing, and if they would like to help in the conservation effort, there is a donation portal through which they can contribute directly to the care of the cubs.

[Click here](#) to access the live stream

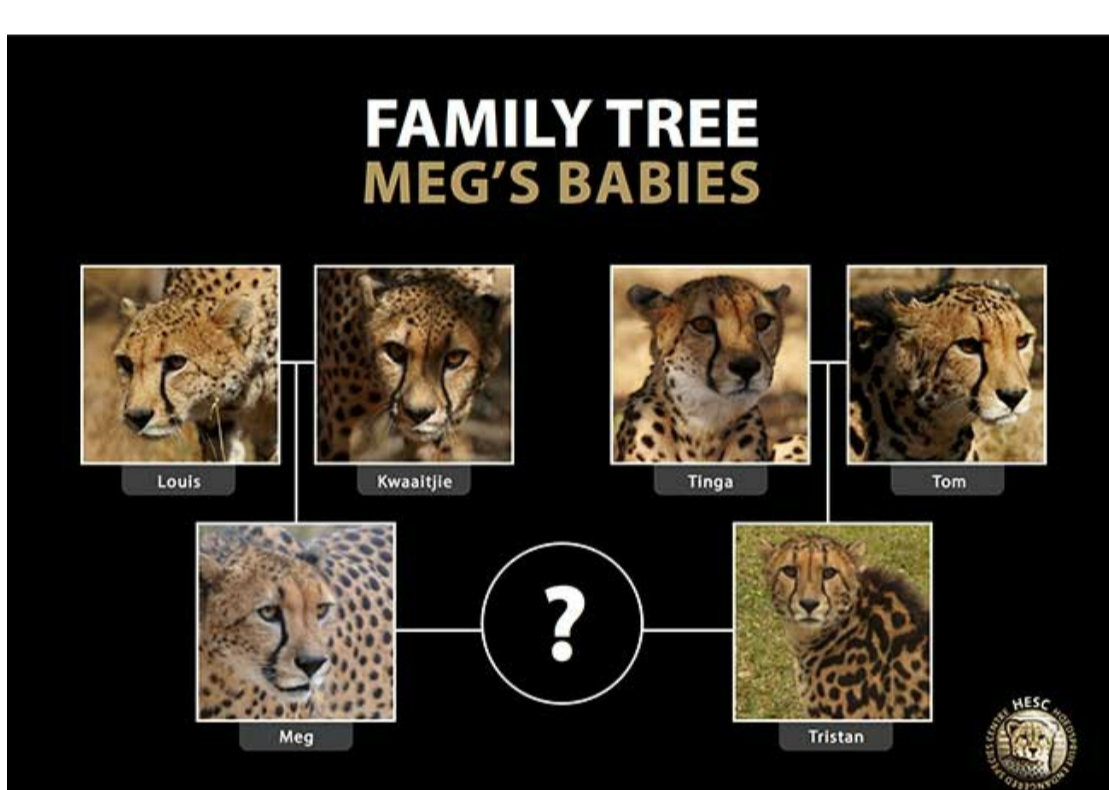
Thousands of people from around the world tuned in to watch the live birth. If you missed it, you can [click here](#) to watch the archived video clip.

**Fact File:**

Although the king cheetah was once thought to be a separate subspecies as the result of a distinct spot pattern on the coat, it is now known that a genetic predisposition affects the coat pattern if both parents carry the recessive gene.



Tom (a king cheetah) & Tinga were the parents of Tristan, who was born on the 7th of April 2008. Meg was born to Louis & Kwaaitjie (meaning "cross" in Afrikaans) on the 23rd May 2007. Although her parents were both aggressive animals, thankfully Meg did not inherit their disposition, and is an affectionate, lovable and extremely calm cheetah.



The HESC is focused on the breeding of cheetahs, including the king cheetah, in order to broaden the cheetah's genetic pool with a view to introducing the vulnerable animal in areas where they are not typically found. According to the Red Data book, the cheetah is currently listed as "vulnerable" in South Africa. This is an improved categorization when compared to the previous global listing of the species as 'endangered'. This is, in part, thanks to the various breeding initiatives that have been undertaken by conservation bodies similar to The HESC.

Cheetah populations are genetically very uniform (or monomorphic). Wild cheetahs often occur in small isolated or patch populations, which leads to further narrowing of the gene pool. Through their breeding programme, The HESC is able to stimulate distinctly different genetic lineages to maintain a healthy ex situ reserve of animals. Wherever possible, these animals are released into a natural environment to support gene diversity in wild populations.

For further information, or to get involved, please contact **Mari Theunissen**:

e-mail: [info@cheetahcentre.co.za](mailto:info@cheetahcentre.co.za)

Tel: 012 460 5605

Ends/

[For editors:](#)

The Hoedspruit Endangered Species Centre focuses on the conservation of rare, vulnerable or endangered animals. Cheetah Conservation is one of their core disciplines.

The Centre is actively involved in:

- The breeding of endangered, vulnerable or rare animal species
- The treatment and rehabilitation of captive-bred cheetahs to the wild
- The treatment and rehabilitation of orphaned or injured animals which are brought to the Centre
- The education of learners, students and the general public in conservation and conservation activities
- Eco-tourism
- A hands-on Student's Programme to conservation and adventure enthusiasts from around the world.

For more information, visit [www.hesc.co.za](http://www.hesc.co.za), or contact 012 460 5605