

ACADEMIC READING 1 Part 1

READING PASSAGE 1

Questions 1 -13

You should spend about 20 minutes on **Questions 1 – 13** which are based on Reading Passage 1 below.

THE BIG CATS AT THE SHARJAH BREEDING CENTRE

It is one of the few places where you will be able to spot them all at the same time... the Arabian wolf, an African cheetah, an Arabian leopard, an oryx, a gazelle. These are just some of the animals, which, on the brink of extinction, are now getting a new lease of life thanks to the exemplary work being done at the Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife in Sharjah.

Sharjah is one of the seven emirates that make up the United Arab Emirates. The Breeding Centre's expertise and facilities have made it a prime destination for illegally imported animals confiscated by UAE and Sharjah authorities. In the last four years, more than 900 mammals and reptiles and 969 birds have arrived at the centre, including 25 North African cheetahs, Houbara bustard and falcons, lions, a baby Nile crocodile and a Burmese python that was left in a rental car at the airport.

The 25 cheetahs were all imported illegally into the UAE and were intercepted at the UAE harbour and airport entry points. They nearly all arrived malnourished, dehydrated and highly stressed after long voyages stuffed into boxes, crates and suitcases. Now they are bright and full of energy. The Centre's efforts have also been rewarded when the first cheetah mating took place at the end of 2002. Playing matchmaker with these beautiful creatures is no easy task – successful breeding requires considerable patience and intimate knowledge of each animal's personality, and it is the result of intensive and expert management of each animal within the group as well as of the group as a whole.

Because this group was still young and inexperienced in courtship matters, the keepers had to make the introductions only after careful planning and management, much like the lead role in a Jane Austen novel. The female cheetahs were initially intimidated by the presence of the male; however, as they advance to oestrus, the roles are reversed and the male cheetah becomes too wary to approach during the female's most receptive phase of the cycle. It is the responsibility of the keeper therefore to monitor each individual and to be able to respond to any indication from the cheetahs that the time is right for introducing a pair. The close bond that invariably develops between the keeper and the cheetahs enables the keeper to spot even the most subtle signs from the animals in their care. The trust between keeper and animal has also allowed the opportunity to study cellular changes in the sexual organs of the females during the hormonal cycles that occur prior to reproduction.

The Breeding Centre's cheetahs are also participants in the European breeding programme, which aims to ensure that the genetic diversity of this endangered species is maintained and expanded by breeding as many founder animals as possible to introduce new bloodlines into the captive population. In this way, the group held at the centre plays a very important role in the future health of the international captive population, as they are potentially all new founders.

Also very important for the Sharjah Breeding Centre is the leopard-breeding programme.

The Arabian leopard, *Panthera pardus nimr*, is critically endangered around the world and particularly in the Arabian peninsula, where it was once found throughout the coastal mountain ranges. Activities like hunting, trapping and habitat destruction has reduced their range to a few isolated and fragmented populations in Oman, Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

In the 1980s, a captive breeding programme was established near Muscat with the capture of three leopards in southwestern Oman. The breeding programme in the UAE was initiated by the Arabian Leopard Trust and started with the arrival of two mature specimens: a male Arabian leopard from Yemen and a female on breeding loan from Oman in 1995. The arrival of these two animals led to the construction of the Breeding Centre in which the leopard has played the role of flagship species.

Today there are twelve leopards at the Breeding centre, eight of which have been born at the centre since the first cub in 1998. Once more, the secret to the centre's success is the close relationship between animal and keeper. The leopard is usually shy and secretive with people around, but here they react positively to the presence of their keepers, approaching the fence so they can be talked to or scratched behind an ear.

The bond is particularly important during breeding season, when keepers decide to introduce pairs to each other. Male leopards are known to have killed their partners on introduction, so it is essential for the keeper to understand the leopards' behaviour to decide when it is safe to do so. The trust is also important if keepers need to enter dens to check on and monitor the cub's growth. Leopard females have been known to kill their cubs if the dens have been disturbed, but the centre's leopards are quite comfortable with the staff handling the new generation of cubs.

Source: The Gulf News, UAE

Questions 1- 8

Use the information in the text to match the statements (1 – 8) with the animals (A – D). Write the appropriate letter (A – D) in boxes 1 – 8 on your answer sheet. Write:

- A *if the statement refers to cheetahs at the Breeding Centre.*
- B *if the statement refers to leopards at the Breeding Centre.*
- C *if the statement refers to both cheetahs and leopards at the Breeding Centre.*
- D *If the statement refers to neither cheetahs nor leopards at the Breeding Centre.*

<i>Example</i>	<i>Answer</i>
These animals are endangered	C

- 1 These animals were smuggled into the UAE.
- 2 At first these animals did not adapt to life at the Sharjah Breeding Centre
- 3 These animals are regarded as the most important animal at the Centre.
- 4 Half of these animals were born at the Breeding centre.

- 5 These animals can be dangerous to one another.
- 6 The role of the keeper is vital in the breeding programme of these animals.
- 7 The first of these animals at the Breeding Centre were relatively young.
- 8 It is normally difficult for humans to approach these animals.

Questions 9 – 13

Complete the summary below.

Choose your answers from the box below the summary and write them in boxes 9 – 12 on your answer sheet.

NB There are more words than spaces, so you will not use them at all.

<i>Example</i>	<i>Answer</i>
The Sharjah Breeding Centre now has a _____ of animals including birds,...	variety

SUMMARY

The Sharjah Breeding Centre now has a variety of animals including birds, mammals and (9) _____. As its name suggests, the Centre is primarily involved in breeding and (10) _____ the numbers of the species housed there whilst still maintaining the (11) _____ of bloodlines in order to retain genetic health. In spite of problems involving the complex (12) _____ of the animals, a fair amount of (13) _____ has been achieved with North African cheetahs and Arabian leopards.

reptiles	variety	behaviour	success	creating
expanding	difficulty	diversity	action	habitat
season	fish	change	working	programme