

## **Acknowledgements**

First I want to thank the supervisor of the Cheetah Research Project, Dr Bettina Wachter from the Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research (IZW) in Berlin, who continuously taught me a scientific approach to the topics investigated in this thesis and advised me intensely on the collection and statistical analysis of the data. I also want to thank Prof Heribert Hofer, director of the IZW and my PhD supervisor, for his important scientific and statistical advice, especially during the period of setting up the framework of this study and during his visits in Namibia. My thanks also go to Johann Lonzer (IZW), who supported me as a PhD fellow in the field and theoretical work over the years and made our cooperative work as a veterinarian and a biologist very successful. I also thank Jörg Melzheimer (IZW), who joined the project as an additional PhD student later on and who also supported me in my work.

Many thanks go to Dr Robert Hermes (IZW), who introduced me into the methods of ultrasonographical examination of cheetahs, assisted me together with Dr Thomas Hildebrandt (IZW) in the analysis and interpretation of the ultrasound results, and gave valuable comments during my writing period. I am grateful to Dr Oliver Höner and Dr Marion East (both IZW) for their useful suggestions and assistance in the project's work. Many thanks also go to the IZW technical assistants, especially Kerstin Wilhelm and Dagmar Thierer, who were always very helpful when technical and logistical problems had to be solved.

I am very grateful to Prof Hans Lutz from the Vetsuisse Faculty in Zurich for providing access to his laboratory to conduct the serological work and for sharing his wide knowledge in the field of feline infectious diseases. From the staff of his laboratory I received a lot of assistance, making my lab work very efficient.

I thank Dr James Cox from the Federal Research Centre for Virus Diseases of Animals in Tübingen and Dr Thomas Müller from the Friedrich-Loeffler Institute in Wusterhausen for testing the samples for the presence of rabies antigen and antibodies.

My thanks also go to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) in Namibia for permission to conduct this study. I am specifically grateful to Toivo Uahengo, Elli Hamunyela and Peter Erb from the MET for their continuous cooperation and help. I also thank the Veterinary Council of Namibia for having approved my registration as a veterinarian in Namibia.

I am extremely grateful to all members of the Seeis Conservancy and Hochfeld Conservancy in Namibia for allowing us access to their farms, permission to catch, investigate and subsequently release again cheetahs on their land and for sharing valuable information and experience. My special thanks for cooperation go to the farmer families Cramer, Kasch, Metzger junior, Metzger senior, Zander, Wiechmann and Schubert, on whose farms my traps were situated and where I caught, investigated and released cheetahs. Many thanks also to Ebi Frey, who hosted and checked daily additional traps on his farm. I also want to thank Birgit and Harald Förster from Okatumba Wildlife Research in Namibia for their cooperation and their assistance in logistical issues and in the field. I am very grateful to Uwe Herbert, who safely flew the Piper Super Cub for countless hours to track the study animals. My thanks also go to the Polytechnic of Namibia for their continuous cooperation. I am deeply grateful to all the highly motivated volunteers from Europe and Namibia, who assisted me during the past years in the field.

I further want to thank the owners of Amani Lodge, Okambara Lodge, Otjitotongwe, Farm Kalkpan, Farm Köcherbaumwald, Farm Skaapplaas and Farm Wegdrai, who allowed us access to their captive cheetahs. Many thanks to the Namibian veterinarians Dr Ulf Tubessing, Dr Mark Jago and Dr Hans-Otto Reuter, who conducted the immobilisation of the captive cheetahs in this study and generously shared their knowledge on wildlife medicine. Dr Ulf Tubessing also immobilised the trapped free-ranging leopards, for what I am thankful.

My special thanks go to the Messerli Foundation in Switzerland, which generously financed this study. Without their support, this study would not have been possible.