



# Tears for Topaz, pig who roamed too far

Nine-year-old Bella distraught as neighbour shoots new pet

SHELLEY SEID

SIX months ago nine-year-old Bella Croxon finally got the pet pig she had been begging for.

The miniature potbelly was flown in from Cape Town and Bella fell in love with her instantly, naming the pig "Topaz" and cuddling her pet incessantly.

And then a neighbour shot Topaz.

Bella has been unable to sleep since the shooting last Saturday and her mother, Paula Croxon, has arranged for her daughter to see a counsellor.

Croxon — a single mother and landscaper from Himeville just outside Underberg — has spent the past week trying to take action against the man who shot their pet pig.

Topaz — who at six months old was the size of a staffie — was fine as a piglet but in August she started digging around and would break through the wooden fencing into the property of neighbours Robbie and Anna La Grange.

"It kept breaking through the fence; it dug up my entire yard, it damaged my water pipes, it bit my dog and it charged my wife when she was pregnant which resulted in her taking a fall," said Robbie La Grange.

He said they phoned Croxon several times and asked her to come and fetch her pig. If she wasn't at home she sent her domestic worker, Pretty Mbanjwa.

But by September La Grange had had enough and asked Garth Nortje, manager of the Sani SPCA, to intervene.

Nortje left a note for Croxon on September 26 telling her to make arrangements to contain Topaz.

Croxon agreed via SMS to do so and made improvements to the fence, but had not finished



DEVASTATED: Paula Croxon comforts her daughter Bella  
Picture: JACKIE CLAUSEN



PIGGY IN THE MIDDLE: Bella Croxon cuddling her potbellied-pig Topaz in happier times. When she got bigger, Topaz began disturbing the neighbours  
Pictures: CROXTON FAMILY



other side, octogenarian Ann McBean, heard the shot, she went outside.

"I watched him shoot it. I screamed at him. The pig was standing still and he went over and pushed it to the ground. I screamed at him: 'Your other dogs used to live on my property and dig up my garden but I didn't shoot them.'

"I would call this plain, bloody murder. It was horrible to see it and it upset me very much," McBean said.

La Grange went to the local police station and made a statement about the incident; he then drove the carcass to the SPCA where Nortje said they had no morgue facilities. La Grange arranged with local farmers to bury the body. He later heard they burnt it.

When Croxon and Bella arrived home that evening they looked everywhere for Topaz.

"When I switched my phone on in the morning I found that he had sent a text the evening before saying what he had done. I asked for the body. We wanted closure."

According to Nortje, under the Animal Protection Act the onus is on the owner to keep an animal secured.

"I believe the animal lost its life because the owner was negligent. She was given an opportunity to remedy the situation — she chose not to. La Grange told me the pig was endangering the lives of children. He was within his rights to shoot it."

La Grange said he and his wife had tried repeatedly to call Nortje to remove the pig, but the SPCA official said he had no missed calls that day, despite being in the area and in range.

Croxon laid charges of malicious damage to property and negligent discharge of a firearm. However, after investigating the claim, the local prosecutor declined to press charges.

"Topaz was funny and she made us laugh," said Bella. "She was sweet and innocent. How could they shoot her?"

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TESTING TIME: Westville Boys' High School pupil Rushen Nair studies as his mother Nirvana looks on  
Picture: ROGAN WARD

# Stress of matric exams takes its toll — on moms

SUTHENTIRA GOVENDER

MATRIC moms are resorting to praying, retail therapy, baking and counselling to cope with the stress of the impending exams.

While they might not be writing exams themselves, more than 500 000 mothers in South Africa are dreading the final exams, according to a medical aid group. The exams begin on Wednesday.

Many moms are more stressed than their children.

The possibility of embattled tertiary institutions extending their academic year because of violent #FeesMustFall protests is also putting strain on parents and matric pupils, experts warned this week.

Johannesburg psychologist Dr Ingrid Artus said she found "a general increase in stress levels among clients" around this time of year.

"Some particular stressors include the preparation around matric farewell events, final exam preparation, the selection of suitable tertiary qualifications as well as awaiting feedback regarding applications."

"The uncertainty around the current state of affairs surrounding tertiary institutions is a concern for parents and matriculants."

She said the uncertainty could lead to emotional distress.

Matric mom Nirvana Nair said she felt "like I'm in matric", although it is her son Rushen who is preparing for his final exams.

"The matric year is an over-

whelming and emotional year ... The current state of universities is a serious cause of concern. I am hoping my son will be able to study in a safe environment and exercise his right to an education."

Despite her son's diligent preparations, Nair said she was anxious.

"I de-stress by enjoying a good book and some retail therapy. I also enjoy baking, which I find very therapeutic."

The Westville Boys' High pupil, who has been provisionally accepted to study commerce at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, said: "At times it is good to have a stressed-out parent ... it makes you put in more effort with your studies."

However, at other times it

would help if the parent was calm, Rushen said.

Jabu Nkosi is equally stressed, particularly because she has to give her daughter Amanda long-distance support.

Nkosi, who is a domestic worker in Durban, said she was concerned for her daughter because she lives far away.

"She is living with my mother in Esikhawini, which is about 150km north of Durban."

"I am very stressed but Amanda tries to calm me down."

Nkosi's salace is daily prayer. Parenting expert Nikki Bush said parents were stressed because they were "aware of the long-term ramifications of poor results".

"We are very connected to our children. Our anxiety is infectious ... mothers of matrics need to take care of themselves. "If it means booking yourself in to see a counsellor, do it, so there's no overflow of anxiety. Children have enough stress to deal with."

Fedhealth has devised a matric mom's survival guide because, said the medical aid's principal officer, Jeremy Yatt, "they play a key role in their children's results and could do with a bit of support themselves".

"Apart from the normal stress associated with having a child in Grade 12 and seeing them through their final exams, we believe that the added uncertainty over tertiary institutions is causing additional anxiety among parents ... and with good reason."

## Survival tips for matric mothers

- Be patient and understanding. Provide your 12th-grader with silence, private space and support while he or she studies.
- Learn to step back. Be careful not to let your own ambitions take over. School is your child's job, not yours.
- Provide healthy meals and have brain-food snacks in the kitchen.
- Encourage positive thinking.

Source: Fedhealth

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