

# Poison can End Rhino Poaching

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**RHINOS** are known for their distinctive horn or in some cases two horns on their nose. It's a great shame how some people do not consider these animals as the treasures that they are. They are also known as part of the big five.

Rhino poaching is a problem that has almost brought these animals on the brink of extinction. These majestic animals are a great part of the African pride.

Rhino poaching is driven by economic forces. If we really want to save the rhino, we must understand how these forces work: the myth of using rhino horns and skin for both ornamental and medical purposes. In Asia its skin is supposedly known to cure skin diseases, bone disorder and fever. Whilst in the Middle East rhino horns are used as handles for ceremonial daggers called Jambiya.

It is exceptional how rhino horns retail more on the black market per kilogram than gold, cocaine, platinum and heroin. Unprotected wild rhinos are rare in modern Africa, the only surviving African rhinos remain either in countries with strong wildlife market institutions, (such as South Africa and Namibia) or in intensively protected zones.

South Africa and Namibia have replicated the successful approach to white rhino conservation with black rhinos. Due to poaching, 92% of the black rhino population has been whiped out over the past 30 years, and there are now about 5 000 left in the world. These numbers are an improvement, however, from the lowest point of 2,500 in the 1980's thanks to conservation efforts and, surprisingly, tourism.

There are many realistic ways to save our rhinos. Safe rhino de-horning is no longer an effective option as it has failed. Harsher prison sentences may do the job as well as educating people that rhino horns serve no significant purpose in the medical system.

But there is one option that I personally believe will work significantly – rhino horn poisoning. This makes them unpalatable for human consumption. This is one of the many reasons for poaching. The procedure poses no real threat to the animal involved. Through this procedure the rhino horn is deemed worthless.

A colour dye will be used to identify the animal from a distance, thus eliminating, the fact that the horns will be used for medicinal purposes.

Let's do all we can to conserve these majestic animal or in the near future they will be no more, and the big five will be a figment of the past. And their memory conserved in pictures and museums.

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