

## Rhino trust investigates poaching

News - National | 2015-02-03

by Staff Reporter

Page no: (



**THE Save the Rhino Trust (SRT), which has been monitoring Namibia's desert-adapted rhinos since 1983, confirmed an internal investigation and announced that Otjiwarongo veterinarian Dr Axel Hartman has assumed the position of chief operating officer at the NGO as of this month.**

The CEO Simson !Uri-#Khob would remain in his position, pending outcome of an internal investigation that is expected to be concluded by middle February, the SRT said in a press statement.

"The investigation, which is being conducted by an external investigator, is complex and still in process, with conclusions not expected for several weeks," chairman Dudu Murorua said.

"Should any evidence or suspicion of criminal activity be identified, this information will be passed to the Protected Resources Unit of the Namibian Police Force, in addition to taking appropriate internal action."

No details would be made public until the investigation was completed, the NGO said.

The Namibian recently reported the suspected involvement of main poaching suspect Efraim Muanyangapo, an Omusati-based businessman who owns a string of shops between Khowarib and Orupembe in southern Kunene. This area is where most rhinos had been poached over the past two years, Ministry of Environment and Tourism data revealed.

The SRT would also restructure its own activities to become more of an anti-poaching entity than one purely monitoring the black rhino who range in this area, west of Etosha and boarding on the Skeleton Coast Park.

The SRT board would also be expanded to include specialists in anti-poaching, according Dr Hartman, who stepped down as a board member as of end January.

"SRT confirms that an internal investigation was launched in 2014 in response to concerns raised by Mr [John] Grobler. SRT acknowledges Grobler's efforts in the fight against rhino poaching," the SRT stated.

Namibia's black rhino population, which comprises 40 percent of all surviving black rhino, have increasingly been targeted by organised poaching syndicates since late 2012. Another eight black rhinos - four at Uukwaluudhi Lodge and four inside the Etosha Game Park - were killed for their horns over the same period.