

Rhino poached at game farm

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by Werner Menges



A RHINOCEROS cow was found poached at a game farm south of Otjiwarongo on Monday. The white rhino cow, named Maria, was found dead with a gunshot wound to her neck, game farm owner WP Barnard told The Namibian yesterday.

The cow was about 30 years old and had an eight-month-old calf, Barnard said. She was killed at Barnard's Otjiwa Safari Lodge, situated about 35 kilometres south of Otjiwarongo.

Police officers and a team from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism visited the farm on Monday and yesterday to investigate the incident, and leads were being followed up, Barnard said.

He is in mourning over the killing of Maria, he remarked.

Barnard recounted that the animal was last seen when she and other animals at the farm received their daily feed on Wednesday last week.

On Thursday she was missing from the feeding place, and a search was launched, Barnard said. He said it was unusual that she had left her calf, which is something that rhinos do not normally do.

During the search she was not spotted on Friday, but the continued search for her was fruitless on Saturday and Sunday, Barnard said. On Monday, her carcass was found about 10 kilometres from the area where she normally wandered, he said

It was estimated that she had been dead for a day or two by the time she was found.

Maria's calf, which was in the company of an older brother, was being monitored to see if it would cope without its mother or if it would need to be taken into care, Barnard added.

The killing of Maria is the first rhino poaching recorded at Otjiwa since a previous incident in 2006. Before that, a rhino was also poached at the farm in 1994.

According to figures supplied by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, more than 200 rhinos have been poached in Namibia since 2011. More than 40 of the endangered animals were poached last year, with two white rhinos also killed at a game farm in the Gobabis area around 22 December last year.

Three people have been arrested in connection with that incident.

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