

## Namibia dehorns over 400 rhinos

News - National | 2017-02-02

Page no: 3



**NAMIBIA** has so far dehorned 451 black rhinos at a cost of over N\$14,5 million in an effort to discourage poaching in the country.

Government has been dehorning rhinos since 2014.

The Ministry of Environment and Tourism makes use of experts contracted to dehorn black rhinos in the country's national game parks, including Etosha, Namib-Naukluft, Mamili, and the Waterberg Plateau Park.

Black rhinos are also kept on community conservancies across Namibia.

Environment minister Pohamba Shifeta said experts have been dehorning mostly black rhinos, which are the targets of poachers.

Shifeta told Nampa recently that rhinos on private farms are also dehorned to avoid death when fighting.

The dehorning process is repeated after three years as the horns grow fast, he noted. The minister, however, said Namibia needs more qualified veterinarians to carry out such operations.

"We have a shortage of people specialised in veterinary science in the country," he said.

Horns legally removed and those confiscated from poachers are kept as government resources, in the hope that the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species will in future legalise the sale of rhino horns which were removed legally.

Public relations officer Romeo Muyunda told Nampa on Tuesday that government has accumulated horns weighing 932,05 kilogrammes from white and black rhinos since 2014.

The value of these products is estimated at N\$74 million.

Muyunda said private farmers have to apply to MET to dehorn white rhinos on their farms, but have to declare such horns as state property. According to legislation, all black rhinos belong to the state.

He explained that during dehorning, ministry officials, accompanied by law-enforcement officers, take DNA samples from the rhinos and the horns, which are marked for tracking.

Muyunda said officials monitor farmers' custody of the animals regularly.

Zimbabwe and South Africa also have dehorning programmes.

According to the Save The Rhino (STR) Trust's website, the population size is confidential.

It said Namibia holds about 28% of Africa's black rhinos, and is the stronghold of the South Western subspecies (*Diceros bicornis bicornis*).

The STR said rhino numbers are increasing steadily under a well-established and innovative conservation and management programme.

"The future of the South Western black rhino will depend on Namibia's ability to maintain adequate standards of protection (given the poaching crisis), management, monitoring and sustainable utilisation of rhinos, and to expand available areas of range to accommodate further population increases."

- Nampa