



Poachers using new tactics

Entering private land on horseback

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Poachers in Namibia have changed their tactics and are now entering private farms with horses.

The use of horses not only complicates tracking but, horses also mask the smell of humans.

Environment minister Pohamba Shifeta said that the new tactic used by poachers remain a concern to the ministry and that officials must stay ahead of poaching syndicates.

He said a specific challenge with regards to poaching in Namibia still remains poaching on private farms and this year three rhinos have already been poached.

Shifeta said even though rhino and elephant poaching appears to be on the decline, there is a need to work harder to ensure that the poaching figures are brought to zero.

"This year, I want further a reduction of poaching cases by more than 50%. Let us rededicate ourselves to ensuring to ensuring that fewer rhinos and elephants are poached this year."

Statistics released by the ministry in October last year indicated that 27 rhinos and 20 elephants were poached in the country.

At that time Shifeta said rhino poaching had gone down by about 50% from 2016. In 2016, a total of 60 rhino were poached while 95 rhino were poached in 2015 and 56 rhino in 2014.

With regard to elephants, there was a decrease of more than 80% compared with 2016.

In 2016, a total of 101 elephants were poached, while 49 elephants were poached in 2015 and 78 elephants were poached in 2014.

"Poaching is driven by international criminal syndicates and it is a complex phenomenon," said Shifeta.

He added that to address this problem it should be recognised that this is not the normal subsistence poaching that the country has dealt with in the past, as rhino and elephant poaching has become commercialised and there are huge financial incentives for people to get involved and participate in this crime.

He also applauded the private sector that has come on board and supported government's efforts to eliminate the poaching problem and expressed his gratitude to the forces on the ground that are protecting the country's wildlife.

Furthermore, the minister said that interventions should be made to manage human-wildlife conflict as this conflict has become more frequent and severe in recent years.

This is attributed to the fact that the human population growth, wildlife population growth, unplanned agricultural activities, and the expansion of agricultural and industrial activities, which together, have led to increased human encroachment on previously wild and uninhabited areas.

According to Shifeta, human-wildlife conflict has frustrated many people, in particular farmers, to the point where they have



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ON HORSEBACK: Poachers are using new tactics to enter private farms. Photo: FILE

resorted to taking the law in their own hands.

"I encourage our staff members to be prompt in responding to issues of human-wildlife conflict.

Delayed responses will trigger a bad reaction from the already frustrated farmers, some of whom hunt and kill predators have caused damages to their properties."

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