

Erongo rhino sanctuary targeted

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A PROTECTED black rhino in the Erongo Mountain Rhino Sanctuary nearly lost a foot after it was caught in a snare set by poachers recently.

During efforts to release the rhino from the wire snare that cut deep into its foot, farmer Trevor Petersen and his workers at the farm Kranzberg, situated inside the sanctuary, further discovered bags of dried zebra meat, animal skins and oryx heads. More wire snares, which are used to trap the animals, were also discovered on the farm.

According to the Erongo police, one of Petersen's farm workers, Leo Mweufika (32), was arrested and charged with illegal hunting of the rhino, which is reported to be recovering well. The report indicated that Mweufika poached one mountain zebra and two oryx, all valued at N\$37 000, and allegedly sold some of the meat from the illegal hunting.

He was arrested on 18 February, and appeared in the Omaruru Magistrate's Court, where he was fined N\$2 000.

"He caused a lot of damage in a protected area, and he gets away with just a N\$2 000 fine? What type of message does that send to poachers?" asked Petersen. "We are investing a lot of money and resources here for the sake of protecting wildlife, and moreover the black rhino. This cannot be tolerated."

The Erongo Mountain Rhino Sanctuary (EMRS) is considered a world-class haven for the highly endangered black rhino.

Since its establishment 20 years ago, EMRS has had an unprecedented success rate in ensuring the adoption, accommodation, protection and revival of black rhinos under the government's rhino protection programme. The sanctuary is also a world-class wilderness conservation project.