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Informanté

Poachers cause havoc during lockdown

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RESETTLEMENT farms and other government owned land in rural areas of Namibia have become the secure staging ground from where syndicates can perpetrate serious crimes such as murder, poaching and stock theft with seeming impunity.

As a result, members of the farming community have had to take on the added responsibility of continuously safeguarding animals and property against the relentless onslaught of criminals.

Over the past long weekend, the vigilance of members of the farming community paid off when two men wanted by the Namibian Police for their involvement in murder cases in the Omaheke Region were amongst a gang of poaching suspects that were arrested on a farm near Drimiopsis, north of Gobabis.

Three suspects were caught red handed while butchering a cow on a farm between the two towns in the Omaheke Region during the early hours of Friday morning.

The poachers left a trail of destruction across several farms in the area and in their wake, they left several illicitly hunted warthogs, stolen goats and at least two cattle carcasses.

Continuous surveillance by civilian anti-crime groupings and private anti-poaching units assisted by the Namibian Police led to the arrest of the three men, of which two are wanted murder suspects on a farm between Gobabis and Drimiopsis.

The arrest was just one instance where a gang of poachers were caught red handed while in the process of butchering stolen animals.

Private anti-poaching units and members of the district watch operating on the farming area surrounding Okahandja also made a breakthrough over the weekend when three men were arrested on the spot where they were busy butchering the carcasses of two Oryx and a warthog.



SLAUGHTER CONTINUES: The carcasses of various illegally hunted wildlife and stolen cattle confiscated by members of the Namibian Police and farm district watches during operations to arrest poachers. Photos: Contributed

Some of the suspects captured by the anti-poaching unit are known poachers who were set free on bail and who still have pending cases against them.

In the south, farmers seized a vehicle abandoned by poachers believed to be residents of Farm Regina, a government resettlement farm near Helmeringhausen, who shot and butchered two Oryx on Saturday night. The poachers abandoned their vehicle and fled the scene of their crime on foot when members of the Helmeringhausen farming community interrupted them while they were loading the illegally hunted animals.

The incident is indicative of an increasing trend where government owned farms and other public land is used by syndicates of organised criminals to plunder already strained resources of farmers struggling to survive in the prevailing drought.

Earlier this year, police at Okahandja arrested an employee of NamWater, who used a government farm and the reserve of the Swakoppoort Dam as a base of operations from where the meat of stolen cattle and other illegally hunted wildlife is distributed to willing buyers in the residential areas of towns across Namibia.

The enterprise of the NamWater employee's poaching and stock theft syndicate in Okahandja also included the distribution of dried fish caught illegally in the Swakoppoort and Von Bach dams.

The suspects that were arrested in different locations across Namibia over the long weekend will appear in various magistrates' courts this week.

