



## Anti-poaching dog unit given teeth

Four new dogs will be imported from the Netherlands to beef up the environment ministry's anti-poaching dog unit, which has helped arrest suspects in 52 poaching cases so far.

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CATCH: The environment ministry plans to expand its anti-poaching dog unit. Photo: ELLANIE SMIT

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WINDHOEK

The environment ministry has purchased four more dogs for to expand its anti-poaching dog unit.

Currently the dog unit has four dogs, Alex, Benno, Baron and Nora, stationed at the Waterberg Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement Training Centre and a fifth dog, Alvero, at the Etosha National Park.

The four new dogs will be flown from the Netherlands to Namibia as soon as borders reopen.

Environment minister Pohamba Shifeta said the four new dogs will be trained at the Waterberg Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement Training Centre before they are permanently deployed at Bwabwata National Park to cover the north-eastern regions of Zambezi, Kavango East, Kavango West and parts of the Otjozondjupa Region.

Three regional units

Shifeta said the four dogs at Waterberg have been trained and fully equipped together with their handlers and will be transferred to Etosha soon.

From there they will support anti-poaching operations in the park, as well as surrounding conservancies and game farms in the Kunene, Omusati, Erongo, Oshana, Oshikoto, Ohangwena and Otjozondjupa regions.

According to Shifeta a third dog unit will be deployed in central Namibia to cover the Khomas, Hardap, Omaheke and //Karas regions.

Shifeta was speaking at the handover of a Toyota Land Cruiser by Standard Bank and donations by other organisations to the ministry's anti-poaching dog unit.

He said various tools have been utilised to curb the onslaught on species such as rhino, elephant and pangolin that are especially sought after by poaching syndicates due to the value of their products.

#### Multiskilled

One of these tools is the deployment of anti-poaching dogs which offer a combination of detection, tracking and apprehension capabilities.

The four dogs at Waterberg are trained to search buildings, vehicles, luggage and open areas for firearms, ammunition and illegal wildlife products such as ivory, rhino horn, pangolin scales and bush meat.

All four dogs are also capable of tracking human scent in a variety of terrains during day and night.

The dog currently in Etosha specialises in investigations, said Shifeta.

“Since their employment in 2017, the dogs have been successful in 52 cases or incidents all over the country, the most recent one being the arrest of suspected rhino poachers on a farm neighbouring the Waterberg Plateau Park,” Shifeta said.

#### Industry support

Thanking Standard Bank for the donated vehicle, Shifeta added that KCJN Trading in partnership with Brown Davis Africa fully equipped the vehicle with accessories which include a complete uprated EFS suspension, front replacement bull bar, LED driving lamp, an EFS winch and 185 litre long-range fuel tank.

Furthermore, Swavet, MDS Animal Health and Rhino Park Private Hospital donated veterinary drugs and food for the dogs.