

Poachers a menace at Karibib

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FATALLY INJURED ... A zebra that died after it was caught in a snare on a Karibib area farm.

POACHING has risen to alarming levels in the Karibib district during the past three months, with dozens of large game animals having been butchered, injured and some having to be put down.

"Covid-19 must have contributed to the sharp increase in poaching. People lost their jobs and are hungry, so there is a demand for meat. The festive season is also around the corner, so this also contributes to an increase," Butzi Kühne of Kühne Security and Anti-Poaching Unit told The Namibian.

The Karibib district is one of the hardest hit areas in Namibia in terms of poaching and Kühne believes this will not stop, "but the fight against it will continue".

According to him, there is too much activity, and law enforcement agents are doing their best to contain it.

He, however, complained that suspects are often released on bail to continue the plunder and when they are convicted, they do not get harsh enough sentences to

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act as a deterrent to others. About 25 crude snares were discovered and removed on a farm at Karibib this week.

Most of the traps consist of metal drum lids in which a jagged opening is cut, and to which a wire snare is attached. There are also wire nooses that are concealed along the animal trails. Once an animal is trapped, it suffers severe injury and bleeding – including suffocation. It may be hours, or even days, in which they suffer, as they struggle to get free.

"If the animal is lucky enough to escape, most of the time it would do so with life threatening injuries and live in severe pain for a few weeks before it succumbs. Usually the wounds become very septic. Most of the time, when we find these animals alive, they have to be put down. There is just too much misery and there is nothing one can do for them," he said.

According to Kühne, the unit was called in last weekend when suspects were spotted on farm Gamikaub in the Karibib district before sunset.

"We instituted investigations and a sweep of the farm on Monday. On the first day we found one slaughtered zebra and removed 17 wire snares," said Kühne, adding that there was also a 'bush butchery' where meat was being hung in the trees to dry.

On the second day, another zebra was discovered, caught in a snare but the poachers had not discovered it. However the animal did not survive. Kühne said from Monday to Wednesday (18 November), 25 snares were discovered and removed.

"We hope we removed everything so that no more animals get hurt," he said.

Kühne said although no one was arrested yet, law enforcement agents will continue hunting the suspects.