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- [HOMEPAGE](#)
- [LOCAL](#)
- GAME TRADER FACES INVESTIGATION



CAPTURING: Rhino capturing at Golden Game. Photo for illustration purposes only. PHOTO: Contributed

- [LOCAL](#)

# GAME TRADER FACES INVESTIGATION

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Ellanie Smit

The Ministry of the Environment, Forestry and Tourism conducted an investigation into the game trader, Mr. Johan Lombaard, launched after he allegedly transported two white rhinos without the necessary paperwork.

The investigation was allegedly necessitated after Lombaard was involved in a car accident between Rehoboth and Kalkrand on Tuesday while he was transporting a white rhino cow and her calf from Mariental to a farm in the Karibib district.

The accident happened on Tuesday around 13:00 about 50 km outside Rehoboth.

It is understood that the two rhinos were transported in two Land Cruisers with trailers. One of the drivers lost control of his vehicle and the vehicle rolled. None of the rhinos were injured.

After the accident, the calf was taken back to Lombaard's farm while the cow was transported to her final destination at Karibib.

However, on Wednesday the authorities ordered him to take the cow back to his farm after it was discovered that he apparently did not have the required transport permits.

Lombaard, who owns Golden Game CC which is operated from his farm in the vicinity of Mariental, confirmed the accident on Wednesday when approached for comment.

The spokesperson of the ministry, Mr. Romeo Muyunda, also confirmed the accident and said the police informed the ministry about the incident on Tuesday evening as rhinos were involved.

"Our staff in the region responded to that."

According to him, Lombaard did not have a hunting permit that provides for the catching and transporting of the rhinos. Apparently he only had a veterinary permit.

the ministry gets the blame

, however Lombard disputed this and said the fault lies with the ministry.

According to ministerial procedures, an applicant does not qualify for a veterinary permit if they do not have a trapping permit.

"According to the information received from the owner [Lombaard], both rhinos were taken back to the farm at Mariental. This is at the behest of the ministry," Muyunda said.

He said the investigation will continue, especially to determine how Lombaard obtained a veterinary permit without a hunting permit.

Once this is completed, the ministry will be informed whether a case should be filed or whether an arrest should be made, he said.

#### VALIDITY

Lombard says the trailer in which the rhino cow was transported overturned. However, he emphasized that he has all the necessary permits to transport the rhinos.

According to him, fishing permits for the South - issued by the ministry - are valid from 1 April to 31 October.

However, his fishing permit incorrectly states that it is only valid until September 30, he said.

Our sister newspaper Namibian Sun had Lombaard's veterinary permit under his eye. The documentation, which was issued on Tuesday, is valid for seven days.

"Everything is in place. This is the only discrepancy and it is a mistake made by the ministry which will be rectified," he said.

The Hardap Police's coordinator for crime investigations, Deputy Commissioner Eric Clay, said that if the ministry's investigation found that the necessary permits had not been issued, "action will have to be taken".

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