



- [HOME](#)
- [ENVIRONMENT](#)
- [PROMINENT WILDLIFE DEALER FACES PROBE](#)



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



INVESTIGATE: Johan Lombaard. Photo: Contributed

- **ENVIRONMENT**

## PROMINENT WILDLIFE DEALER FACES PROBE

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The environment ministry is investigating prominent wildlife dealer Johan Lombaard after he allegedly transported two white rhinos without the necessary paperwork.

Namibian Sun understands the investigation was necessitated after Lombaard was involved in a car accident on Tuesday afternoon between Rehoboth and Kalkrand while transporting a rhino cow and its calf from Mariental to farm Uitkyk in the Karibib district.

The accident occurred about 50 kilometres from Rehoboth.

It is understood two Land Cruisers with trailers were carrying the rhino cow and the calf. One of the drivers lost control of their vehicle and it rolled, but neither of the rhinos were injured.

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

However, the authorities yesterday ordered him to return the cow to his farm after it was discovered that he allegedly did not have the required transportation paperwork.

The wildlife dealer, who owns Golden Game CC which operates from his farm in the vicinity of Mariental, confirmed the accident yesterday when approached for comment.

'Ministry's mistake'

Ministry spokesperson Romeo Muyunda said "we were informed about the incident by the police on Tuesday evening because rhinos were involved. Our staff from the region responded to it".

According to him, Lombaard did not have a capture permit which allows for the capture and transportation of the rhinos. He was only in possession of a veterinary permit.

Lombaard, however, disputed this, saying the error was on the ministry's side.

As per ministerial procedures, when it comes to the issuing of veterinary permits, applicants do not qualify to be issued with a veterinary permit if they do not have a capture permit.

"According to the information received from the owner [Lombaard], both rhinos have been taken back to the farm at Mariental. This is per instruction of the ministry," Muyunda said, adding that the calf was transported there on Tuesday and the rhino cow yesterday morning.

He added that investigations into the matter will continue, especially to establish how Lombaard acquired a veterinary permit without a capture permit.

Once concluded, the investigation will inform the ministry whether a case should be opened and whether an arrest should be made, he said.

'Everything's in place'

Lombaard said the trailer in which the rhino cow was being transported tipped over.

He, however, stressed that he had all necessary permits needed to transport the rhinos. According to him, capture permits for the south issued by the ministry are valid from 1 April to 31 October. However, his capture permit mistakenly indicates that it is only valid until 30 September, he said.

Namibian Sun has seen Lombaard's veterinary permit to move animals. The documentation, issued on Tuesday, is valid for seven days.

“Everything is in place. That is the only discrepancy and is an error which was made by the ministry, which will be corrected,” he said.

Hardap police crime investigations coordinator, deputy commissioner Eric Clay, said if the ministry’s investigation finds that the proper permits were not in place, “action will have to be taken”.