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Statistics show 43 rhinos were poached in 2020, 61 in 2019, 55 in 2017, 66 in 2016, 56 in 2014 and nine in 2013. For illustration, photo archive

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POACHER DIES IN SKIRMISH

Two more suspects behind bars

Several previous incidents of poaching have occurred on the farm and to prevent further targeting, the name is not being disclosed.

Ella Smith

- 10 HOURS AGO - - 2023-01-24 00:00:00

A suspected rhino poacher was killed and another wounded during a shootout on Saturday between an anti-poaching unit and three suspected poachers on a farm about 120 km east of Windhoek.

The injured poacher was arrested and the third suspect who initially fled was arrested yesterday morning.

The owner of Namibia Wildlife Protection, Salmon Vermaak, whose anti-poaching unit is stationed on the farm, says the team leader informed him at around 11:30 on Saturday that a suspected poacher had been spotted following a rhino cow and her calf.

Vermaak instructed his team to fire shots into the air to scare off the poachers. The tactic worked, and the poachers ran away, while the team chased them.

According to Vermaak, the farm has an excellent security network for farmers and warnings were sent out immediately. Farmers responded immediately and set up roadblocks. During the chase, the poachers started firing at the anti-poaching unit which in turn fired back.

One of the poachers was fatally wounded and another was injured during arrest. The third suspect fled.

However, the search continued and he was arrested yesterday morning three farms from where the incident took place.

Vermaak says a bag with two fresh rhino horns was found with the suspects. The horns are from a rhino bull that was poached before the poachers set their sights on the cow. A hunting rifle, silencer, ax and two mobile phones were also found. This is the first incident of rhino poaching this year. According to the police, a case of murder has been filed against the anti-poaching unit which will be referred to the attorney general to decide on prosecution.

Vermaak says several previous incidents of poaching have occurred on the farm and to prevent further targeting, the name is not being disclosed. The police are investigating the case and the body of the poacher has been taken to the mortuary for a postmortem. The spokesperson for the Ministry of the Environment, Forestry and Tourism confirmed the incident. "It is regrettable that a person lost his life. We commend the team that was involved for their work in pursuing the suspects. This is another indication that crime does not pay." Poachers poached 77 rhinos last year, compared to 45 in 2021. Last year's figure is the third highest since 2013 and is exceeded

only by the 97 rhinos poached in 2015 and the 84 in 2018.

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