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Thirteen carcasses of chamois were found. PHOTOS PROVIDED.



A farmer from the Otjwarongo area says he also had to shoot two chamois that were still alive in wire snares. PHOTOS PROVIDED.



Wire snares: Botha says his workers have already found 40 wire snares in one camp - and they are still collecting more. PHOTOS PROVIDED.



Dried meat found in Botha's one farm camp. PHOTOS PROVIDED.



Wire snares: Botha says his workers have already found 40 wire snares in one camp - and they are still collecting more. PHOTOS PROVIDED.

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OTJIWARONGO FARMER DISCOVERS BUTCHER'S NEST

Concerns about gemsbok numbers

A farmer found 14 poached chamois on his farm in the past week, while he had already removed 40 wire snares.

Elvira Hattingh

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A farmer from the Otjiwarongo area came across 14 poached gemsbok carcasses on his farm last week.

Earlier it was reported that the police office in the town is one of eight in the Otjozondjupa region that does not have any vehicles to investigate, among other things, cases of cattle and game theft that plague the region.

JL Botha says three of the chamois were still alive, but were caught in wire snares and he had to shoot them himself. So far, Botha's workers have collected 40 wire snares in the camp - and they are still busy searching the camp.

“Regardless of the financial impact of such a loss, it costs a lot of manpower and money to remove all the wire snares from the camp again, but it has to be done, otherwise the cattle get caught in them and strangle them to death.

"If this happens all the time, I'm not going to get a job because I'll be busy with this all the time.

Botha says that he is also concerned about gemsbok numbers in the area. Farmers in the area estimate that the 2019 drought has already reduced their numbers by around 60%, while they are currently often the victims of game thieves.

The message we would like to bring home is that our wildlife population could soon be completely wiped out at this rate, with far-reaching consequences. Botha says a gemsbok is worth about N\$2,000 to N\$3,000.

GRUVONDS

Botha says he discovered the massacre at a camp on his farm which is located closest to Otjiwarongo.

"As the crow flies, it is about 18 km from Otjiwarongo, or about 30 km by road.

"We noticed there is movement in the camp, but there are no cattle in the camp," he said.

He says he sent 15 people in to search the camp and came across all the wire snares and dead chamois.

"We brought out the meat that was still hanging in the trees to dry. The people ran away because they realized we were there. We followed the tracks all the way back to Otjiwarongo in the informal settlement," he said.

"While we were busy here, they were busy elsewhere on my farm trying to steal some of my water pumps. I took great care and luckily they couldn't steal it, but there is a lot of damage that needs to be repaired.

"We are heavily targeted by thieves. I lose cattle every year. We measured some of the cattle thieves walked 46 km to me - with things he carried on his back. The people are very determined," he said.

STRUGGLE

"I always say to farmers, we must not lose heart, but we are fighting a battle. It makes a guy a little discouraged," he said.

Botha says that if the police came out and documented the case, one would never hear about it again. He says the problem with private security initiatives is that everyone is a volunteer and everyone has their own full-time job.

He believes the only way to catch the game thieves is with a helicopter or a dog, which also present challenges.

"All we can do at the moment is maintain a presence on our farms."

He says that when farmers report stolen water pumps, for example, the police always ask if they have insurance. If this is the case, they consider you have been helped and they do not need to make further efforts to investigate the matter.

Botha says in the meantime insurance companies are becoming more and more reluctant to insure this type of farm equipment.

He says that kapana sellers on Otjiwarongo's streets have openly admitted to him that they sell the meat of stolen cattle.

Botha says he is afraid it will reach the point where thieves will no longer have any fear of them, because they know nothing can actually be done about them.

"It can get to the point where we catch him slaughtering an animal, and he just gets up and walks away. My workers will not catch him because they are afraid because he has a panga with him. I can't run into him, I'm 65 years old," he said.

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