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- 'AVIS TIMBER POACHING' TO BE INVESTIGATED, SAYS COW



Grass harvested in the Avis neighborhood in Windhoek. PHOTOS PROVIDED.

'AVIS TIMBER POACHING' TO BE INVESTIGATED, SAYS COW

Lorry loads of grass, wood apparently already driven away

The municipal spokesperson said that no permit issued to harvest grass also allows the collection of wood.

Elvira Hattingh

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The Windhoek municipality (CoW) says it will investigate after receiving complaints about grass, trees and wood being harvested illegally in the vicinity of the Avidam.

This follows after Republikein received a complaint and photos from a concerned Avis resident, who claims that persons who have a permit to harvest grass on the sidewalks have also apparently already driven lorry loads of grass and wood away from Avidam.

Andreas Voigt provided photos of people who apparently recently drove away wood and grass with a "ten-ton lorry" from Avis.

He says he has asked the Windhoek city police several times to come and investigate, but says the police "often cannot interpret the permit", or they do not know what to do or simply stand by and watch the vehicles being loaded. become

"It is obvious how even the wildlife in the area is becoming less," says Voigt. "Windhoek's natural resources are being severely stripped."

Vera Freyer, the chairman of Greenspace Namibia who is in charge of the area around the Avidam, agrees that the environment is being stripped.

"The people make no distinction between the trees they harvest and whether they are alive or dry," she said.

HARVEST PERMITS FOR GRASS

"No permit issued to harvest grass also allows the collection of wood," said the municipal spokesperson, Lydia Amutenya.

She says the municipality has not received "any prominent complaints" about the specific case that was reported to the newspaper, but that they will nevertheless investigate the incident.

"The illegal harvesting of wood is a problem in several areas around our city. We observe this when public areas are investigated for forest control and remains of trees that have been cut

down are found," she said.

MAY NOT CUT TREES

She made it clear, however, that permits issued for the collection of wood clearly indicate that only dry wood may be collected in Windhoek's riverbeds.

"No trees may be cut down for timber. In addition, people are only allowed to drive away – at most – a bakkie load full of (dry) wood," she said.

Amutenya says that although dry wood is also available in public places such as Avis, the fact remains that municipal permits only allow people to collect dry wood for their own use.

"The permits are mostly issued to the residents of informal settlements who use the wood to make fire and cook food."

REPORT IT

Amutenya says the municipality lacks manpower to actively monitor whether residents are collecting wood and grass correctly - according to their permits.

"The city council is committed to protecting the city's biodiversity and promoting a healthy ecosystem.

"In cases where permit holders cut down trees, they violate the conditions of the permit. Residents are encouraged to report such cases to our customer service center (061 290 3777 or 061 290 2594 or by email enquiry@windhoekcc.org.na)," she said.

"All persons who apply for permits are informed that they may be used badly for animal feed. Many of the people are elderly who want to assist drought-stricken farmers and look for grass to feed their livestock.

"We allow this, because it may also reduce the occurrence of fires in and around Windhoek," she said.

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