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Horses



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## HORSES ROPED INTO RHINO PROTECTION FIGHT

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This year, 39 rhinos have been poached so far in Namibia, compared to 92 in 2022 and 50 in 2021.

Tourism minister Pohamba Shifeta presented these figures at the commemoration of World Rhino Day on Friday at Okaukuejo in Etosha National Park.

At the event, the minister also officially launched a horse anti-poaching unit.

A total of 13 horses have been purchased by the ministry for N\$10 000 each, with funding support from the Game Product Trust Fund.

Faster

Eight horses will be stationed in Etosha National Park, while five will be stationed in Waterberg Plateau Park.

Shifeta said that horse-mounted patrols will help them cover more patrol distances, give them the ability to carry more equipment than on foot patrols, and provide superior off-road mobility and tracking ability compared to vehicles.

“Rangers on horseback can travel faster than foot patrols, yet more silently than vehicle patrols and provide superior visibility from the horseback vantage point.”

He said with horses, their response time will be much shorter than for foot patrols, and they will pose an intimidating presence to would-be illegal actors.

“Over the years, we observed horse-mounted incursions for illegal activity taking place in Etosha National Park, and the culprits managed to evade arrest due to their superior speed and mobility through harsh terrain.”

Stronger

Shifeta said mounted patrol teams will be on equal footing with horse-mounted incursions and thus increase the potential for successful apprehension.

He said deploying a combination of the horse unit, dog unit, air wing (helicopter), fixed-wing patrols, foot patrols, CCTV, intelligence gathering and drones will help Namibia improve and enhance the protection of rhinos from illegal activities.

According to him, illegal hunting for rhino horn is primarily responsible for the crash in black rhino numbers in Africa, from around 100 000 animals in the 1960s to a low of about 2 410 in 1995.