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Horses

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HORSES SADDLED FOR RHINO CONSERVATION

New anti-poaching unit established

The ministry bought a total of 13 horses at N\$10,000 each, with financing from the Wildlife Products Trust Fund.

Yandy Du Plessis

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

The Minister of the Environment, Forestry and Tourism, Pohamba Shifeta, shared these figures at the commemoration of World Rhino Day on Friday at Okaukuejo in the Etosha National Park.

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

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FASTER

Eight horses will be stationed in the Etosha National Park and five in the Waterberg Plateau Park.

Shifeta said horse patrols would help them patrol over greater distances, give them the ability to carry more equipment than patrols done on foot, and provide superior mobility and tracking ability compared to vehicles.

"Rangers on horseback can move faster than those patrolling on foot, but at the same time move more quietly than vehicle patrols and have an excellent vantage point from the horse's back."

He said with horses, their response time would be much shorter than with foot patrols, and they would be an intimidating presence to would-be criminals.

"Over the years, we have observed criminals entering the Etosha National Park on horseback, and the culprits have managed to evade arrest due to their superior speed and mobility over rough terrain."

STRONGER

Shifeta said patrol teams on horseback would be on par with criminals moving in the same manner, thereby increasing the potential for successful arrests.

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

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