


PRETORIA NEWS / NEWS

*Dr Gerhardus Scheepers with a rhino bull in the Pilanesberg National Park.*

## Park forced to de-horn rhino to curb poaching

By Staff Reporter  23h ago



PRETORIA - The rhino of the Pilanesberg National Park have been de-horned.

The Pilanesberg National Park and Wildlife Trust announced horn trimming was a “drastic measure” to save rhino in the park from further poaching.

In a statement the park said the decision by North West Parks was not taken lightly. "It was not something we wanted to do, but rather needed to do. It broke us as much as it will you when you get to visit, but it is something we need to get used to."

Pilanesberg is an important home to white and black rhino, and animals from Pilanesberg have been used to establish new populations in other South African reserves and in Botswana.

But, for the past seven years the park had been plagued with poaching, and the park had lost 120 rhino in this period.

This impacted the rhino population which had been in decline.



*The inside of a dehorned rhino horn.*

The de-horning was done during lockdown and assisted by veterinary service experts who arrived in the park on May 12 and worked systematically through the park "trimming the horns of all black and white rhinos, males and females and calves" following established protocols for the procedure.

They also were able to tend to old gunshot wounds and other injuries.

The management said studies had shown rhino were not impacted by the removal of their horn, but they would be monitored closely for any signs of behavioural changes.

Bulls use their horns to defend territory and dominance while cows use theirs to defend their calves.

“Although we would prefer rhinos to have their horns and roam safely without any threat, the horn trimming operation was necessary to relieve the pressure of poaching,” the statement read.

The size and terrain of the Pilanesberg and its location close to provincial roads made it vulnerable to poaching. In addition to the de-horning, the parks board is also increasing security efforts in Pilanesberg.

The cost of the operation is valued at around R2m, and was made possible thanks to sponsorships from various rhino and other wildlife foundations, while the pilots and crew offered their services free of charge to support the parks staff. Staff Reporter

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