



PRETORIA NEWS NEWS

Vehicle used to transport pangolin skins forfeited to state



A file picture of a pangolin recovered by police. Picture: SAPS

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Pretoria - The court has once again proved that those who illegally trade in exotic animals will feel the full brunt of the law.

It ordered a vehicle which transported two pangolin skins forfeited to the State.

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The National Prosecuting Authority in the Northern Cape, sitting in Kimberley, issued the order in favour of the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) after it concluded that the vehicle was used as an instrument to commit an offence as it transported the skins.

This was an application in terms of the Prevention of Organised Crime Act for the forfeiture of a white Opel Corsa.

The vehicle was earlier subjected to a preservation order issued by the court, which was not followed by the forfeiture order.

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Egidius Hausiku, a Namibian, who is the owner of the vehicle, claimed he had no idea that there were pangolin skins in the boot of his car.

The court was told that in January 2021, the police's endangered species unit received a report from an informer that two men intended to sell two pangolin skins for about R400 000. They were apparently willing to reduce the price because one of the skins did not have a tail.

The SAPS obtained permission to engage in an undercover operation, and gathered at a casino where the informer said the deal was going to be concluded. They met four suspects – all Namibians, who included the owner of the car.

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One told the police that they had two pangolin skins and opened the boot of the car to show an officer the skins, which were kept under the luggage. One weighed 2.60kg and the other 0.85kg.

One of the men priced the skins at R500 000, but he said they were willing to accept R400 000.

The rest of the undercover officers swooped on the men and found the skins and two knives which were used to skin the animals.

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A Tshwane University of Technology professor told the court that pangolins were under severe threat of extinction. A live pangolin is estimated to be worth nearly R1 million.

The two animal skins were identified as those of Temminck's Pangolin species. Based on their weight, they were of an adult and a pub pangolin.

The court was told that Temminck's pangolins were listed as vulnerable in the latest Red listings for mammals of South Africa as their population continued to decline due to increased poaching.

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