

# Drop in South Africa's rhino poaching linked to dehorning programmes



Item 1 of 2 A rhino and her calf, among over 2000 rhinos sold to African Parks, are seen in captivity ahead of the rewilding process planned for the next 10 years, starting later this year, at a farm outside Klerksdorp, South Africa, March 12, 2024. REUTERS/Siphiwe Sibeko/File Photo [1/2]A rhino and her calf, among over 2000 rhinos sold to African Parks, are seen in captivity ahead of the rewilding process planned for the next 10 years, starting later this year, at a farm outside Klerksdorp, South Africa, March 12, 2024. REUTERS/Siphiwe Sibeko/File Photo [Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab](#)

JOHANNESBURG, Aug 1 (Reuters) - South Africa recorded 229 rhinos poached in the first half of 2024, a slight decline from the same period last year, and the government said global cooperation is essential to save the rare animals.

Poaching poses the biggest threat to the rhino population in South Africa where at least one rhino is killed for their horns every day. Rhino horns - made primarily of keratin, a protein also found in human hair and fingernails - are prized in some East Asian countries for traditional medicine and jewellery.

While the decline in poaching was only marginal, environment minister Dion George said there had been a significant drop in numbers in the months of May and June due to dehorning programmes carried out in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province.

"This reduced loss is thought to be attributable to ... specifically in Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park where over 1,000 rhinos have been dehorned since April 2024," he said in a statement.

Twenty-one and 22 rhinos were poached in May and June respectively, compared to 42 and 34 in the same months last year.

Poachers - who collaborate with international crime syndicates - shifted their focus to KZN in recent years after surveillance and dehorning programmes were stepped up in the country's famous Kruger National Park.

"Given the organised and transnational nature of the crimes involved, ongoing engagement and cooperation with other countries is essential," the environment ministry said, adding that South

African authorities had engaged with representatives from countries including China, Singapore and Vietnam.

South Africa, which resembles a rhino's head on a map, is home to around 16,000 rhinos. About half of the total critically endangered black rhinos in Africa and the world's largest population of threatened white rhinos are found in the country.

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