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Four elephants poisoned, tusks removed

Elephants at Hwange National Park

Leonard Ncube, Victoria Falls Reporter

FOUR elephants were found dead, three of them without tusks in Woodlands Farm resettlement area on Monday.

The resettlement area is on the edge of Hwange National Park and the jumbos were

Zimbabwe National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (Zimparks) rangers were called in after a boy who was herding cattle saw the decomposing carcasses at a salt lick.

One of the carcasses still had its tusks intact.

The Environmental Management Agency (EMA) and Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust (VWT) confirmed that cyanide was used after conducting onsite tests.

Zimparks spokesperson Mr Tinashe Farawo confirmed the incident and said investigations were underway. "A team of investigators is on the ground and we are working with other stakeholders including the Environmental Agency (EMA) to decontaminate the area. The carcasses were seen by a boy who was herding cattle and he notified others," said Mr Farawo.

EMA Matabeleland North provincial environment manager Mrs Chipo Mpofu-Zuze said: "We decontaminated the place with help of other stakeholders. Three poisoned salt licks were identified and cyanide granules were removed and the place treated to prevent further death of animals."

Cyanide is a deadly substance used in the mining industry and is abused by illegal hunters who administer it in water bodies, salt licks and fruits to trap animals, especially elephants.

Hundreds of elephants and other species have died at Hwange National Park since 2013 due to cyanide poisoning. In some cases, rangers have recovered oranges laced with cyanide placed strategically on trees so that elephants could eat.

Meanwhile, a 53-year-old man from Mambanje in Dete under Chief Nekatambe has appeared in court charged with unlawful possession of raw ivory after he was found with four elephant tusks.

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