

South Africa: Two rhinos killed and one injured in poaching attack near Paulpietersburg, as poaching crisis intensifies!

In what is being treated as another poaching incident, game rangers at a private reserve near Paulpietersburg discovered two dead rhinos and a third one wounded on Monday. The horns of the two dead rhinos had been removed.

This gruesome discovery follows a previous incident at the same reserve on July 25, when rhinos were also targeted by poachers. In connection with that case, three men – Simanga Mnguni (42), Betwell Baloye (27) and Muziwakhe Nkosi (38) – were arrested and scheduled to face a bail hearing in the Vryheid District Court on August 14. The hearing was postponed at the request of the state prosecutor.

Incidents like these form part of a much larger crisis. Rhino poaching remains one of the most serious conservation threats in South Africa. By mid-year 2025, 195 rhinos had already been killed nationwide, although this was 35 fewer than in the same period last year. KwaZulu-Natal continues to be the hardest-hit province, even though the number of animals lost here has dropped compared to previous years. The Kruger National Park has also seen an increase, with more than 80 rhinos killed last year and dozens more in the first months of this year.

The impact reaches far beyond the loss of the animals themselves. Each poaching case disrupts ecosystems, weakens biodiversity and erodes decades of conservation work. Communities are also affected, as wildlife tourism declines and job opportunities shrink.

Efforts to fight poaching are ongoing. De-horning programmes have shown promising results, with studies suggesting that removing horns safely under veterinary supervision can reduce poaching risk by almost 80%. In addition, polygraph testing for park staff is being used to curb internal collusion, while technology such as drones, thermal cameras and trained dogs gives rangers a better chance of detecting poachers before they strike.

Stronger prosecutions (including heavy sentences for syndicate leaders) and community engagement initiatives that provide jobs and training outside of poaching networks are also proving essential.

While national statistics show a gradual decline, each new attack serves as a reminder that the fight is far from over. The reserve near Paulpietersburg now stands as another painful example of what is at stake and why continued vigilance, innovation and co-operation are needed to protect South Africa's rhinos for future generations.