



1) The vet in the helicopter darts the rhino and then lands nearby. The vehicle response team drives in with the equipment to assist with the operation.



2) The rhino is propped up on its sternum cool. Its eyes are protected by a damp cloth checked by a digital thermometer in its ear. Oximeters are clipped to one ear to provide a pulse rate. The ear is notched and artery forceps applied.

Rhino Darting Exercise

The objectives of this darting exercise are to help identify and monitor the rhino in the conservancy. This involves ear notching, implanting transponder microchips, insertion of radio transmitters and some dehorning.

It requires a team of rhino trackers on the ground, a response team in a vehicle, a fixed wing aircraft. When they get a visual of a rhino they contact the fixed wing plane by radio with the GPS reading. The plane then drops the dart from the helicopter and the response vehicle.

The full procedure outlined above takes about half an hour. It requires a skilled veterinarian but we were fortunate to receive the help of an excellent tracking team from Bubiana Conservancy.

It is estimated that the cost of this procedure is between US\$1000 and US\$1500 for each rhino. The flying time involved. A helicopter costs US\$350 an hour and the fixed wing plane US\$200 an hour. The cost of a darting exercise for 20 rhino was US\$30,000 and I would like to thank The Marwell Trust, SA for funding of this exercise with SBRT & MBRCT.

7) The body condition is scored and recorded. The back and flank is sprayed with yellow dye for future identification from the air. The tranquilliser dart is removed and the puncture holes sprayed with antibiotic. Equipment is packed and cleared away. The anaesthetic antidote is injected. All personnel stand out of range as the rhino recovers quickly and is liable to charge !!!

6) Adhesive is then mixed and poured into the holes to secure the unit in place. An ice pack is applied to overcome excessive heat as the adhesive quickly sets firm.





and sprayed with water to keep it cool. The body temperature is monitored at the rectum. Leads from the pulse monitor are attached to an audible monitor of the pulse rate to control haemorrhage.



3) A blood sample is taken from an ear vein. Microchips are implanted under the skin. A plastic tag with individual number is inserted into one ear. A notch is made in the hoof so that spore can be identified by the trackers.

cy. This is done by tranquillising the rhino and lifting it.

craft and a helicopter. When the ground trackers find the rhino then helps follow the rhino and guide in the field.

acked up by an experienced support team. We have a team of trackers and a support team.

started, the cost is dependent on the amount of fuel. The total cost for the Midlands Conservancy, Wildlife Australia and the IRF who helped share the cost.

4) The smaller horn is removed



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5) The horn is drilled to receive the transmitter and the aerial antennae.

