



Plans to safeguard our rhinos

by Pelham Jones

“It is essential that the value of rhino be restored, it is a disgusting fact that currently a rhino is worth more dead than alive! I appeal for owners and custodians of private rhino herds to become more proactive and involved - not only within WRSA/PROA, but in your area security and reaction plan.”

The WRSA Private Rhino Owners Association attended two important workshops in March to address the ongoing poaching crisis of rhino in Southern Africa.

At the first, convened by EWT, we mainly discussed issues around the possible legal trade in rhino horn and dehorning. The second was the IUCN/SSC African Rhino Specialist Group Meeting held at Mokalala National Park at Kimberly.

The following proposals and resolutions resulted from these two meetings.

TOPS legislation

- There is an urgent need for certain elements of the TOPS (threatened or protected species) legislation to be reviewed and amended.
- An application should be submitted for an amnesty period to allow for individuals who have not registered rhino horn stocks to do so without prosecution.
- There is a need for the improved and uniform application of this legislation by the various provincial offices.

- A centralised secure national permitting office is required.
- The issue of rhino horn storage should be discussed and finalised.

Firearms

The urgent assistance of the minister of environmental affairs is required with regard to the unacceptable delay in the issuing of firearm licences, especially to accredited companies for anti-poaching use.

CITES

The process as resolved at the DEA Ministers Summit should be driven and feedback on the progress of this should be provided to members.

Statistics

Members and the media should be provided with the latest information on rhino poaching, related arrests, court rolls and convictions.



A rhino being dehorned



A rhino with its horns just cut off

Legalised trade in rhino horn

There has been consensus that legalised trade should be fully investigated and should be supported. To achieve this, a number of actions have to be achieved:

- Per the resolution of CoP 15 in November 2009, there has to be a credible database of rhino populations and data on horn stockpiles. To achieve this, all private owners have to be registered and provide the information required. This data will be held in a secure database in which properties and owners are not identified by name, but by a code for security reasons.
- Only once stocks are registered will individuals be able to trade their horns. Without proof of ownership and horn registration, the horns will be regarded

as 'blood horns,' which cannot be legally sold. Members will be advised on the process shortly and owners will be encouraged to register. This data will be used for scientific analysis, and as more animals are captured on the DNA databank, this will further help with investigations and the conviction of poachers. The DEA have stated that only once they have established a credible database, will they lift the current moratorium.

Dehorning

Dehorning should only be done as a last resort. With the need to leave a horn base and the regrowth that occurs, there will always be enough horn on the animal to satisfy a poacher. **WR**