

# Improving our dogs' tracking skills

As the Head of the Canine Unit at Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, I oversee the dog training within Lewa and outside in the community area. I am very happy to lead this elite team of dogs and handlers, all working tirelessly and putting their lives at risk to protect wildlife and communities.

**Joseph Piroris** | Third-in-Charge of Anti-Poaching Unit and Commander of K9 Unit, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy

**O**ur dogs are on the frontline of conservation efforts within Lewa, and are also frequently deployed beyond Lewa's boundaries, responding to emergency calls from the communities surrounding Lewa and other conservancies.

Thanks to our Unit's efforts, security incidents, including rhino poaching, have reduced significantly. Our dogs are not only heroes of conservation, but our communities similarly recognise and appreciate their commitment to fighting against road banditry, stock theft, attacks on tourists and other issues.

Our training sessions take place every day, with the exception of Sunday, which is the general cleaning time for the kennels and dogs. When exercising on the long trails within the Conservancy, our dogs enjoy tracking the scent over a long distance through the long grasses.

Through the good relationship we have with our neighbouring communities, our K9 Unit also carries out exercises, day and night, within community areas. Training in these areas is extremely challenging for the dogs due to the increased human activity, causing many distractions. Training in such situations improves our tracking capabilities, making the Unit more effective when deployed.

Recently, a number of our dog handlers participated in an exchange programme in South Africa. South Africa is known to have excellent canine teams and the experience significantly improved our handlers' capabilities. Our rangers learned advanced skills, including tracking at night and emergency First Aid while on an operation, as well as improving their understanding of anti-poaching operations within a protected area.



Canine teams are rapidly expanding across Africa, becoming more important than ever to stop poaching and reduce overall crime.

Since 2018, we've supported a continental workshop to share knowledge between dog units across Africa.



Members of our team were also looking forward to attending the Lusaka-based Working Dog Workshop, organised by Save the Rhino and others, scheduled for May 2020, but unfortunately it had to be postponed due to Covid-19.

In previous years, these workshops have been extremely helpful, providing an opportunity for our team to share knowledge and experiences with people from all walks of life. This collaboration is crucial to ensure that our teams are able to excel, helping us to protect wildlife and our local communities.



MARTIN BUZORA

LEWA WILDLIFE CONSERVANCY