

# NEWSLETTER JUNE

Dear clients,

This newsletter is all about rhinos. At the end of April, a rhino calf without mother was found on a Namibian game farm. We will tell you a bit more about his story. Recently we have dehorned rhinos. A sad thing, but very important to do. Furthermore, Wildlife Vets Namibia now has its own YouTube channel, we hope you enjoy watching our videos from our work. We hope you have a good month so far, take care!

Kind regards, Ulf

## RHINO CALF

26 April a 3-month old bull calf was found on a game farm without its mom. As calves are with their mother 24h until around 18 months, this meant bad news... A search operation was started, and soon the mother was found dead. She seemed to have died of natural causes about 3 to 4 days earlier and the calf was badly dehydrated. As Ulf was on his way to the DRC, Dr HO Reuter came over and immobilized the calf. The calf was taken into a trailer, got several supportive drugs and was placed on multiple drips. Every two hours the calf was given a bottle, which it did not really want to take. The next day the calf starting to look better and started to take the bottle.

Bonding is of utmost importance for the survival of the rhino calf. They are very dependent on their mother, so the caretakers had to take over that role. By spending lots of time with the calf, talking to him and sleeping with him, he soon trusted the caretakers. Once the calf was stable, it was moved to a boma facility. The calf was now named ISAP-HoRN, after the two organizations who are supporting and sponsoring the calf.

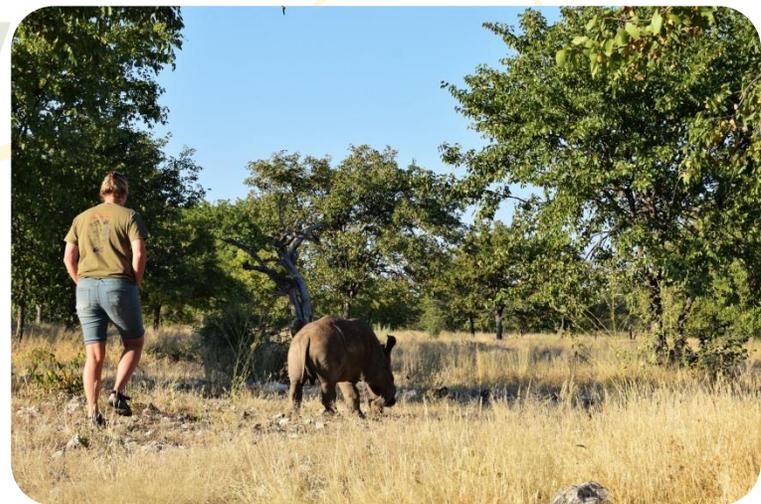


At this stage the calf got 1 litre of Fat-Free milk, supplemented with glucose and Protexin® every two hours. He also received multivitamins once a day and ate a bit of lucern. The calf looked much better since being in the boma and would happily walk around.



When he was fully relaxed in his boma, the caretakers started to take him outside for walks, and he loves it! The walking is very important to gain muscle strength, and to keep his digestion going. Outside of the boma he is also able to eat grass. Every couple of days he gets a nice mud bath. The mud helps the rhino to keep cool, and protects the skin against sun burn and parasites. The calf also got a new friend to keep him company, a sheep.

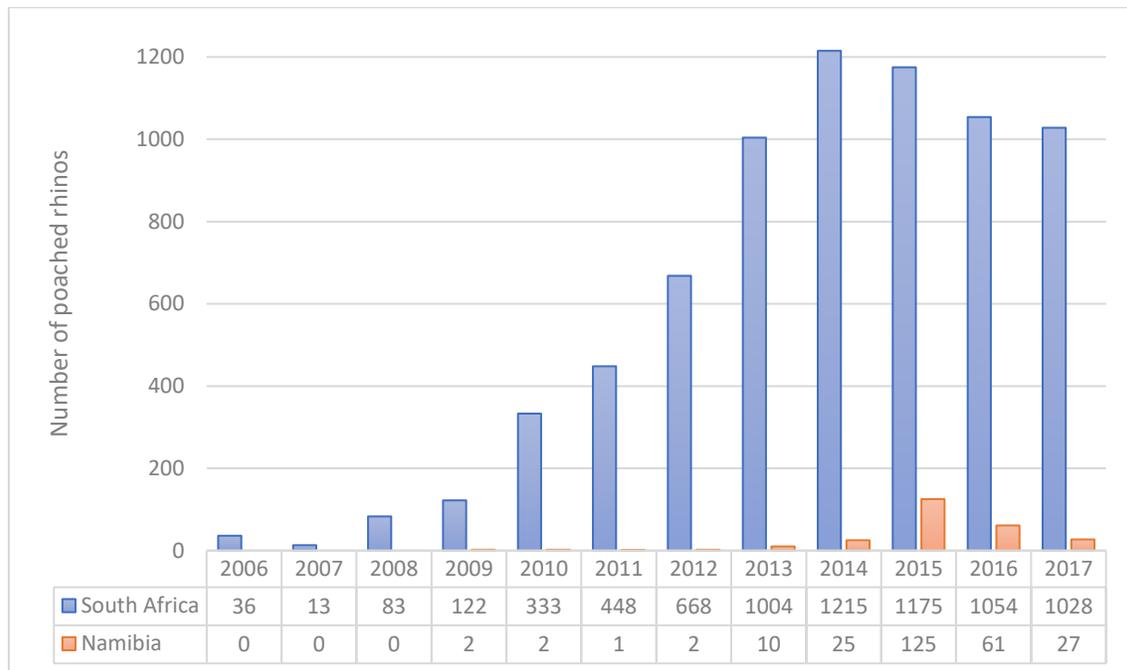
The calf is currently doing very well. Ulf had a look at him, and he is in great condition. He now drinks 3.75 litres, 6 times a day. As you can imagine, it is very costly and time consuming to raise a rhino calf. He will need milk until he is about 18 months old, by which time he will drink about 24 litres a day. If you want to support ISAP (Intelligence Support Against Poaching) via [www.isap.com.na](http://www.isap.com.na) or their [Facebook-page](#).



***\* Wildlife Vets Namibia did not participate in this operation, besides the fact that Mariska, my assistant, helped the team with taking care of the calf for the first two weeks. All credits to the team who takes care of the rhino, Dr HO Reuter, HoRN and ISAP! \****

## DEHORNING RHINOS

Recently we have dehorned several rhinos. The African rhinos are in crisis at the moment due to the low population numbers, and the high amount of poaching. Dehorning is one of the methods used to discourage poachers.



**Recorded number of rhinos poached in South Africa and Namibia between 2006 – 2017. Note that the number for Namibia (2017) was established in October, and the actual number may be higher.**

Rhino horn is used in several markets. In Yemen rhino horn is carved into traditional daggers, or jambiya, which act as a status symbol. The biggest market is in Asia. Rhino horn is used in traditional medicine and is regarded to have a range of curative properties, such as hangover relief, fever, rheumatism, gout and stroke. Another big market which is often overlooked is the use of rhino horns in the art and antique markets in Asia, where horn has a symbolic value, and is used as a gift to obtain favours and influence.



The recent rapid increase of the illegal trade of rhino horn is believed to be driven by the demand for rhino horn in especially Vietnam. The rumour that a Vietnamese politician was cured from cancer fueled the promotion of the use of horn for life-threatening diseases. Besides a cure for illnesses, rhino horn is believed to have detoxification properties. Although originally not recognised as such, rhino horn is marketed in Vietnam to cure impotence and to enhance sexual performance. A recent study suggests that horn is now often used as a symbolic gesture to console terminally ill family members. Despite all the medicinal values given to the horn, it is proven that rhino horn has no medicinal properties!

Namibia has been the first country to dehorn their rhinos for protection measures. Between 1989 and 1990 dehorning, combined with more stringent security measures, led to a decline in poaching, and not a single dehorned rhino was poached. Although positive results were obtained in Namibia, dehorning comes with limitations. A stub of horn remains after a rhino is dehorned, which still has sufficient value to result in poaching of dehorned rhinos.

Horn consists of keratin, calcium and melanin, and grows continuously throughout the life of a rhino, at an average rate of 25 to 66 mm per year, depending on sex and age. The dehorning process starts by selecting an individual of which the horn is grown long enough to dehorn. That individual is then darted with an immobilizing drug.



**Watch our  
video about  
the  
dehorning  
procedure  
on [YouTube](#)  
or [Facebook](#)**

*When the drugs start to take effect, the rhino will show several signs; the head is held up high, high stepping gait. Then a mask is placed over his eyes, and the rhino is pushed over, so it lies on its side.*

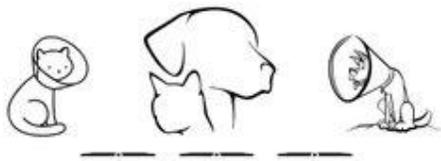
Rhinos are very sensitive for immobilizing drugs; every anaesthesia is a risk for the animal. We use M99 (etorphine) for rhinos. After it has been darted, it must get Butorphanol, another opioid that slightly reverses the effects of M99, which helps the rhino to breath more easily. Then the dehorning process can start. The horns are measured and sawed off. Microchips are placed in the stubs, and ID-photos are taken. An antibiotic is injected in the dart wound, and Rhinovax (a vaccine against anthrax and clostridium infections) is given. At the same time samples such as blood, tissue, horn and hair are taken. This is essential to ensure traceability of a rhino horn (and/or its products) back to an individual animal and farm of origin.

When a rhino is immobilized for the first time, it is wise to collect samples for RhODIS. This is a rhino DNA database, which is run from South Africa's University of Pretoria's Veterinary Genetics Lab (VLG). This lab analyses and collects DNA of rhinos, which in turn can be used in criminal investigations and prosecutions in cases of poaching and/or the trafficking of horn. Over 100,000 samples from 18.000+ individuals are already submitted to RhODIS. When everything is done and collected, the rhino can be woken up again.



## YOUTUBE CHANNEL

Besides Facebook and LinkedIn, Wildlife Vets Namibia is now also on YouTube! We hope you enjoy our videos! Visit our YouTube channel [here](#).



## Rhino Park Veterinary Clinic

### RHINO PARK VETERINARY CLINIC

Rhino Park Veterinary Clinic, owned by Dr Minty Soni, has launched a new website! I am still closely attached to the clinic and when needed, I perform specialized orthopaedic cases or help out in complicated cases. Check out their new website:

[www.namibian-veterinary.com](http://www.namibian-veterinary.com)



*This yellow-billed kite we picked up mid-February on the highway between Windhoek and Okahandja. It's right wing was severely broken. We brought it to the clinic, where I placed a pin in the big fracture. The other fracture would heal on its own. After being cage-rested for a while in the clinic, the bird was taken to NARREC. The bird is doing very well at the moment, he is in a big flight aviary away from the public. As kites are migratory birds, and they have left the country already, he cannot be released yet. When the kites come back, he goes back out into the wild again!*

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