

# NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER

## In this newsletter:

-  [Shedding snakes](#)
-  [Broken horns in antelopes](#)
-  [Game translocation to Angola](#)

Dear clients,

We hope you are well. In this newsletter you can read about why snakes shed their skin, and broken horns in antelopes. We give some background information on horns, how they can break, and what we can do. Lastly, we tell you about our game translocation to Angola that we did in October. We hope you enjoy the newsletter, and have a great day!

Kind regards, the Wildlife Vets Namibia team

## SHEDDING SNAKES

It's hot these days, and we all hope the rains start soon! With the start of the rainy season snakes become more and more active. An interesting feature of snakes is the fact that they shed their skin (also called sloughing). Snakes shed their skin for a simple reason; their skin does not grow, but they do. So as the snake grows, their skin cannot stretch enough, and the snake must shed it off.

Before the skin is shed, the eyes will become milky and the colours of the skin will turn greyish/dull. The change in colour is caused by a lubricant which is secreted by the skin, this helps to separate the old from the new skin. The snake becomes sluggish and more easily irritated. After a few days the old skin around the nose will start to peel off, and the snake moves along rough surfaces and vegetation to get rid of the old skin. The skin peels off like an inside-out sock.

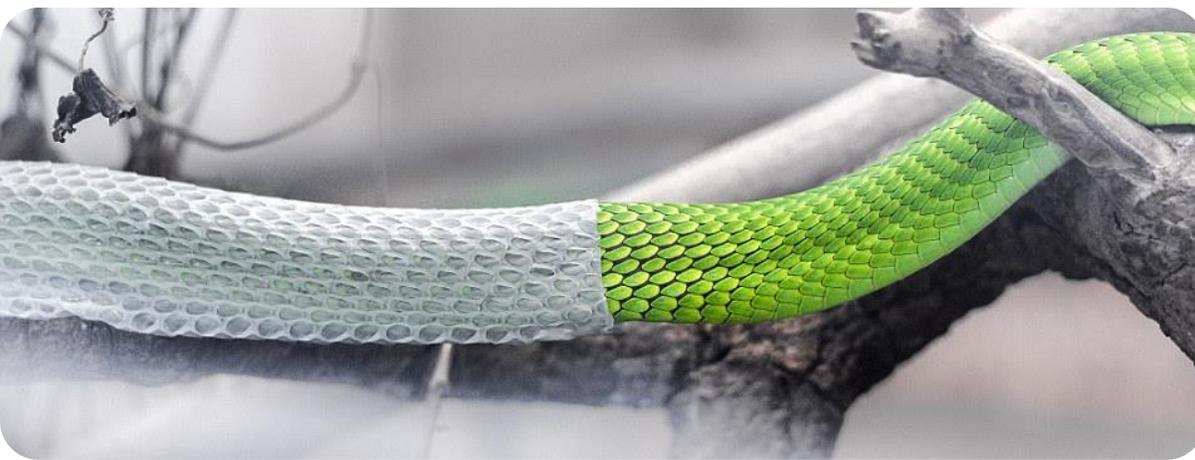
Snakes don't have eyelids like mammals have. Instead, they have special-adapted scales that cover their eyes, called spectacles. When the skin sheds, these spectacles come off as well, and you can see this in the shed skin. The left-over skin mirrors every scale, and experts (when the skin is in good condition) can sometimes even tell from which snake species the skin is!

Since not everybody likes snakes, here some quick tips on how to live along snakes! Make your garden unattractive for snakes; keep (bird) food away so rodents are not attracted and clean up. Make sure that there are no branches, creeping plants etc. near your windows. Prevent snakes from entering your house by having mesh screens in front of doors and windows. When you are in the bush, wear sturdy shoes and watch where you walk, especially in rocky areas.

For more information on snake bites, check our April-newsletter [here](#).



*Young Boomslang, you can clearly see the spectacle that is shed off © [African Snakebite Institute](#)*



*Green mamba in a Tanzanian museum shedding its skin © [Sundukova](#)*

*To see the video of this green mamba shedding, click [here](#)*

## **BROKEN HORNS IN ANTELOPES**

Recently we received an interesting photo (on the right) from one of our clients; he relieved this eland with a massive growth on its horn from its misery. An interesting feature, that used to be quite common in oryx in the past, but now we don't see it that often anymore. We assume that they injured their horns while going under fences and with the many game fences around, oryx creeping under fences may be discouraged.

So, what do we have here...? This eland very likely damaged its horn at a younger age, resulting in excessive/abnormal scarring, which ended up in a tumour-like growth on the horn.

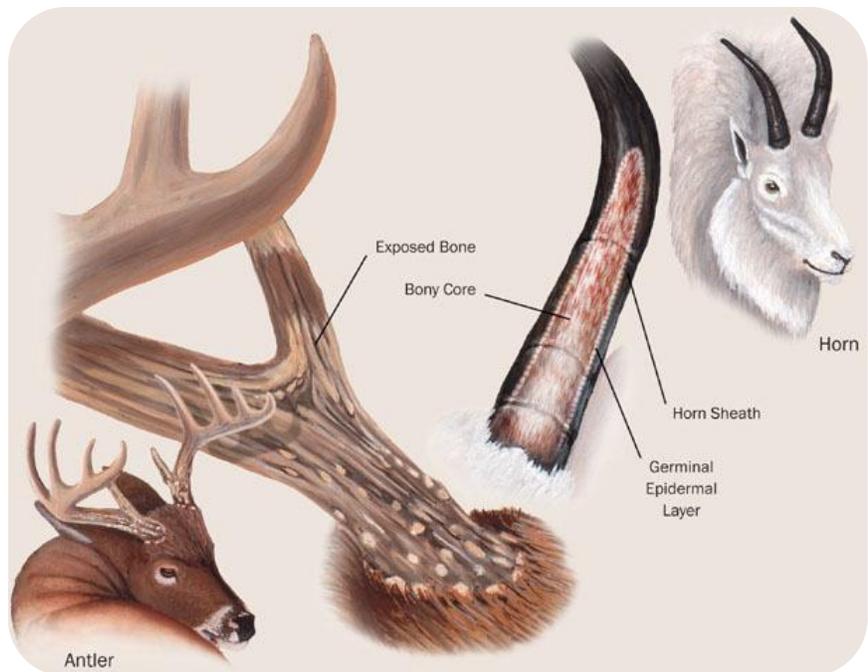


### **Horns or antlers?**

Before we discuss broken horns in more detail, let's go back to the basic anatomy first! Our ungulate species (mammals with hooves) in Africa have horns, while in other parts of the world ungulates often have antlers (e.g. deer).

A horn is a pointy and permanent projection that grows on the head of a wide range of animals (mainly ungulates like antelopes and bovines). On the inside of the horn is a core of live bone, which is covered by a sheath of keratin and other proteins. Horns usually start growing just after birth and keep growing during life.

An antler is an extension of an animal's skull, and is found in species of the deer family. Antlers are made entirely out of bone, and are not permanent. An antler grows from an attachment point on the skull, which is called a pedicle. It starts as cartilage, which is covered by a hairy skin (called velvet). As the cartilage grows, it is replaced by bone tissue. Once the antler has reached its full size, the velvet comes off and the antler's bone dies. The antler is then shed off, and the whole process starts again.



*Difference between horns and antlers © [BioKids/Michigan science art](#)*

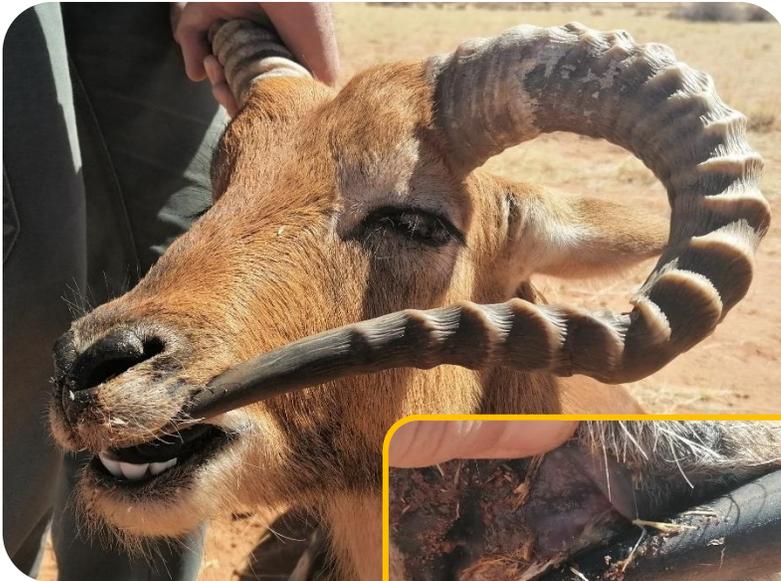
### **How can a horn break?**

Any bone can break, and thus also the bony part inside a horn. This often happens when animals are younger, and the horns are still soft. When we handle young antelope, it is very important that we do not hold the antelope by the (tip of the) horns, as they can easily break. If it breaks, you probably won't notice anything in the beginning, but eventually the horn might grow skew. Therefore, young antelopes must always be held by the ears. Another big possibility for horns to break is during a fight, or horns getting entangled in fences or other structures (feeding grids etc.).

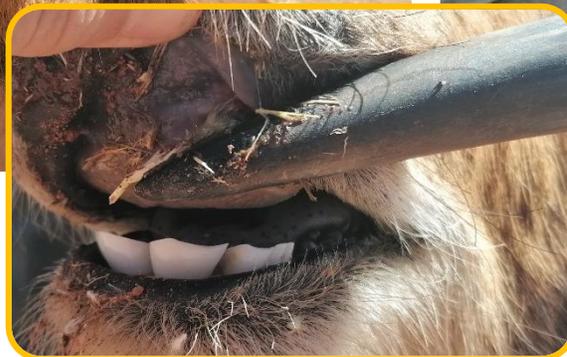
## What to do?

When a horn completely breaks off at the base, it won't regrow anymore. There will be considerable bleeding, and veterinary assistance may be required – the wound can become infected and is very painful, and may extend into the sinuses. Cleaning, a long-acting antibiotic and painkiller is thus advised.

More often it happens that the horn breaks on the inside, but it is not noticed immediately. Then the chance is good that the horn becomes deformed. Sometimes the horn grows towards the head, and this might pose problems later on. As the horn will keep on growing, it will eventually poke into the skull of the animal. Such an animal should be euthanised or veterinary assistance should be called in to cut the horn off.



*The horn of this lechwe ram was growing into the mouth, and pressing against the gums. As the horn keeps growing, it eventually will prevent the lechwe from eating properly. © M. Bijsterbosch*



*The horn of this roan calf was pointing directly towards the skull, and will eventually grow into the skull. © M. Bijsterbosch*

In Namibia, with our vast farms, we don't often do it, but in the more intensive South-African game farms and esp. in high value animals, vets make entire constructions to try to ensure the horn grows properly after it broke. One can use scotch casting to secure the horns, or PVC pipes/droppers with duct tape. The animal should be closely monitored, as it will need to be immobilized several times.

On the photos on the next page you can see various clever techniques utilising metal frames or other support structures to stabilise a broken horn. The aim is to achieve healing with normal horn symmetry, where the non-fractured horn is used as a splint and alignment guide.



Wildebeest ©  
Dr JW Ecksteen

Sable bull © Dr Hendrik Hansen



Sable © Dr  
JW Ecksteen



## GAME TRANSLOCATION TO ANGOLA

In October we translocated a group of lechwes, nyalas and sables from Namibian game farms to a game farm in central Angola. The trip of 2040 km (one way) brought us, via good and bad roads, to a lush and green area. Here you can read about our journey!

### The capture

In total we translocated 10 nyalas, 10 lechwes and 4 sables from two Namibian game farms. The animals were all caught via dart immobilization which afforded us the big advantage that we then can select animals. For long translocations such as this one, and when the area is different than what the animal is used to, we prefer to take young individuals. Young animals travel easier, and adapt better to a new environment. Another advantage is that we have 'hands-on' the animal, and can thus give it a wide range of vitamins, minerals, vaccinations and an anti-fly/tick pour-on, to give them a health booster.

To watch the video of this trip, click [here](#)

Darting lechwes. All photos in this article © M. Bijsterbosch

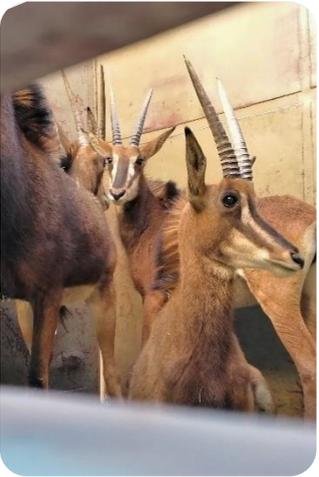
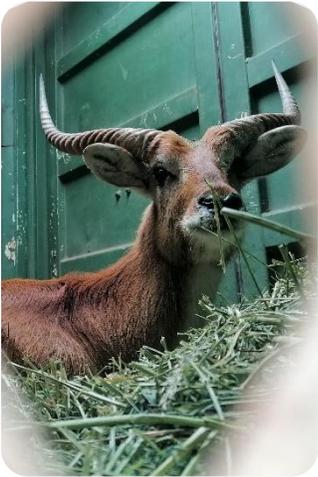


### The road trip

Once all the animals were loaded, we drove to the Namibian border. Close to the border, at a quiet place, we stopped to have some sleep. The next morning, we crossed the Namibian-Angolan border. We fed the animals teff/lucerne and camel thorn pods, and gave water. The border procedure is always a frustrating time...



Luckily for the animals there was a nice breeze, and a friendly Namibian truck driver parked his truck in such a way that our truck could stand in his shade! This saved us from the effort of putting up our truck shade nets. Late afternoon we were on our way into Angola! We drove past Lubango, where we found a nice place to sleep. The animals got some food and water again, and we could also catch a few hours of sleep.



*From left to right; nyalas ewes, nyala bull, leche ewes, lechwe ram and sables*

We woke up with a nice thick cloud cover and a pleasant temperature. This was good, since the next few 100 km's we had to drive very slow due to all the potholes and cut-out pieces of road. Despite the road issues, Angola is a beautiful country, with big trees and amazing landscapes. Well worth to visit one day!

The animals were doing very well during the trip, we stopped every now and then to check on them, and if needed we gave some extra camel thorn pods. The animals really enjoy these, and a big advantage is that these pods are highly nutritious.

At night we reached the farm, but as it was so dark, we decided to wait a few hours to offload in daylight. The animals were fed again, and were by now very relaxed and used to the feeding routine.



*In many places the road is partly cut out, so the driving went slowly...*

### The release

The time we were all longing for; the release! Early in the morning the trucks were brought into position, and we could release the animals. The sables got off in a nice canter into the green pasture. The lechwes and nyalas got off very relaxed, checking their new area and slowly moving towards the bushes.



We would like to thank the owner and management of the Angolan farm for their trust in our services! We would also give a special thanks to our team members Frederick and Romario, and driver Bertie for joining us on this trip! You can watch our video about this trip [here](#).

DR ULF TUBBESING  
P.O. BOX 50533, BACHBRECHT,  
WINDHOEK  
+264 (0) 81 128 3050  
[ULFT@AFRICAONLINE.COM.NA](mailto:ULFT@AFRICAONLINE.COM.NA)

MARISKA BIJSTERBOSCH  
+264 (0) 81 382 8473  
+31 (0)6 4369 3095 (WHATSAPP)  
[MARISKA@WILDLIFEVETSNAMIBIA.COM](mailto:MARISKA@WILDLIFEVETSNAMIBIA.COM)

[WWW.WILDLIFEVETSNAMIBIA.COM](http://WWW.WILDLIFEVETSNAMIBIA.COM)  
FACEBOOK: [WILDLIFE VETS NAMIBIA](#)  
YOUTUBE: [WILDLIFE VETS NAMIBIA](#)

