



WILDLIFE RANCHING

WRSA PUBLICATION FOR THE WILDLIFE RANCHING INDUSTRY

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Bedreigde diere
yl gesaai

The demand for
rhino horn

Optimism prevails

The R9,2 million paid for a buffalo bull at an auction met with a lot of disbelief by a number of people. Informed sources are, however, not that surprised and believe it is a fair indication of where the commercial game ranching industry is going. What a way to end the successful game season of 2010! Congratulations to the new owners Cyril Ramaphosa and Piet du Toit.

The future of the game industry in South Africa is, however, not only dependent on how expensive we can sell our game. It also lies in how effectively we can uplift our industry with the full participation of emerging farmers and investors. Mr Ramaphosa is an excellent example, but we need many more. We also need all South African marginal-income farmers to become successful commercial game farmers. This is the challenge for every member of WRSA: to see on what basis to participate to make the above a success.

White dominance must be broken and we must make the game farming industry an example of a well-transformed agricultural sector by making it accessible through creating mentorships to assist emerging

game farmers. Community involvement, which sometimes can be a nightmare, should be investigated and accessed. Let us make this our goal for 2011. We should likewise become involved in training at a very basic local level with all our schools to teach all the children of South Africa the benefits of game farming and to create a love for the use of it, including hunting.

WRSA has applied to our newly appointed minister of environmental affairs, the honourable Edna Molewa, for a central safekeeping facility for rhino horn which originates from deaths other than poaching. We will then be issued with a receipt. At some stage, everybody will realise that the only way we can stop the brutal killing and poaching of rhino will be by opening legal centralised trade in the same way as with ivory.

On behalf of all the directors and management of WRSA we would like to wish you all a prosperous new year. May you return fresh for all the challenges of 2011. **WR**

Greetings
Jacques Malan

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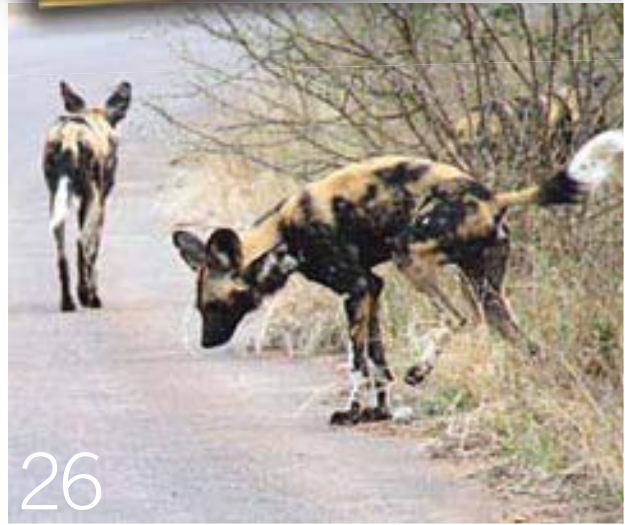
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ERRATUM

In ons vorige uitgawe was daar 'n artikel oor die gewildheid van buffels, voorsien deur Johan Rabie van Chimoyo Game Ranch. Ons het berig dat 'n paar infeksies voorgekom het by ongeveer 6 500 buffels, wat moontlik verkeerd geïnterpreteer kan word. Waar gesels is oor siektes, wou Johan sê dit word uitstekende beheer maar ook dat daar wel 'n paar deurbraakinfeksies voorgekom het onder 'n baie klein persentasie van die ongeveer 6 500 buffels wat hul oorsprong uit die projekte gehad het. Ons hoop om enige onduidelikheid oor die aanleentheid hiermee uit die weg te ruim.



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Redakteursbrief

Die afgelope maande word ons oorval met mediaberigte oor onwettige jag op renosters, 'n absurditeit wat steeds aan die toeneem is en wat niks positiefs vir ons land se beeld in die buiteland kan meebring nie.

Ons moet egter erkenning gee aan formele en informele beskermingseenhede wat hulle vingers op die pols hou en hul beste lewer om te probeer verseker dat hierdie grusame misdaad nie verder handuit ruk nie. Dit is verblydend dat verskeie arrestasies gemaak is en dat gemeenskappe oor die algemeen meer by natuurbewaring betrokke raak. 'n Voorval in November verlede jaar op Mookgophong (Naboomspruit) waar 'n verdagte gearresteer is, is 'n baie goeie voorbeeld. Die arrestasie was grootliks te danke aan die gemeenskap se bereidwilligheid om betrokke te raak en te help. Wildboere word sterk aangeraai om by hulle plaaslike wildbelangegroep aan te sluit en aktief betrokke te raak.

In hierdie uitgawe kyk ons veral na die benarde posisie waarin die renoster hom bevind en loer ook na wildehonde, die groot swartwitpens, luiperds en die gebruik van radiohalsbande. Ons het ook 'n tweede aflewering oor die polemieë rondom jag in die land. Die belang van goeie heinings en herwinning van die graslaag kry ook aandag.

Ek wens graag al ons lesers en lede 'n voorspoedige nuwe jaar toe. In besonder wil ek ook die direksie en onderskeie voorsitters bedank vir hul tyd en ondersteuning gedurende verlede jaar, maar ook byvoorbaat vir die jaar wat voorlê en waarin ons reeds staan.

Reinhardt Holtzhausen

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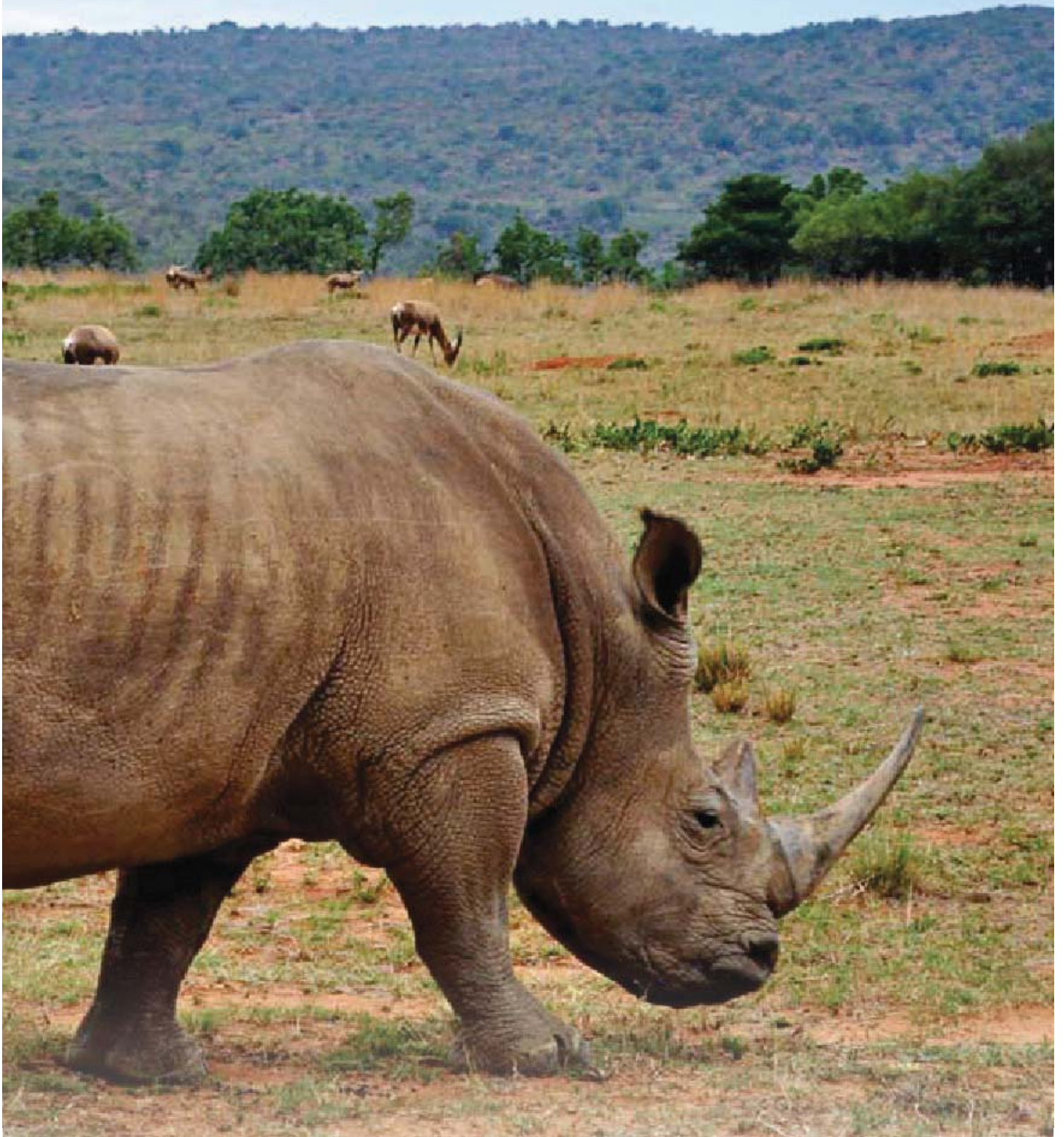
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The demand for rhino horn: **past, present and future**

by Michael 't Sas-Rolfes



The recent onslaught of South Africa's rhinos has stirred up much concern and controversy.

Rhino poaching is not a new problem in Africa, but the intensity of the current wave has caught most South Africans off guard. What is actually driving this poaching? We hear talk of aphrodisiacs, greed, corruption and criminal syndicates, but what is the real truth behind the incredible demand for rhino horn, now alleged to be more valuable than gold?

First, let us get one fact straight: rhino horn is not used as an aphrodisiac. In the past, some tribal people in India supposedly used it for that purpose, but that has never been its main use. A sensation-seeking journalist reported on this in the mid-1970s and the myth has persisted ever since, which just goes to show that sometimes the media gets it very wrong for very long.

The two main uses for rhino horn are medicinal and ornamental. Rhino horn is one of four key ingredients in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), to be used in cases of extreme illness. It is considered to have fever-reducing and detoxifying properties and is prescribed as an ingredient to treat a whole range of ailments. In Yemen and Oman, rhino horn is used to make traditional dagger handles. These handles are also made using other substances, but rhino horn is highly prized because it has unique aesthetic properties, which improve with age and handling.

The traditional use of rhino horn for medicine and ornaments dates back thousands of years. How did this come about? Interestingly, it seems that rhino meat formed a central part of the diet of some of our hunter-gatherer ancestors. Even as recently as the 19th century, the early Dutch settlers hunted South Africa's once abundant white rhinos to near extinction

for their meat, which was said to be the finest of all game meat. No doubt the early Chinese also hunted rhinos for meat, and then started using various different body parts for medicinal and ornamental purposes. Rhino horn appears in written Chinese pharmacology references dating back to about 2 000 years ago.

Traditional practice

So what are the prospects of ending a traditional practice that is entrenched in so much history? Many Westerners believe that TCM has no scientific basis and argue that rhino horn has not been proven to work, and that Asian consumers must be educated to change their practices. After all, why not simply replace rhino horn with aspirin?

“The traditional use of rhino horn for medicine and ornaments dates back thousands of years”

Unfortunately, things are not that simple. A patient seeking TCM may not be interested in taking Western pharmaceuticals. TCM is a wholly different system of healing, based on restoring energetic flows and balance in the body, and using techniques such as acupuncture and preparations made with natural herbs and animal products.

We can observe something similar here in South Africa, where traditional healing methods still thrive alongside Western medicine. Sangomas and their methods still have a prominent place in modern African society, and so it is with TCM practitioners in China. In tackling the belief of rhino horn as medicine,

we cannot simply substitute one product for another – we are effectively trying to change the long-standing traditions and culture of a sizable portion of the world’s population.

Not only is this change unlikely to happen anytime soon, but TCM is making inroads into Western society. A few months ago, the Australian former supermodel, Elle MacPherson, caused a stir by claiming to use rhino horn as part of her TCM repertoire (she subsequently retracted this). Twenty years ago, conservationists argued that a younger generation of Chinese would embrace medicine based on science, and that TCM practices such as the use of rhino horn would disappear. At that time, African rhino horn retailed at approximately US\$3 000 per kilogram in East Asia; today, its retail value is alleged to be between US\$40 000 and \$60 000.

Those conservationists were wrong. Not only do TCM practices persist, but also the economic and cultural ascendancy of China and its neighbouring countries means that

people’s disposable incomes are rising, and the demand for rhino horn has in fact increased, whereas the demand for new rhino horn dagger handles appears to have abated.

Given that the latter demand appears to be deep-seated and widespread, we need to consider two questions. First, what is likely to happen to this demand in the next decade or two? Second, if



Michael 't Sas-Rolfes

demand does not decline, then what are the implications for rhino conservation, how do we deal with the prospect of continued increases in rhino horn prices and consequent increasing incentives to poach them? **WR**

Thaba Manzi Wildlife Services

Our family run business offers 23 years of experience to the client!

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