

NEWSLETTER

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SAVE RHINOS, TO SAVE PEOPLE, TO SAVE TOMORROW



SPIRIT GIVES BIRTH: 7th CALF BORN AT CARE FOR WILD

In the early hours of September 3rd, 2023, an unexpected miracle arrived. Spirit gave birth to her first calf. This incredible moment marked a joyous and very important step in Spirit's journey. Spirit has undergone a complex rehabilitation process, with the team fighting for her life every day. From the tiny, terrified orphan who lost her own mother to poachers, she has transformed into a strong and fiercely protective mother herself. We are immensely proud of this very special girl so let's take a moment to remind ourselves of just how far she has come.

Special thank you and acknowledgement to Spirit Wildlife Foundation and Sirius Group for their long term and unwavering support of Spirit





LET'S REVISIT SPIRIT'S STORY...

On the 17th November 2016, a rhino calf was spotted alone in the northern region of the Sabi Sand Game Reserve. Discovered by Edwin Pierce on Arathusa Farm near the border of the Kruger National Park (KNP), the baby was estimated to be around 7 months old. It is believed that she was running alone in the bush for three days before she was discovered.

Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) Veterinarian, Dr Ferreira du Plessis, darted the calf. She ran towards a nearby waterhole and fell into the mud. Fortunately the ground team were close on hand to pull the baby to safety. She was very thin. With the severe drought, food had been scarce and it looked as though Spirit, as she would later be named, had virtually no fat reserves. She was placed on drips for the journey to Care for Wild Rhino Sanctuary where Petronel was waiting to receive the new orphan.

Spirit took a little while to accept the bottle but as soon as she began to drink, staff knew that they had won her trust. Her blindfold and ear plugs were removed and she was introduced to fellow orphans, Zac, Jemu and Grey. Both Jemu and Grey also arrived within the same week as Spirit. Spirit certainly provided a lot of challenges for the team. She was not a strong baby and required a lot of round the clock monitoring and care. Petronel would roll up small balls of grass to hand feed her and with recurring episodes of pneumonia, the team fought for her life every day.

The new crash of 4 soon moved to the bigger bomas and continued through their rehabilitation programme together. As time went on, Spirit grew a lot stronger and in April 2018, 5 month old Lilli became the fifth member of the crash. Lilli was a few years younger than her new friends but Spirit and the others welcomed her instantly. In January 2019, Spirit and her crash entered the rewilding and release programme together and on the 3rd September 2023, Spirit gave birth to her first calf.





Enhancing Rhino Welfare in Translocation: A Collaborative Milestone in Global Conservation

The conservation of rhinos remains crucial in global efforts to protect keystone species and biodiversity. As part of global conservation initiatives, rhinos are being relocated to protected areas for safety and as part of repopulation efforts. However, rhino translocation presents many challenges which can impact on the success of the project and well being of the animals.

Earlier this month, Care for Wild worked together with the University of Pretoria, South African National Parks, Wildlifevets.com and MTPA on a research project aimed at addressing the issues of dehydration and stress in rhinos during translocation, particularly in long-distance journeys of up to 30-40 hours. These extended trips significantly increase the risk of dehydration. Prior translocation research has shown that rhinos often refuse to drink water during translocation. This project focuses on improving fluid administration methods and reducing stress to enhance the welfare and health of rhinos undergoing translocation and thereby contributing to the overall success of translocation efforts globally.

Professor Leith Meyer, director of the Wildlife Centre at the University of Pretoria, specialises in wildlife capture and translocation, with a particular focus on rhino capture and anesthesia. "To tackle the dehydration problem, the research project explores alternative methods of fluid administration during transport. Two methods are under investigation: intravenous fluids, commonly used by veterinarians, and rectal fluid administration. The objective is to determine the effectiveness of these techniques in maintaining the rhinos' hydration levels.'

Furthermore, the project aims to assess the practicality and feasibility of implementing these fluid administration methods during rhino translocations. If proven effective, these methods could revolutionize rhino transportation practices, greatly improving their' welfare and overall health.

Throughout the transportation process, rhinos experience substantial stress, especially during the capture phase when they are tranquilised. Once safely within the transport crate, they receive tranquilisers to reduce stress and prevent self-injury or crate damage. These tranquilizers are periodically administered during the journey.

"Over the course of 2 weeks, translocation conditions were mimicked at Care for Wild with 3 separate groups of rhinos monitored for 24 hours in transportation crates. This collaborative research project will contribute significantly to ongoing global conservation efforts." Petronel Nieuwoudt.



Special thanks to the team: Prof Leith Meyer, Dr Marion Leiberich, Prof Emma Hooijberg, Dr Ashleigh Donaldson, Dr Thembeke Mtetwa, Dr Sandra Purwin, Dr Emmanuel Macha, Valeska von Mitzlaff, Dr Frederike Pohlin, Dr Peter Buss, Tebogo Manamela, Gait Sterk (MTPA), Dr Chris Smith, Louis Van Wyk (wildlifevets.com)