

Moratorium on bow-hunting lifted

The Professional Hunters Association of South Africa (PHASA) has lifted the moratorium on the hunting of rhino with bow and arrow. The decision lies, however, with the nine provinces to decide if they will allow the hunting of the Big Six - elephants, rhinos, buffalo, lions, leopards and hippos - with bow and arrow.

The committee that investigated bow-hunting determined that strict measures must be adhered to:

* The hunter must be accompanied by an armed professional hunter and nature conservator.

* The weight of the arrow must be at least 850 grams and the bow tension must be 105 vt per pound.

* When an animal is wounded with an arrow, the professional hunter must shoot it immediately.

The ethics of bow-hunting have been questioned by the Elephant Management and Owners' Association (EMOA), as well as the African Rhino Owners' Association (AROA). The following was also said in an article by Walter Mangold: "... I found the local acceptance of this new-found money spinner another blow to the decency of humanity and the dignity of animals ..."

Mr Cobus Schoeman, Deputy Director of Gauteng's Directorate Nature Conservation, is however of the opinion

that the animals do not suffer when they are hunted with bow and arrow. He says that if the animal is hit correctly, the arrow will cut directly through the lungs and other intestines. The animal bleeds to death within a few hours.

He says that only skilled hunters must hunt elephants, rhinos and hippos. A shoulder-blade shot is the only way to kill these animals with their thick skins.

According to him there are in America alone four million registered hunters who will be willing to pay up to R55 000 to kill a white rhino. The money can mean a lot for nature conservation.

Natal Parks Board refutes allegations on rhino poaching

The NPB refuted in a news release on 25 February 1997, all allegations that have been made in the press regarding alleged involvement of game guards in rhino poaching in the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park. "There is no evidence of our game guards being involved in this. There has been neither rhino nor elephant poaching in the park since May 1995", says Tony Conway, Chief

Conservator for Zululand. "Only two arrests have been made over the last 12 months for minor illegal hunting cases in the area, he continues.

According to the Endangered Species Protection Unit (ESPU), indications are that the rhino horn was taken from an animal outside the province. This may only be confirmed once a 'trace element' and 'isotopic' analysis has been conducted. This will reflect the chemical signature of the horn. The Board has also refuted claims that elephant tusks would have been taken from animals in any of its protected areas, as it would not be viable to poach the elephants of their size and youth.

"The existence of a syndicate operating in the park is also refuted," says Mr Conway. The current modus operandi of poachers is erratic and ad-hoc which does not suggest a syndicate type operation. Our supervisor levels and patrol densities are of a high degree and the Board has a full-time law enforcement officer and an anti-poaching unit in the area to ensure that these high standards are maintained," he continues.

Newsflash

The first Nordic born rhino

The first rhino to be born in a Nordic Zoo, made his acquaintance with the world on Wednesday, 15 January 1997. He was born at the Kolmarden Zoo, outside Norrkoping, 140 km west of Stockholm in Sweden. The gestation lasted 17 months.

Two years ago, the calf's mother, Natala, had another calf which died soon after birth.