Bowhunting Training

Foundational subjects include a history of professional hunting, hunting ethics, wildlife and vegetation management, reptile, bird, invertebrate and fish studies and the role of hunting in conservation. In addition the curriculum covers practical subjects such as skinning and caping, basic taxidermy work, freshwater angling, meat processing, conducting post mortems and disease identification, infrastructure management (vehicle maintenance and repair, welding, fencing, road maintenance, erosion prevention etc.), wilderness first aid (Level 1 & 2), trophy estimation and trophy management.

The hard skills are complemented by the "soft skills" which include learning how to market and run a hunting business, catering and hospitality management, complying with occupational health and safety regulations and learning how to manage the staff component of a hunting operation. Students are thoroughly and comprehensively assessed writing more than 60 assessments and 28 practical evaluations. The standards are high and pass rates are expected to be low to moderate at best.

The course has received substantial financial foreign support and backing from Dallas Safari Club, Aimpoint, and Norma ammunition with additional aid coming from Safari Club International. Donor funding has made it possible to acquire training equipment for the course including firearms, archery equipment, rangefinders, binoculars, reloading equipment, 3D targets, a "charge" box for simulating animal charges, fishing gear, camera traps, leafy suit camouflage clothing, skinning knives and sharpeners, GPS's etc.

On the local front a full set of horns and animal skulls was kindly donated by Nico van Rooyen Taxidermy, and firearms from Parow Arms. The two top students are rewarded with a buffalo hunt from the Timbavati Private Nature Reserve. It would appear that the training of professional hunters in South Africa is on the cusp of change. The SA Wildlife College has accomplished what it set out to do and will hopefully continue making a meaningful contribution towards the training of "PH's" for the foreseeable future.

The Southern African Wildlife College has a new and updated website at www.wildlifecollege.org.za, jam-packed with information, user friendly and interactive. It's designed so that SAWC partners, supporters, donors, students, the media and individuals interested in the work of the College can access information and interact.

In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing. The worst thing you can do is nothing

Theodore Roosevelt

Rhino Horn Use: Fact vs. Fiction

Jacques Olivier

All five of the world's diverse species of rhinoceros have been brought to the edge of extinction because of the demand for their distinctive horns either as a decorative material or as a product of perceived medicinal value.

As a traditional medicine, there is a demand for rhino horn across several Asian countries ranging from Malaysia and South Korea to India and China, to cure a variety of ailments. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, the horn, which is shaved or ground into a powder and dissolved in boiling water, is used to treat fever, rheumatism, gout, and other disorders. According to the 16th century Chinese pharmacist Li Shi Chen, the horn could also cure snakebites, hallucinations, typhoid, headaches, carbuncles, vomiting, food poisoning, and "devil possession." It is not however, as commonly believed, prescribed as an aphrodisiac.

Traditional Oriental Medicine Shop

Historical mentions of other uses for rhino horn date back thousands of years. The ancient Persians of the 5th century BC thought that vessels carved from the horn could be used to detect poisoned liquids, causing bubbles in the presence of some poisons, a belief that persisted into the 18th and 19th centuries among the royal courts of Europe. Now, science is now stepping in to dispel some of the mystery and fiction surrounding the use of rhino horn.

It is believed that there may be some truth behind the rhino horn's ability to detect poisons that is linked to the composition of the horn. Rhino horns are composed largely of the protein keratin, also the chief component in hair, fingernails, and animal hooves. Many poisons are strongly alkaline (or basic), and may have reacted chemically with the keratin.

Unlike the horns of most animals, which have a bony core covered by a relatively thin layer of keratin, rhino horns are keratin all the way through, although the precise chemical composition of the keratin will vary depending on a rhino's diet and geographic location. This fact has allowed ecologist Raj Amin of the Zoological Society of London and his colleagues to take "fingerprints" of horn samples and determine the animal populations they came from, which has helped law enforcement officials target and crack down on poaching.

Rhino horns are not, as once believed, made simply from a clump of compressed or modified hair. Recent studies by researchers at Ohio University using computerized tomography (CT) scans have shown that the horns are, in fact, similar in structure to horses' hooves, turtle beaks, and cockatoo bills. The studies also revealed that the centers of the horns have dense mineral deposits of calcium and melanin — a finding that may explain the curve and sharp tip of the horns. The calcium would strengthen the horn while the melanin would protect the core from being degraded by ultraviolet radiation from the sun. As the softer outer portion was worn away over time by the sun and typical rhino activities (bashing horns with other animals, or rubbing it on the ground), the inner core would be sharpened into a point (much like a wooden pencil).

Overall there isn't much evidence to support the plethora of claims about the healing properties of the horns. In 1990, researchers at Chinese University in Hong Kong found that large doses of rhino horn extract could slightly lower fever in rats (as could extracts from Saiga antelope and Water Buffalo horn), but the concentration of horn given by a traditional Chinese medicine specialist are many times lower than used in those experiments. In short, says Amin, you'd do just as well chewing on your fingernails.

Pioneering Research Reveals New Insights into the Consumers behind Rhino Poaching

Source: http://www.traffic.org/home/2013/9/17/pioneering-research-reveals-new-insights-into-the-consumers.html

The use of rhino horn as a symbol of status among wealthy urban Vietnamese has been identified as a major driver of the current rhino poaching crisis. Findings from consumer research – concluded earlier this year in Viet Nam – has added significantly to our understanding of why a growing economy and emergence of a middle class with disposable incomes, is pressuring African rhino populations. Funded by WWF South Africa (WWF-SA) and co-ordinated by TRAFFIC's Greater Mekong Program Office – this research surveyed 720 people in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. It found that the buyers and users of rhino horn primarily consider it a status symbol – often used to gift to family members, business colleagues or people in positions of authority. They also associate it with a feeling of 'peace of mind'.

"Rhino horn consumers are wealthy and powerful and as such are seen as influential people within Vietnamese society," says Dr Jo Shaw, WWF-SA's Rhino coordinator. She adds, "While their reasons for purchasing and consuming rhino horn are linked to an underlying belief in its medicinal properties there is a current trend of use to enhance social standing." Shaw further explains, "Research reveals that typical users of rhino horn are successful, well-educated men, over the age of 40 who live in Viet Nam's main urban centers. They value their luxury lifestyle, which is often based around meeting peer group pressures and tend to view animals as commodities to serve functional and income-generating purposes rather than feeling an emotional connection".

Perhaps the most significant finding is the fact that beyond current consumer groups lies a large "intender" group: people who are not currently buying or using rhino horn, but who expressed their intent to do so in future. Dr Naomi Doak of