

Audit into stockpiles of rhino horn underway

South Africa is in the process of conducting an audit of all existing stockpiles of rhino horn in an effort to prevent the smuggling of illegally obtained horn out of the country, says Environmental Affairs Minister Edna Molewa.



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Addressing the sixth Annual Rhino Conservation Awards on Monday, 21 August, Molewa said the audit will ensure that the country has full and accurate information on the number of horns in South Africa at any given time, as well as the registered owner of each horn.

An electronic database that will capture details on all individual rhino horns in private and government-owned stockpiles, as well as all newly acquired horns is currently being developed.

“South Africa remains committed to a well-regulated process that manages the trade in endangered species such as rhino in line with domestic legislation, as well as all Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) provisions.

“This includes firstly the release for public comment of a set of draft regulatory measures focusing primarily on the domestic trade, but also including specific provisions relating to the export of rhino horn for non-commercial purposes,”

Molewa said.

In order to buy or sell rhino horn domestically one needs a permit - issued in terms of the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act 2004 (NEMBA), as well as applicable provincial conservation legislation.



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“Prior to legal export, the horn must have been subjected to DNA profiling; must be marked by means of a microchip and a ZA-serial number; the information of the owner of the horn; information relating to its markings must have been recorded in the national database; and the exporter will have to have a CITES export permit.

“This permit also needs to make provision for the export as a Threatened or Protected Species (TOPS) specimen, to be endorsed at the port of exit,” she said.

The minister will issue authority for permit applications relating to the selling and buying of rhino horn within the borders of the country.

The environmental management inspectors (EMIs), as well as those of the provincial conservation departments will continue to monitor compliance.

Molewa emphasised that the commercial international trade in rhino horn remains strictly prohibited in terms of CITES.



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“We, as government, are doing everything within our means to ensure that we have closed any possible loopholes that could pave the way for a circumvention of CITES regulations,” she said.

Other milestones that the department has recorded include a Community Rhino Ambassadors programme and a Rhino Guardian project that was launched in the Kruger National Park in January 2017 with the support of the Peace Parks Foundation and the World Wildlife Fund South Africa.

“We are also in the process of finalising an Anti-Poaching Unit (APU) ranger training curriculum,” Molewa said.

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