

## Hippo: Male or Female?

*In general it is not very easy to tell the difference between a bull hippo and a cow hippo, especially when they are submerged in water with only the head sticking out.*

A trained eye on the other hand can, to a certain extent, tell the difference with only the head sticking out of the water. Right behind the nostril openings, the tusks of a bull hippo, because of their length, result in the upper lip making a bulge or a bump. The tusks of the cow hippo are not nearly as long as that of the bull and therefore do not have the same effect on the upper lip. On average a third of the tusk of a bull hippo can be seen in the mouth whilst two thirds are located inside of the jaw bone. The tusks of a male hippo can easily be between 24 - 28 inches long.



It is said that hippos kills more people in Africa than any other dangerous game species. Many deaths caused by hippos go undocumented due to the fact that they occur in remote rural areas. In many places in Africa, human settlements occur along the banks of the rivers. Early in the morning the villagers will go down to the river to collect water or do the washing. This is the time when the hippos return to the river after feeding all night. The villagers are then seen as a threat and often people get killed, simply because they find themselves between the hippo and the river.

## My Own Game Ranch! (Part 1)

*Many people have an intense desire to one day own their own game ranch and for some this idea will become a reality at some point in time.*

Although you own your own game ranch, the landowner is obliged to operate within certain guidelines as set out by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, when it comes to the introduction, the capture and hunting of certain game species on the ranch.

To provide the landowner with more freedom to manage his wildlife, on his terms, the landowner will need to apply for a permit called a P3. This permit is issued by the Department. Prior to the issuing of such a permit the Department will first inspect the game fence around the ranch to ensure that it complies with certain criteria.





Once the Department is happy with the criteria of the fence the permit will be issued to the landowner. This P3-permit states that the landowner is allowed to hunt, catch or sell any of the species listed (mainly antelope species) on this P3 permit when he wants to. The fee payable for this P3 permit is R680 and it remains valid for a period of three years. Certain game species will however not be listed on the P3-permit, such as tsessebe, roan, black wildebeest, common reedbuck, white and black rhino, elephant, lion, leopard etc. All of these species are known as TOPS (Threatened or Protected Species) species and to be able to hunt or capture or introduce these species, requirements specified by the Department need to be met prior to performing these operations. The requirements for the introduction of white rhino and that of black rhino are completely different.

If the landowner decides to introduce white rhino onto his game ranch, the Department requires that a habitat evaluation be done for that specific game ranch. It would be in the best interest of the landowner to have this study done by an ecologist registered with the South African Council of Natural Scientific Professions.



This study will look into and investigate the following aspects:

- Suitable habitat in the form of edible grass species preferred by white rhino. In certain areas nearly all the grass will disappear in winter time and supplementary feeding will have to be provided.
- Suitable geographical terrain - rhino's do not climb mountains, thus if mountainous areas occur the surface areas covered by the mountains will be deducted from the total land surface of the game ranch.
- Calculation of the total suitable surface area in terms of hectares.
- Suitable surface water in the form of dirt dams and suitable drinking troughs to provide adequate water for drinking. Rhinos will often roll in the mud in an attempt to cool down and to get rid of parasites.
- A safe environment for the rhino to live in - are all the inner fences and obstacle's removed?
- Is there enough shade in the vicinity of the drinking holes?
- Is the game ranch a minimum of 400 accessible hectares? This criteria varies from province to province.
- What plan of action is in place to prevent the rhino's from being poached, and are these plans adequate?
- Is a rhino management plan in place, dealing with issues such as will the individual rhinos be micro-chipped, how long before another male will be introduced and what will happen with the current male or males, etc.
- The detail of the temporary holding facility at the new location and the day to day management of the rhino whilst being held in this facility. This includes aspects such as veterinary care, parasite control, feeding, water availability, chemical immobilisation, availability of shade etc.

This study will then be reviewed by the Department and on approval of the required information and provided the area is suitable, permission will then be granted for the introduction of white rhino onto a game ranch. The landowner now have to apply for a TOPS permit and once this has been issued, only then can the landowner start making plans to acquire the animals. This entire process can take up to a month to be completed.



## The Winner that Lost

Shortly before the Easter weekend a tragedy unfolded on a game farm close to Lephalale when two kudu bulls started fighting.



In the process the horns of the two bulls interlocked, resulting in the one bull's neck being broken and the other bull dying from starvation. The wildlife management team is only aware of one other situation like this and it occurred in Kruger National Park. In the Skukuza rest camp a bronze sculpture can be seen of the fighting kudu bulls with locked horns. The question now is: Would it be possible to get the horns undone? The financial loss related to this freak incident amounts to R17 000.

## Game Fence Down

During the last week in March the game rangers had their hands full to maintain and keep the perimeter game fence standing.



Like last year the kudu bulls started to show their strength to the kudu bull on the other side of the fence, with significant damage to the fence. In total 17 Y-poles were completely broken off and more than 30 hangers had to be taken down and straightened. It is suspected that during one of these disagreements a kudu bull from Ledibeng has possibly gone through the fence to the farm next door. All of this happened on the western boundary fence.

Some are fierce like a banded mongoose when threatened by a predator, some beetles spray their attackers with a vinegar like chemical, some insects and even birds and lizards rely on their ability to hide by blending in with the habitat. These pictures are classic examples of how animals can blend in with their preferred habitat.

See if you can spot them...On the first picture you should be able to see a red crested korhaan and on the second picture a sand lizard.

## Camouflage

When it comes to survival of the fittest various creatures use various techniques.



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*From your Wildlife Management Team*

