



forestry, fisheries & the environment

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 3038 {NW3500E}

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Mr A D de Blocq van Scheltinga (DA) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

Given the devastating recent poisoning of over 200 vultures in the Kruger National Park and the historic collaborative rescue effort between SA National Parks (SANParks), the Endangered Wildlife Trust and others, (a) what measures will the SANParks put in place to reduce the incidence of such events moving forward, (b) what are the lessons learned from this response, (c) how will these identified improvements be operationalised for future responses and (d) how will SANParks collaborate with (i) the SA Police Service, (ii) the courts and (iii) other law enforcement bodies to clamp down on poaching and poisoning in the Kruger National Park?

3038. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

- a) Following the recent poisoning inside the Kruger National Park (KNP), in which 123 vultures died, and 84 vultures were rescued, South African National Parks (SANParks) has engaged both internally and with external departments to focus on the following areas of concern:
 - i. Increased area coverage and patrols in high-risk areas and the use of technology to improve patrol coverage and early detection.
 - ii. Increased engagements with other law enforcement agencies focusing on dedicated intelligence gathering and investigations.
 - iii. Early detection and response with the aim of increasing detection systems that trigger alerts when a suspicious activity is detected in remote areas of the park.

- iv. Rapid mobilisation and emergency treatment to improve the survival of poisoned vultures significantly.
 - v. Rehabilitation and release by engaging and partnering with experts in the field.
 - vi. Engagement and education programmes in surrounding communities and awareness regarding the use of pesticides, which pose a threat not only to wildlife, but also to humans.
- b) Lessons learned from the recent incidents:
- i. Improved intelligence gathering, investigations and research are required to understand the drivers of poisoning, specifically in the Greater Kruger landscape, and address the root causes.
 - ii. Good and rapid detection allows for coordinated law enforcement responses and can significantly increase the survival rate of poisoned vultures.
 - iii. Technology should be used more extensively to combat the overall increase in wildlife crime in the Greater Kruger landscape.
 - iv. Poisoned carcasses do not need to be placed inside the KNP to poison vultures as these birds can fly vast distances. This makes the detection of carcasses more difficult, as demonstrated recently when a poisoned carcass was placed adjacent to the KNP, on a private land, resulting in the death of many vultures. Addressing this problem requires a regional and interdepartmental effort.
 - v. One needs to be careful with messaging and counter-intelligence on the issue of vulture poisoning. A national and interdepartmental focus on the importation, categorisation, labelling, distribution, management, and possible buy-back scheme for expired, obsolete, or banned poisons and chemicals.
- c) Some of the above initiatives have been ongoing for some time, and the recent incident has allowed teams to reflect on these efforts and find ways to improve both proactive and reactive responses to such events. The KNP ranger staff are engaging with several NGOs that assist with tracking, recovering and treating poisoned raptors, and are engaging with neighbouring structures and groups to gather information to track and apprehend poison poachers proactively. SANParks will also engage with Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) and other national role players to see how the management of poisons, pesticides and harmful chemicals can be improved nationally.

- d) SANParks' collaboration with (i) the South African Police Service (SAPS), (ii) the courts and (iii) other law enforcement bodies to clamp down on poaching and poisoning in the KNP.

Following the recent incidents, SANParks has engaged with both internal departments, such as the Environmental Crime Investigations Unit, and external agencies, such as the SAPS and Stock Theft and Endangered Species Units, to improve intelligence gathering and investigations, specifically around poisoning and snaring in the KNP. SANParks also has a close working relationship with the SAPS based in Skukuza, the Skukuza Stock Theft and Endangered Species Unit, and the Skukuza Regional Court, which provides dedicated support for rhinoceros poaching investigations and prosecutions in the KNP.

SANParks has shared information related to the recent events and is cooperating fully with the SAPS's investigations, which are being conducted. SANParks engages with these local, provincial, and national law enforcement agencies through various forums created to share information, collaborate on investigations, and improve prosecutions.

Regards



DR D T GEORGE, MP

MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

DATE: 3/6/2025