

NEWSLETTER APRIL

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Dear clients,

In these times of uncertainties we hope you keep your spirits up. Things will go back to normal again, hopefully soon! As we are listed as an essential service, we will remain committed to provide (emergency) veterinary services throughout Namibia. In this newsletter we inform you again about COVID-19 and pets. We also have a new section... PM case discussions, we hope you enjoy reading them! Additional topics in this newsletter are the Swakopmund elephant translocation we did, and CCF's new carnivore conflict support field station in Gobabis.

Kind regards, Ulf and Mariska

COVID-19 AND PETS

In our [previous newsletter](#) we discussed issues around COVID-19 (corona) and pets. Since there are now reports of people dumping their pets out of fear of getting the disease, we consider it essential to inform you about some new animal-related cases and developments.

You have likely heard a tiger at the Bronx Zoo in New York has tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, which is the virus that causes the disease COVID-19 in humans. The USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratory was alerted by the zoo after several tigers and lions developed dry coughs and decreased appetite. Out of caution, tiger Nadia was tested, and appeared positive for the disease. The cats were likely infected by a zookeeper who had COVID-19, but was asymptomatic (she did not have any symptoms). Besides the decreased appetite, the big cats are doing well and expected to fully recover.

Late March, a domestic cat in Belgium was infected by its owner. The cat developed diarrhoea, vomiting and respiratory issues a week after its owner got sick. The vomit was tested, and showed high levels of SARS-CoV-2. The cat recovered fully after 9 days.

The only other two pets that (might have) caught the disease from their owners are 2 dogs in Hong Kong. The 1st dog, a 17-year old Pomeranian, tested weak positive at the end of February. The dog died mid-March, but the owner refused a necropsy (examination after death), so we don't know what the cause of death is. The 2nd dog was a German shepherd that tested positive, but showed no symptoms.

We would like to stress once again, that there is NO EVIDENCE that animals, including pets or livestock, can spread COVID-19 TO PEOPLE.

Please do not get rid of your animal because of the virus!! If you are sick with COVID-19, restrict contact with pets and other animals, just as you would do with other people. If you think your animal might have the disease (which could only possibly happen after contact with an infected person), contact your veterinarian, and make sure to tell your vet that the animal has been in contact with an infected person.



The 4-year-old Malayan tiger named Nadia has been infected with the coronavirus that causes the COVID-19 disease. © Julie Larsen/WCS

NEW: POST-MORTEM CASE DISCUSSIONS

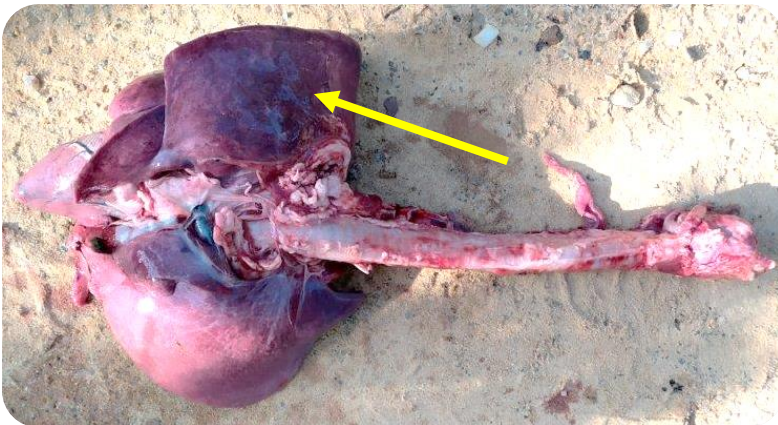
We have been talking about Post-Mortem (PM) examinations quite a lot lately. As you probably heard, we also present PM courses (once we are not in lock down... 😊). Based on our experiences and feedback of the course participants, we decided now to make case discussions. In here we present you a PM case, and we give information on what was found, and about the cause of death. These case discussions will be available to download on the [Documentation-section](#) on our website. We hope you enjoy reading these, and that you learn a thing or two from it! Below you find a very short version of what you can read in the actual document.

History

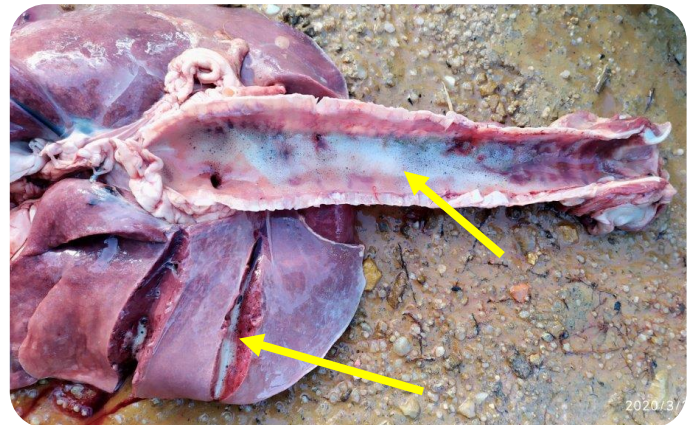
The first case discussion is about a sheep ewe. She went out grazing with the herd as per normal, but when she returned, she started to show signs of weakness, then she could not walk or stand anymore, and died during the evening. A PM was conducted the next day.

PM findings

The ewe was in good body condition. Her lungs were dark and patchy in appearance. There was a lot of foam in the trachea and cut surfaces of the lungs. The other organs visually seemed all right.



Here you see the heart, lungs and windpipe (trachea). The lungs are dark and patchy in appearance. A normal lung should be pink, uniformly soft and spongy.



Cuts were made in the lungs to examine the inside, and the trachea was cut open. Note the foam in the trachea, and in the cut surfaces in the lungs. Foam should be limited to the lower 1/3 of the trachea, this is usually due to leaky blood vessels and difficult breathing and is considered normal. What we see here, is abnormal.

Cause of death

What do you think could be the cause of death?

In the [online case discussion](#) you can read about the disease that caused this ewe to die, its predisposing factors, symptoms, how we diagnose this disease, how we might treat it, and how to prevent and control it. A second case is about a [sheep ram with abscesses](#). In due time we will add more cases.



SWAKOPMUND ELEPHANT

We recently purchased our own specialized elephant crates consisting of 2 transport crates, and a wake-up crate. Soon after their arrival in Namibia, we could put the equipment to work. At the request of the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) and N/a'an ku sê we captured and translocated the “Swakopmund” elephant.

It is a bit of a mystery where this ‘beach boy’ came from. He was first seen at a farm in the Otjiwarongo area in Sep/Oct ’19. After that he disappeared for a while, and around Christmas ’19 he was spotted at the coast. He was in very poor condition and dehydrated. Thanks for the MEFT and a couple of donors who provided food and water, he recovered well. MEFT placed a tracking collar on him to monitor his movements, and lured him inland. He settled for a while in the Omaruru river area, but soon returned to Swakopmund again. Several attempts to lure him back inland failed. He made the Swakop river and Rossmund Golf Club his new “home”.



The Swakop elephant © [Adam Hartman, the Namibian](#)

He frequented the same areas where people ride their bikes and walk their dogs. Taxi drivers doubled up as tour guides, taking tourists in on foot to see the elephant. The “suitable” elephant habitat in the area is extremely limited, which would result him running out of food. Needless to say, his next feeding ground would be the gardens of Swakopmund. This was a situation where an accident waited to happen and we all know that the elephant would be blamed, and likely get shot... Health issues for the elephant were the high salt content of the water, as well as the fact that some of the vegetation in the area is toxic when eaten in high dosages – he recently had bouts of diarrhoea likely caused by these factors. For his own wellbeing, the decision was made by MEFT to translocate him, and we could facilitate the capture and translocation process.

Ulf darted the elephant from an MEFT helicopter, and once he was immobilized, a crane truck picked him up. Now the difficult time started... getting out of the sand! Luckily we had some heavy machinery on stand-by who helped us to get to the elephant crates.



The elephant was closely monitored during the whole procedure, and was injected with a vitamin booster, a tranquilizer and we vaccinated it with Rhinovax (against anthrax and clostridium). The elephant was brought to the wake-up crate. The crane lifted him on a piece of conveyor belt, and he was pulled into the wake-up crate. Then we woke him up. When he was standing, we opened the doors, so he could walk into the transport crates.



Then it was time to undertake the 420km journey to its final destination! To avoid unnecessary delays at the road blocks, all members of the capture team were tested for signs of COVID-19 and we had a start to finish escort by the Nampol Traffic Division.



Around 19:00 we arrived at the N/a'an ku sê reserve. The elephant was released into a specially built elephant pre-release boma, where he could rest, be monitored closely and gets used to the electric fencing. He disembarked very quietly, and quickly disappeared into the bush. He was kept in this boma for 36 hours, and was then released into the 7500-ha reserve itself.

The reserve has elephant-proof fencing, and after the good rains the vegetation is lush and green so there is plenty of food around. The elephant remains State property. The bull is doing well so far and is enjoying all the grass!

We would like to express our gratitude to the MEFT, N/a'an ku sê, Cowboy's Trading & Rental Solutions, Swakopmund Hire Sales and Services cc, the Nampol Traffic Division, health officials and all others who were involved in this operation. It was a big team effort, many thanks!

With our new elephant crates, we now are really capable of translocating any species! If you want to make use of our services, you are welcome to contact us anytime 😊

Photos © Armand Meding, Carl-Heinz Moeller, Mariska Bijsterbosch.



CARNIVORE CONFLICT SUPPORT FIELD STATION IN EASTERN NAMIBIA



The Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) asked us to inform you about a new field station they have started in Gobabis. This station is called CCF East – Carnivore Conflict Support Field Station.

The reason for this new field station is that there is an increase in conflict between predators such as cheetah and African wild dog, and livestock- and game farmers. This is likely a result of the drought, whereby especially livestock had to roam further away from the kraal to find grazing, and were weaker, and thus easier targets for predators.

From the field station CCF East will provide support, management strategies and advice for farmers in order to reduce conflict and to encourage co-existence. In the meantime, the CCF East team has already set up ecological research projects to help farming communities in developing better understanding of livestock, wildlife and rangeland management. The knowledge gained from this project is used to inform farmers and stakeholders to come up with solutions and creating a balance between wildlife and livestock farming. An environmental education programme for schools will become more active from this location soon. Additionally, a 24-h farmer support hotline is implemented by the Large Carnivore Association of Namibia, which offers advice and a network of partner organizations that can assist in human-wildlife conflict situations. Farmers are encouraged to use this hotline for quick response on and human wildlife conflict issues with carnivores:

The hotline number: +264 81 227 5139

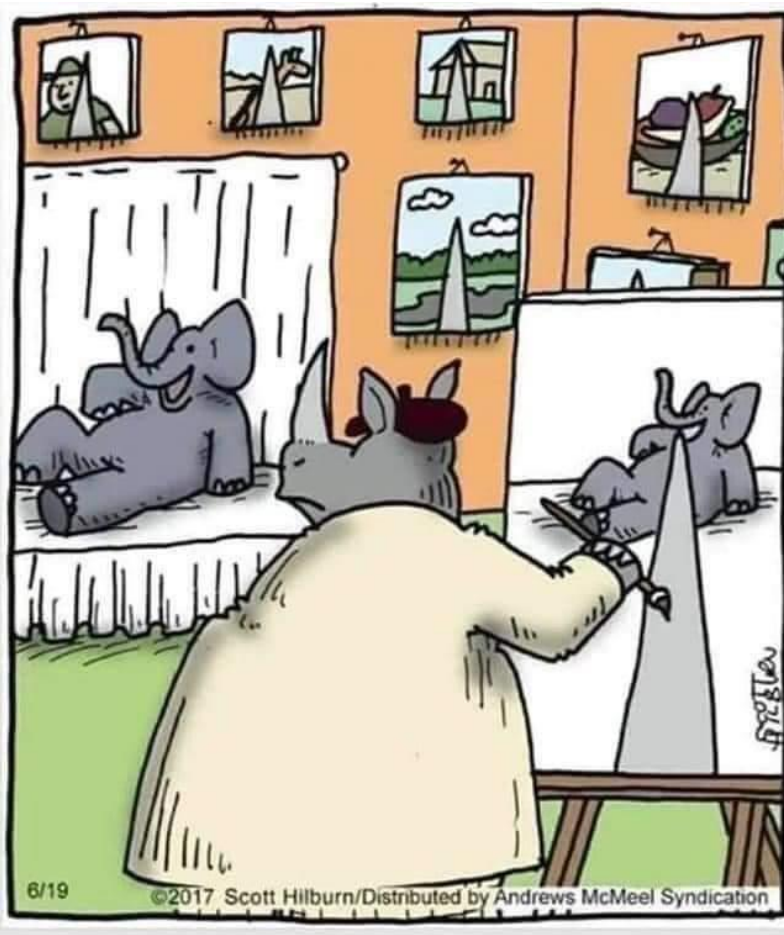
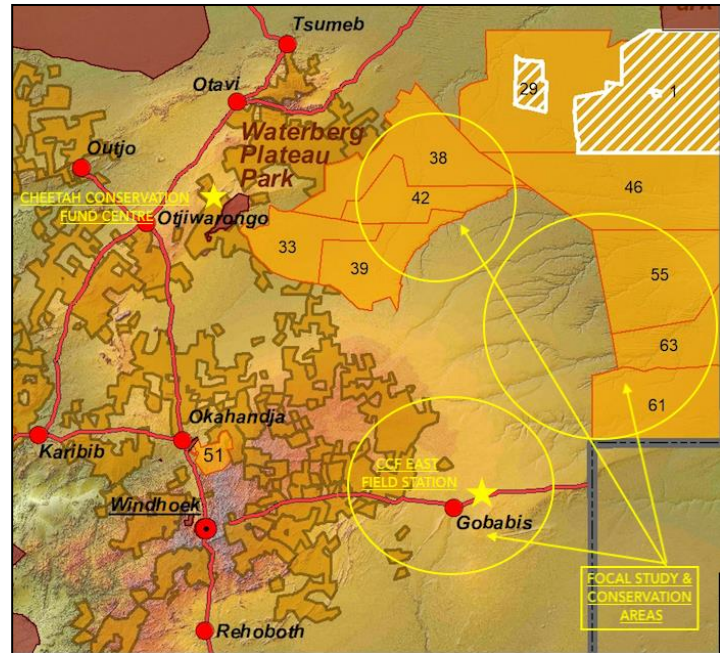


The CCF East field station team consist of Dr. Hanlie Winterbach (Carnivore Researcher), Ms. Nadja le Roux (Community Development Coordinator), Ms. Veisy Kasaona (Community Development Officer), and Jo-anne Swart (Field Technician).

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CCF East focal support areas © CCF



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