





NEWSLETTER MAY

In this newsletter:

-  [Animals and cold weather](#)
-  [South trip](#)
-  [Courses](#)
-  [Dart gun](#)

Dear clients,

We hope you have a good month so far and that you managed to keep yourself warm! The first big cold spell has landed in several areas of Namibia. In this newsletter we give a short summary of our article 'Animals and cold weather'. We tell you all about the PM and Animal Crime Scene course that we presented in May, and we explain the differences between our two dart guns. We hope you enjoy the newsletter!

Kind regards, the Wildlife Vets Namibia team

ANIMALS AND COLD WEATHER

The winter is here! Some areas already have had minus 9! We have written about animals and cold weather before in our [June 2020](#) and [June 2021](#) newsletters. We have now combined these two articles into a bigger article: 'Animals and cold weather' is free to download from the [Documentation section](#) on our website. In here you can read what animals can do to protect themselves from the cold, and we explain why smaller animals are more susceptible to severe cold stress. We also provide a couple of practical tips that you can use to help your animals and to minimize stock losses. A short summary:

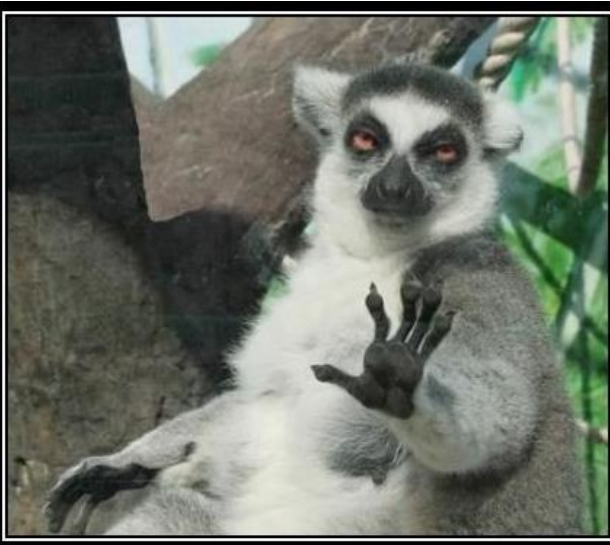
Animals have several 'defense' strategies to protect themselves from the cold. Some species hibernate or migrate to escape the cold. Often species will undergo physiological changes such as growing a thicker fur and building up fat reserves. Few of the African antelope species have the ability to build up significant (protective) subcutaneous fat reserves. In addition, most are pregnant during our dry, cold winter months. This puts additional nutritional strain on the animals. Some species, such as kudu, nyala and warthogs are more sensitive to cold than others. We thus often see mortalities in these species (not so much warthog because they shelter in relatively warm ground borroughs) whilst frost bite and the dropping off of ear tips in sable and roan is not uncommon.

With modern weather prediction models, we receive fairly accurate information and advance warnings of pending cold spells. This enables the farmer to take a couple of steps to prevent or minimise stock losses. The most important one is to maintain your animals in the best condition possible. Animals in poor body condition start utilising their fat reserves as a source of energy. We all know that fat also has an important insulation function. Animals in poor condition thus not only have minimal body reserves, they also have no physical protection against the cold.

If you are aware of severe cold coming in, consider giving your animals a late afternoon meal of **good quality roughage**. You are not just supplying the animals with food, roughage fermentation by rumen micro-organisms results in substantial heat production. This "passive" heat from fermentation does NOT require any work from the animal – thus near zero energy consumption.



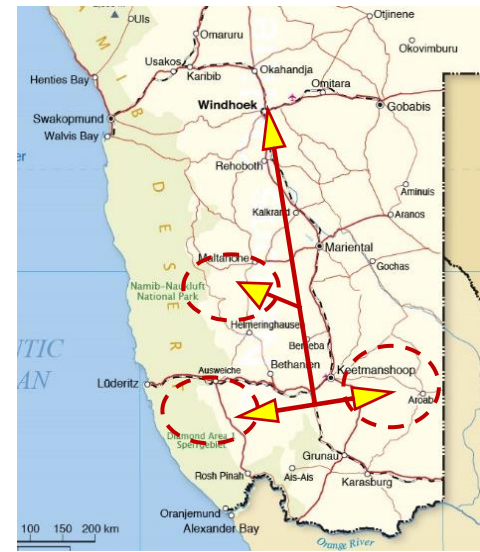
Click [here](#) to read the entire article



JUST...JUST STOP

STOP! Before you read on...

We will be visiting several farms in the South of Namibia in June. If you want to join in on this trip and share kilometer costs, please let us know. The more farmers join in, the cheaper it will be for all 😊



COURSES

In May we offered two courses at Kifaru Bush Camp (Outjo district). We started off with our Post-Mortem course, and straight after we presented the Animal Crime Scene and Evidence Handling course at Kifaru Bush Camp. We would like to thank all the participants for attending, it was great getting to know you all and we hope that everybody learned a lot! Then we also would like to thank the team from Kifaru Bush Camp for the great service, amazing food (we are sure everybody gained a few pounds 😊) and wonderful accommodation. We hope to do many more courses here!

Post-Mortem course

We started with an introduction on when you can do a PM, when you should NOT do a PM and what to do with the carcass. In the second lecture we went back to the biology classes, and explained what is where in the body, and what the different organs do. The next lecture was about what changes in the body after an animal has died, and how you can see what is still normal, and what is abnormal after death. Then we spoke about photography – and how you should take proper photos of the carcass and different lesions (Afr. letsels). After a delicious lunch we began with a massive lecture on organ lesions – in this lecture Ulf showed many slides with photos on what can go wrong in the body. In between we headed outside to practise (macro)photography, and continued with the lecture. At the end Ulf lectured about sample collection, and it was time for dinner.

The next day we explained the entire procedure of doing a PM, and then it was time to practise! We had a zebra carcass that was shot because he was lame, and the participants had to follow the entire PM examination procedure. We also made several impression and blood smears. The lameness of the zebra was due to the cruciate in the knee being gone; it likely had stepped in a hole. After the practical we did some case discussions, had a nice lunch and people could go back home again. Some stayed for the next course!

Our next PM course is:

09-10 July

**SAROA Lodge
(Nina district)**



Animal Crime Scene and Evidence Handling course

The next course was our Animal Crime Scene course. We started with an introduction lecture to make sure everybody understands that crime scenes and poaching are not simple cases. Then we explained about the importance of DNA and Forensics. The end of the afternoon was about photography (your pictures are the police/court's eyes – so a lot of emphasis is placed on topic). Late afternoon we went outside and practiced making photos in the field.

The next day we lectured about crime scenes – which ones are there, how to approach and handle them. The next lecture was about evidence – what evidence can one collect, and how to preserve, handle and store this. We also spoke about court appearance and body language. In the afternoon we practised making casts of foot prints, and tyre imprints.

On the final day we staged a house break in, and the participants had to 'investigate' the scene from A to Z. All the evidence was collected and brought bac to the camp, where it was handed over to 'the police'.



This year we have presented two Animal crime scene courses, so the next ones will be planned for next year again. Should there however be an interest in a certain area, contact us and we will see if we can plan another course 😊



The tips of these sable ears have frozen off. Under normal circumstances, blood carries oxygen to keep all tissues healthy. If an animal's body temperature starts to drop, blood vessels constrict → the blood is kept close to the vital organs. This means the extremities (such as the ears) get less blood. This lack of blood and oxygen damages the tissue cells in the extremities, and ice crystals start to form. Blood clots may start to occur, leading to further damage of the tissues. If this condition lasts long enough, the tissue dies off. This is what we call frostbite. © M. Bijsterbosch

DARTGUN

When we immobilize wild animals, we make use of a dart gun, also called a tranquilizer gun or dart projectile. This is a non-lethal gun that shoots a dart with immobilizing drugs, tranquilizer or for example a vaccine. We make use of the Pneu-Dart X-Calibre which operates on gas. On the gun we attach a CO₂ cartridge or a rechargeable CO₂ cylinder. The advantage of CO₂ over blank cartridges is that we can make slight adjustments in the pressure, making the pressure just right for the distance.

We have two dart guns with different scopes. The big gun has a telescope with range finder on, and allows us to dart animals from the car or from foot. The advantage is that this scope magnifies the subject you are aiming at, which increases accuracy, and thus the ability to shoot further.



With this gun Ulf can shoot up till +/- 90 meters. Sometimes people forget that a dart gun is not the same as a rifle, and a dart is certainly not the same as a bullet 😊 The flight of a dart is much slower and not straight like a bullet. Because its slow and relatively big, its very susceptible for winds.



These are photos extracted from a video which show you the flight of the dart. The sable heifer on the right is the target (yellow circle).

On the first photo you can see the yellow tail piece of the dart just coming out of the dart gun. In the next photos we made it a bit clearer by adding a dot to it. You will see that the trajectory of the dart is like a bow © M. Bijsterbosch

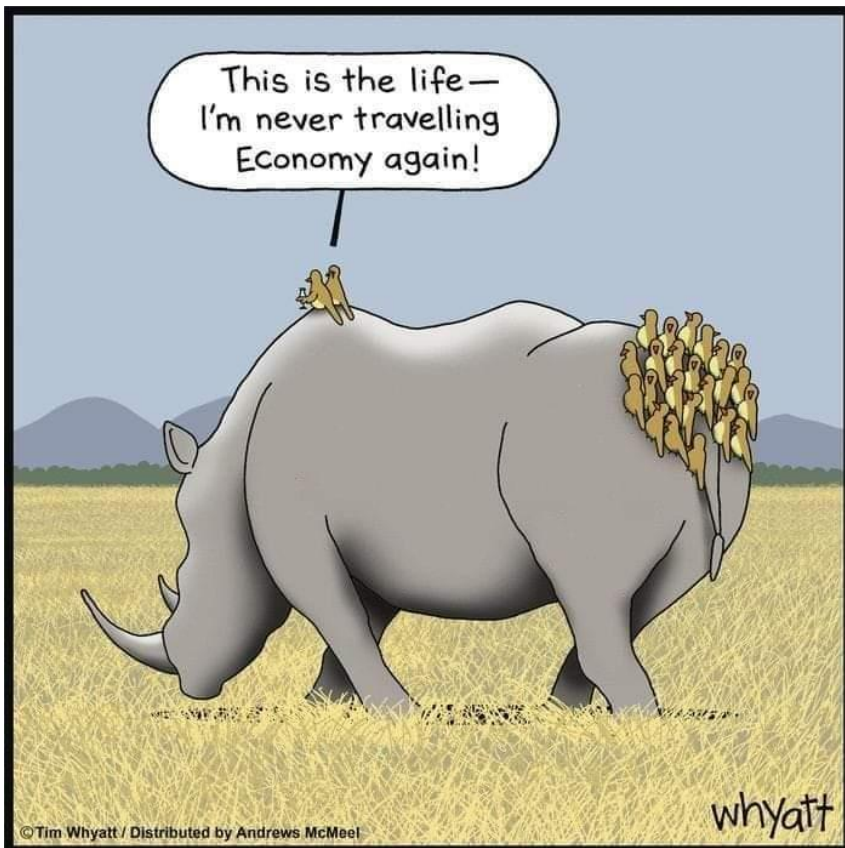


The other dart gun we have has a red-dot scope on. This gun is used from the helicopter and when we dart animals from a close distance. This scope has a central red dot, so the shooter can keep both eyes open, allowing for a wider view of what is happening.



‘There is a science and an art to darting wild animals; the former can be taught and the latter takes practice’

Chemical and physical restraint of African wild animals (Michael D. Kock and Richard Burroughs)



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