

NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY

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Dear clients,

Here we have the latest newsletter for you again! At Rhino Park Veterinary Clinic quite a few dogs have come in that were stung by scorpions. In this newsletter we have written a small article about scorpion stings, that you hopefully find useful. Furthermore, we have an article about offloading game; what should your offloading ramp look like? We also give you a summary of our latest article on Malignant Catarrhal Fever (MCF or Snotsiekte), we hope this provides you with all the necessary information to make an educated opinion on this topic. Lastly, we hope to see you on the 16th of March at the Klawerberg and Friends Game Auction! Kind regards, the Wildlife Vets Namibia team.

SCORPION STINGS IN PETS

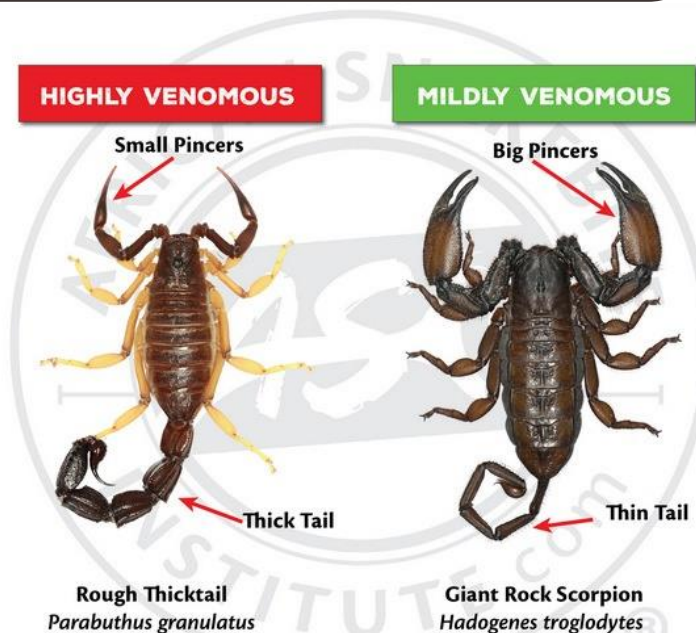
Scorpions, some find them fascinating, the others just want to run away! Either way, these often-misunderstood little animals play an important role in our ecosystem! Scorpions eat small animals, and they are an important prey for larger animals. It is important to remember that most scorpion species are relatively harmless to humans.

All scorpions are venomous, but a sting from most species will only have a mild effect; the sting might be painful, but is not of medical importance. There are however some dangerous species in southern Africa (mostly of the *Parabuthus* genus) that could potentially kill a human. Especially children are vulnerable. In Namibia, the most dangerous scorpion species is the Rough Thick-tail scorpion (*Parabuthus granulatus*).

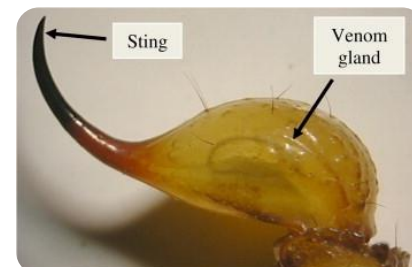
Contrary to common belief, neither the colour nor the size of a scorpion gives an indication whether a specific scorpion is dangerous or not. The best indicator of toxicity is the relative size of the pinchers compared to the tail (see image on the right). Since the venom is injected by a stinger on the tip of the tail (called telson) just remember a thick tail means a lot of venom – DANGER! Two venom glands at the end of the tail inject the venom by muscle contraction.

Since it requires quite some effort for the scorpion venom to be produced, scorpions do not just sting away. They conserve their venom as far as possible and control the amount of venom that is injected, depending on the circumstances (e.g., self-defense or size of prey being captured).

Most scorpion species are active at night and prefer to hide under rocks, tree trunks etc., but they can also actively hunt during the day.



The main way to identify potentially dangerous scorpions is by looking at the tail relative to the pinchers. Thick tail & small pinchers are usually more venomous than scorpions with a thin tail & thick pinchers © [African Snake Bite Institute](#)



The stinger and venom gland of an African fattail scorpion © [Soliman et al \(2013\)](#)

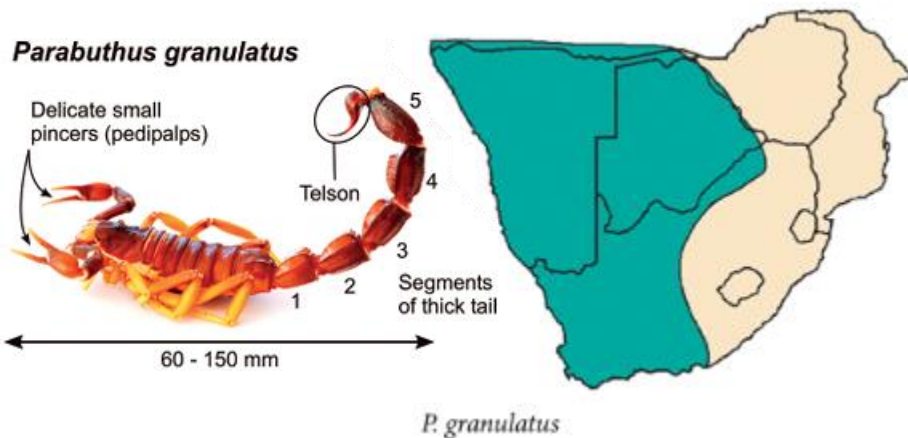
Scorpion venom is neurotoxic, which means that it attacks the nervous system. Animals, especially dogs, are more often stung than humans. This is because they are often nose down on the ground, hunting the scorpion out of curiosity or because they want to kill it.

If your pet is being stung, it is important to try and take a photo of the scorpion and/or pay attention to the pinchers and tail. Small pinchers and a thick tail suggest problems!

Pets are typically stung on the face or front feet. Once again, most scorpion stings might be a bit painful but quite harmless! The Rough Thick-tail scorpion can, however, cause life-threatening situations in both humans and animals.

A sting by this scorpion will be extremely painful. Occasionally an animal yelps when stung. Most animals then typically start sneezing, pawing at the nose mouth and often salivate a lot. Severe pain symptoms start within 30 min to 3h following the sting and are characterized by the animal often screaming hysterically even if only touched very lightly at almost any area on the body (hyperesthesia). Occasionally an animal becomes aggressive and a dry cough can develop after a day. Some, especially the smaller pets may become paralysed, have difficulty breathing and are likely to die without effective treatment. If these severe symptoms develop, it is important to contact your veterinarian since your pet might need antivenom and supportive treatment. The most effective, though expensive, treatment is an anti-venom injection. Why, we don't know... but there is currently no scorpion antivenom available in Namibia. This will hopefully change soon.

There is much controversy about supportive treatment to be given. Other than some painkillers ("Rimadyl", "Metacam" etc.) few drugs will be immediately available to the lay person. Treatment is usually adapted and based on the severity of the symptoms. Tranquilizers like "Valium" or "Midazolam" can be very useful and animals are frequently placed on a drip. Antihistamines etc. tend to be of no value. Don't take a chance with home-remedies, please consult your veterinarian.

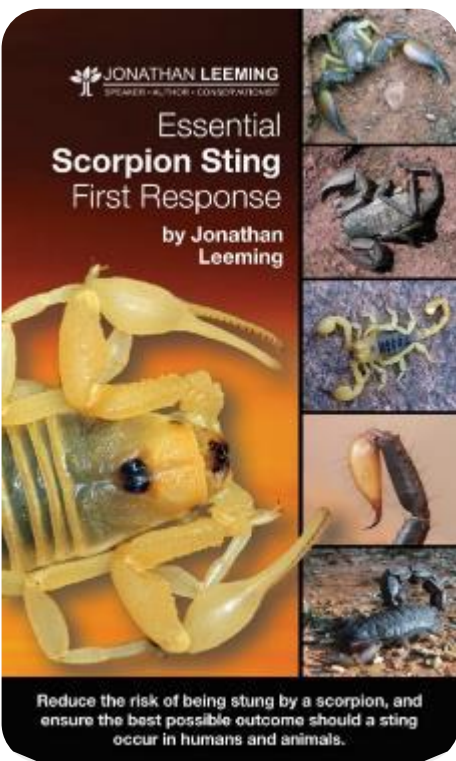


*The Rough Thick-tail scorpion (*Parabuthus granulatus*) occurs throughout Namibia. It is considered to be the most venomous scorpion in southern Africa and accounts for a few fatalities a year. © Muller et al (2012)*

Click [here](#) to watch an interesting video on YouTube about how scorpion antivenom is made.

Jonathan Leeming, an authority on spider bite and scorpion sting first response, is almost ready to publish his new book; Essential Scorpion Sting First Response. In the meantime, he has developed a [free short course](#) using the main points of the book. The book focuses upon reducing the chance of being stung by a scorpion, and if there is a scorpion sting, how you can ensure the best possible outcome for stings in humans and pets.

The short course consists of 10 short modules (lots of interesting and important information!), plus an online assessment and certificate. Click [here](#) to go to the short course, or scan the QR code.



OFFLOADING GAME

The Namibian game capture season is about to open up for the entire country. Before you buy game, many things are important to have in place before the animals come. You should have sufficient veld (or make provision to give supplemental food), clean water, the fence must be up to standard etc. Very often farmers neglect to construct a proper offloading ramp and ensure good road access for the game trucks! This especially happens when game is bought for the first time. Poor offloading facilities will likely lead to unnecessary injuries and game losses. In this short article we give some important points.

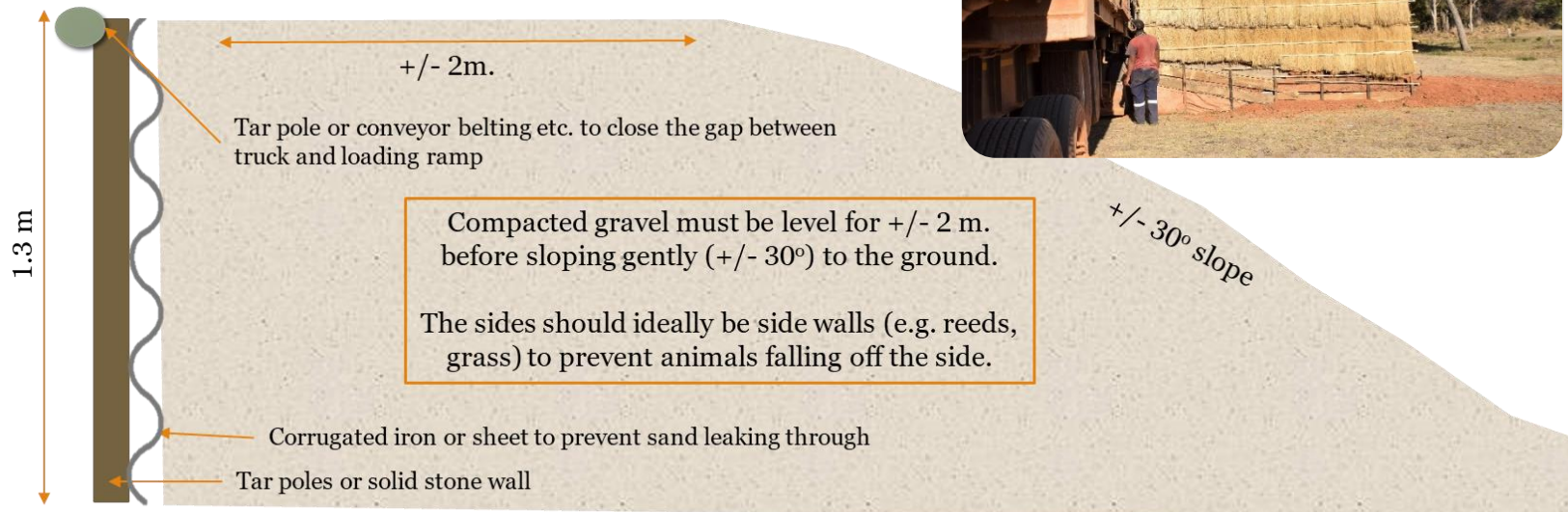
First of all, it is important to coordinate with the delivery agent what type of vehicle will deliver the animals (no need for an offloading ramp when animals are delivered in a bullperd). Usually, game is brought in big game trucks. In those cases, it is important to have a **good access road** to the farm and to the offloading ramp, this will eliminate unnecessary delays before offloading:

- 🐾 Easy access for trucks, incl. gates
- 🐾 No loose sand/clay/mud
- 🐾 No sharp rocks/stumps
- 🐾 No sharp turns
- 🐾 No trees/branches in the way

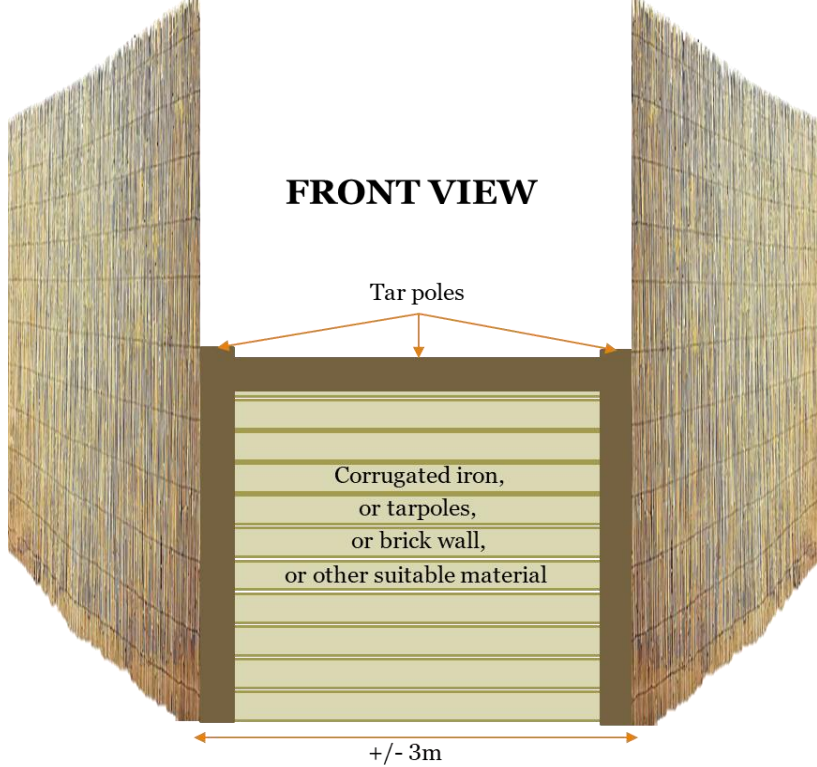
The offloading ramp should be **1.3 m high** and positioned to allow offloading of game at from the **right side of the truck, or from the back**. Make sure there are no protruding objects where the animals can hurt themselves.



Below is a schematic drawing of an offloading ramp. To prevent animals from falling off the sides, one can make side walls with e.g., grass or bamboo (make sure the side walls are high enough so the animals cannot jump over the walls!). Another option is to make the offloading ramp wide enough and to have sloping sides on both sides of the ramp.



SIDE VIEW



Another possibility is digging a trench into which the truck drives. The height of the trench must be right. Do note that this only allows for offloading from the sides, not from the back of the truck.

This requires access to heavy earth moving equipment and following offloading, the trench should be closed or fenced off to prevent animals accidentally running into the trench.



If no fixed offloading ramp can be made, a temporary offloading ramp should be made before the animals arrive. For example, one can fill up hessian bags with soil, and cover these with a layer of soil. Another option is to place hay bales or make a quick sand wall with a front-end loader or TLB. Make sure the height is correct.

Correct positioning of the offloading ramp is another important consideration. Make sure that the area in front of the offloading ramp is clear, so the animals have a free view. No fences or big obstacles, e.g., feeding and/or drinking troughs etc. should be within 300-400m of the offloading place. Ideally an open water source should be relatively close by but not in the direct flight path. Provide extra water (e.g., meat trays, half drums, mobile drinking troughs) in the corners of bigger camps and along the fence. Make sure these are filled up on a daily basis and, to attract animals to these, consider spraying the surrounding sand with water.



Offloading animals is always exciting and people want photos and videos of this event. Please avoid having people standing close by the truck gate (within view or with wind blowing their smell into the truck (*see photo on the left, lechwe tries to jump away from the person*) and don't have a drone overhead to film the offloading! This will delay offloading, stress the animals and result in them jumping off the truck hysterically, often resulting in serious or fatal injuries. Remember, the capture and transport were already very stressful for the animal, so let's make the offloading as quiet and relaxed as possible.

Where animals are offloaded into a very big area or, where the habitat differs a lot from the area the animals originate from, it is advantageous to build a pre-release boma and keep the animals in it for a short (1-2 days) adaptation and regrouping period. For more information on how to build one, [click here](#) to open our Pre-Release Boma article.

WILDEBEEST AND MALIGNANT CATARRHAL FEVER (SNOTSIEKTE) IN CATTLE – AN UPDATE

Malignant Catarrhal Fever (MCF), better known as Snotsiekte in Namibia and South Africa, is currently a hot topic amongst Namibian game ranchers. Newly imposed, poorly researched legislation enforcing a 10m double fence on farms where wildebeest are kept have devastating economic consequences not just to the game farmer, but secondarily to the Namibian economy.

We have sent out an article on this topic per email a few days ago, and we hope you already had a chance to read it. The article consists of two parts; the first part is about the disease itself, the second part specifically addresses the Namibian situation regarding MCF cases and the imposed legislation on game ranchers.

Did you know that MCF outbreaks have occurred without any wildebeest being present for up to 5 km? It is very likely that, in addition to direct contact, some insect is involved in spreading the disease to cattle. That means a 10 m double fence will give a cattle farmer a false sense of security against the disease! In the article we give some guidelines on managing the disease between cattle and game farms. This requires cooperation between neighbors, and no expensive double fences! When we look at the statistics from the Central Veterinary Lab (CVL), it appears that the actual cases of MCF proven by PCR lab tests amount to 28 (26 x wildebeest origin and 2 x sheep) over 6 years, an average of 5 cases per year. Namibia is likely the country in Africa with the lowest incidence of MCF, yet it is the only country world-wide enforcing a double fence policy.

Please note that it is NOT our intention to pitch game farmers against cattle farmers, but to inform everybody about the fact that the 10m double fence does not protect cattle against MCF. There are other, much cheaper and more effective management options that could/should be practiced by both cattle and game farmers, even if there is a double fence. Not a 10m double fence, but cooperation between cattle and neighboring game farmers provides the key to managing this disease! It would be great if we could open up a discussion amongst yourselves, neighbors, farmers associations etc., on this important topic. If you have any discussion points, experiences, problems etc., please let us know. It is important that we gather more information and statistics about the effects of wildebeest and cattle cohabitation in Namibia.

[Click here](#) to read and download the Snotsiekte article from our website.



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KLAWERBERG AND VRIENDE WILD VEILING 2024

The Klawerberg and Friends game auction is just around the corner. Curious to see what is on offer? The catalogue is online! [Click here](#) to see and/or download the 2024 catalogue.

As it did in 2023, the Klawerberg auction of this year will showcase some of Namibia's top game genetics. Because of repeated outbreaks of foot and mouth disease in South Africa, the border is closed indefinitely. As a result, game farmers are quite limited in their options for buying game to improve their game breeding herds. Search no longer, attend this auction!

The catalogue auction will be held on **16 March 2024**, at the **Midgard** Country Estate near Okahandja. For more information, have a look at the [Klawerberg facebook page](#), or visit their website: www.klawerberg.com.

You can book your accommodation at Midgard via the Klawerberg website with a [nice discount](#). And don't forget, if you come to the auction, you stand a chance to win a son of Titan, a striking 34" roan bull!

See you there on the 16th of March!





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