

# Illegal dog hunts: do's and don'ts

In the heat of the moment, encountering an illegal dog hunt on your property can lead to anger and carelessness, clouding your judgement and possibly endangering you. By following Agri SA's guidelines, you can tackle the problem safely, legally and more effectively.

**A**gri SA has published guidelines on how farmers can handle illegal hunting with dogs on their farms.

Back in 1998, Dr John Ledger, chairperson of the Endangered Wildlife Trust, said that hunting with dogs posed the greatest threat to the biodiversity of Africa. And the problem has grown worse since then.

According to a 2002 NSPCA report, a large percentage of dogs used for illegal hunting are in exceptionally poor condition: undernourished, tick- and worm-infested, and uncared for.

Dr Gerhard Verdoorn, director of the Griffon Poison Information Centre, agrees: "These dogs are deliberately starved to ensure that they're more vicious during hunting."

In one case, he saw 14 men with 42 dogs ripping apart everything from hares to meercat and plovers on a farm near Carletonville.

Researchers at the University of KwaZulu-Natal have found that blue crane and crowned crane populations have declined by 90% over the past 10 years due, in large part, to the indiscriminate use of dogs. This is despite the fact that, if found guilty of hunting an endangered species, one can be fined millions of rands or sent to jail for up to 25 years.

## ACT WITHIN THE LAW

Extreme caution should be exercised when dealing with illegal dog hunting. There are sufficient laws to deal with the problem, and there is simply too much at stake to act impulsively.

Following discussions with the police, Agri SA suggests the following guidelines for dealing with the problem:

- Implement Agri SA's farm access protocols



**ABOVE:** Illegal dog hunting is a major threat to biodiversity in South Africa and across the continent. Farmers can help to combat the scourge, but should act within the confines of the law for their own safety and to secure convictions.  
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and display the applicable signage at entrances and on boundary fences.

- Report all cases of illegal hunting with dogs to the local police station and keep a record of all case numbers.
- Contact your local safety network for assistance, especially when several offenders are involved.
- Ensure that there are no further suspects in the area, then gather evidence and protect the crime scene, preserving vehicle tracks, suspect and animal spoor, and the like. Avoid eating, drinking and smoking at the crime scene.
- Mark the entry point (open gate or damaged fence). Make notes on the position of vehicles, suspects, dogs, gates, fences and so forth. Where possible, take photographs of vehicles, dogs and suspects.
- Gather the names and addresses of possible witnesses, but don't discuss the facts of the incident with them.
- Involve nature conservation organisations immediately; they can assist with complaints about illegal hunting.
- Seek help from the nearest SPCA; it has the capacity to deal with confiscated dogs.
- Ensure that your farmers' association discusses the problem of illegal hunting at its meetings. Assist members with how to tackle the problem. Involve the local National Prosecuting Authority where possible.
- Get involved with the local police and Sector Community Policing Forum.
- Use the Local Priority Committee to develop action plans, such as patrols and increased awareness programmes, to deal with the problem.
- In the event of damage caused by dogs, landowners should open a case of malicious damage to property and insist on a compensatory fine by declaring the value of the property.
- If hunting was previously permitted and the landowner now wishes to stop it, a legal procedure should be followed to inform neighbours, tenants, community members and others that hunting will no longer be permitted.
- Email the Red Meat Producers' Organisation at [rpo@lantic.net](mailto:rpo@lantic.net).

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