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News Release

Protection of horned giants

Bayer extends its support for the rhino anti-poaching dogs in South Africa

Monheim, October 27, 2017 – Johannes De Beer looks grimly at the corpse of the rhino lying in front of him in the quilted sand. The horn is sawn off; only the bloody stump is still visible. Once again, well-equipped poachers have succeeded in their murderous hunt.

Since 1960, the Black Rhino population in the Kruger National Park (KNP) in South Africa has declined by 97.6%. Poachers remain the biggest threat to this species and Kruger is the most important target for poachers. The park is one of the world's foremost national parks and an un-spoiled wilderness. It is also one of the most developed and accessible ecotourism destinations in South Africa.

In 2016, 702 rhinos were poached – virtually two every day – throughout South Africa. In a desperate attempt to save the rhino, adult as well as orphaned baby rhinos are being dehorned.

However a well-trained anti-poaching dog team is giving the fight for the survival of the rhinos in Kruger a glimmer of hope. These dogs and their handlers are the unsung heroes on the war against rhino poaching. More than 180 poachers have been arrested in Kruger since January 2016. In only 8 months, 458 rhino carcasses were discovered in the Park; 99 fewer carcasses than in the same period the year before.

In 2012, South African National Parks (SANParks) introduced anti-poaching dog teams into Kruger to combat the poaching. Bayer Animal Health South Africa became involved at an early stage, sponsoring mainly parasiticides for the dogs, but also some Consumer Care products for the handlers and rangers. Clint Austin, veterinarian and Head of Clinical Development & Regulatory Affairs for Bayer Animal Health South Africa, is glad to extend

this cooperation now. “I am convinced that we make an important contribution with our commitment by aiding the health and well-being of the dogs. These highly trained and very expensive dogs work in very remote and sometimes extremely inhospitable terrain in a part of the world that is rife with often fatal tick borne disease like Ehrlichiosis or Babesiosis.”

Out in the field, parasites such as fleas, ticks, lice and flies are waiting for suitable victims such as the dogs. The bites are not just annoying – tick bites in particular can also transmit serious diseases, leading to severe illness and possible death. For this reason it’s important that parasites are repelled before they have an opportunity to bite. “Health care and disease prevention are extremely important for our dogs”, says Johannes De Beer, Head of the nationwide K9 anti-poaching units. “I like the innovative collar which provides up to 8 month protection. It keeps fleas and ticks successfully under control and is an easy solution to protect the dogs with a single application. It enables us and the dogs to concentrate better on our real task: hunting poachers.”

Since the inception of the sponsorship, the K9 units have not had a single case of tick borne disease among the dog team, which has now grown to just over 50 dogs. “The collars have performed remarkably well over the past few years”, explains Dr. Austin, “proving their worth time and again.”

The dog team is fairly cosmopolitan, comprising of attack dogs (Belgian Malinois), dedicated trackers (bloodhounds and fox hounds), as well as sniffer dogs at the various entrances to the park which are specially trained to sniff out rhino horn, elephant tusks and firearms/ammunition.

The dogs are bred off-site, trained, and introduced to the K9 unit when they are about one year old. In Kruger, 53 dogs are on standby for anti-poaching duty. Their training continues with the unit. Naturally, there is an incredibly strong bond between each dog and his or her handler.

Trackers patrol the park and alert the authorities if there is any evidence of poaching. Then the dogs are brought in by 4 x 4 vehicles or occasionally, a helicopter, to track them. It is a tough daily struggle to protect the lives of rhinos and secure their survival in the long term. Fortunately, the White Rhino population is starting to recover, due to anti-

poaching and protection strategies throughout South Africa, in which the dogs and their handlers play a very important role.

Facts:

- Black Rhino has a total - rapidly diminishing - population of about 5000 in the whole of Southern and Eastern Africa
- White Rhino are recovering from the threat of extinction; from only 50 left in the wild, to 20,405 now roaming the grasslands

About ticks and fleas

Tick and flea infestations are more than just a nuisance; they also pose a very real threat to both pets and humans as they can transmit serious diseases. These diseases have become more frequently diagnosed and more geographically widespread, increasing both the danger posed to pets and the risk posed to humans.

Fleas are the most common ectoparasite in cats and dogs and are capable of spreading and/or causing a number of diseases that affect cats, dogs and humans, including tapeworm, flea allergy dermatitis (FAD), bartonellosis and endemic typhus.

Diseases spread by ticks include anaplasmosis, Lyme borreliosis, babesiosis and ehrlichiosis, many of which can cause serious diseases in humans.

In dogs, many of these diseases can be lethal and cannot yet be cured, meaning that prevention is key to their management. The most effective disease prevention technique is to stop parasites from biting, removing any possibility of disease transmission.

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