NEWSLETTER JULY

In this newsletter:

- Celebrating 100 newsletter together!
- Introducing Kayleigh!

Dear clients,
Yes, we have reached 100 newsletters! Thank you for reading, supporting, and inspiring us over the years. In this edition, we have gathered some wonderful stories and photos that were sent in. We are very proud of reaching this milestone and already look forward to the next 100 newsletters! Remember, if you ever have a question or a topic you would like us to cover, please let us know! To add to the celebrations, we have more good news… we are excited to introduce you to Kayleigh, our new veterinary assistant who works alongside Dr Max. Kind regards, the Wildlife Vets Namibia team

CELEBRATING 100 NEWSLETTERS TOGETHER!

This month's newsletter marks a major milestone for us, our 100th newsletter! Over the years we have used this newsletter to share veterinary knowledge, conservation updates and field experiences. Many of the topics we have covered were inspired by you, our readers! Your ideas, questions and suggestions have shaped these newsletters and kept them alive, and we want to thank you sincerely for that. Keep them coming!

To celebrate, we have gathered some special moments that were sent in. We hope you will enjoy reading them as much as we did; they brought back beautiful memories and reminded us why we love our job. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed!! And now… up to newsletter #200!

Waking up sables while being watched by elephants!

Carla Lichtenberg – Gobabis Veterinary Practice

During a practical for the Immobilization course for wildlife para-professionals in 2024 at Erindi, we moved some young sable bulls out of the breeding camps. This made for an interesting learning curve… Waking up the sables between elephants that slowly came closer!

Surgery under Nanna's supervision

Juliette Erdtsieck – Rhino Momma Project

Ulf came to do a small surgery on one of our APU dogs. Whilst busy, Nanna, our grannie rhino, came to check if he was doing a good job!

Moving rhinos to Etosha Oberland

Jan Rohlfs – Ondili Lodges

The translocation of our rhinos from Kifaru to Oberland was one of my coolest experiences ever! Our rhino population is thriving, and expanding!

Many jobs, many special moments!

Willie Pienaar – Klawerberg Stud Game Breeders

We had many special moments together in the field, but what was very special for me were the times when our daughter Carlie could help; proudly pouring anti-tick treatment over the sables as if she is a vet (nurse) already! Another moment I remember well, was a roan offloading this year. The young bull came straight for the bush where Mariska and I were sitting behind! Fortunately we came out with just a scare and no scars!

Asleep or not asleep? That is the question...

Genie Bezuidenhout – Worldwide Vets

In Spain they dodge bulls... But in Namibia they dodge rhinos! During our 2025 Dehorning Mission the rhino was not as dopey as we thought! Fortunately Jaco Muller was fast and fit and nobody got hurt. Watch the video to see what happened!

How to approach a lion?

Dr Olivier Famba – Parc de la Vallée de la N'Sele

Whenever I immobilize a lion, I always remember Ulf's advice on the approach to take once a lion is lying down. It is the veterinarian's responsibility to check that the animal is properly asleep.

WILDLIFE VETS NAMIBIA

100th newsletter celebration

Eloise Acx – WildlifeCampus

Congratulations to the Wildlife Vets Namibia team on reaching your 100th newsletter. What a wonderful milestone! 😊

There is so much about your work and the stories you share that stands out to us. However, if we had to choose, it would be your wildlife capture and veterinary intervention posts. They are always incredibly interesting and give such a fascinating look at the work happening behind the scenes.

We especially enjoy posts about giraffe captures, as well as the unforgettable story of Dunlop the rhino with a tyre caught over his horns. It was such an unusual situation, and the way your team stepped in to help made it a story that has stayed with us.

Thank you for continuing to share these remarkable moments and for giving people a greater understanding of wildlife veterinary work.

Onward and upward

Back in the days!

Cornelia

For quite some time I wanted to thank you for all your wonderful and interesting Newsletters. These photos were taken long before your Newsletter came out and are the reason why we still remember and love Namibia and the wonderful time we had.

Giraffe – snare – calf!

Simone Schoombee - Aqualand

On the day my husband and I returned from South Africa, I received a message from my mother: our giraffe cow had stepped into a snare, the wire tight around her hoof. We had to act quickly. I contacted Dr Ulf, and we arranged everything for the next morning, June 30th.

At first the dart missed, and the giraffes became unsettled, so we paused to let them calm down. Later, using the Kubota, we approached again. This time the dart hit. I spoke softly to her as she grew drowsy, but she resisted strongly. With ropes and teamwork, she was finally brought down. My heart broke seeing her struggle, but I stayed by her side, lifting her head, stroking her, and speaking to her. My father cut off the snare while my mother and Mariska supported me. She was given the reversal drug, and within seconds she was back on her feet, walking into the veld. Exhausted but relieved, I cried as my mother held me.

Just days later, on July 11th, our giraffe cow "Princess" unexpectedly gave birth to a healthy calf; tiny ears peeking above the grass, strong and drinking well! After all the trauma, she became a proud mother. It reminds us that God made these amazing creatures and watches over them! The cow is still hiding her calf, but as soon as we get a nice photo we will share it with you!

WILDLIFE VETS NAMIBIA

Venasha

Juliette Erdtsieck – Rhino Momma Project

In June 2022, you arrived by me with a fragile little rhino calf whose mother had rejected her. Her body temperature was dangerously low, and glucose levels unstable; it was touch and go. Soon, dung tests revealed protozoal infestations. Both Venasha and another orphaned calf, Lily, struggled, but became inseparable friends. Tragedy struck when Lily passed away, leaving Venasha in need of a companion…

She was introduced to Nanna, one of the rhino "grannies," who took over the role of mother and helped her grow stronger. Venasha remained stubborn, refusing grass and lucerne. I tried every trick in the book! Only when an orphan donkey, Dominic, began eating with Nanna did jealousy push her to finally join in. Group pressure worked where I had failed 😉

Christmas 2024 brought another crisis… Nanna, knowing something was wrong, brought Venasha to me. Venasha suddenly lost condition, and food and water came pouring out through her nose. Both were passively moved into the corridor where more intensive supervision could take place. I called Ulf, who immediately left his family celebration to help. He suspected an obstruction or rabies. Venasha was immobilized, examined and treated. The next day, I found Nanna alone without Venasha. We looked everywhere for her! Eventually she was found close to one of our small camps. There was a small improvement in her drinking, so we ruled out rabies. Rhinos hate being alone, but Venasha was too weak to walk back to Nanna. Instead, we walked old Nanna to her. An endurance test! In the blazing heat, Nanna crossed breeding camps and a dominant bull, Brutus. After many hours, the two reunited, and Venasha turned around completely. She quickly picked up condition and became her true self again.

In 2025, Venasha bonded with a young bull, Travolta, while Nanna joined a Granny group. Then the next issue struck… Venasha was found alone again, suffering from a bladder infection, but recovered thanks to Ulf's guidance and antibiotics. At the start of 2026, she was dehorned for safety, and re-released. After some wandering around, she now finally bonded with another group of rhinos and is now on the right road to rewilding.

This journey, with all its battles and triumphs, belongs not only to Venasha but to you, Wildlife Vets Namibia. From the Christmas calls to the countless interventions, your dedication made her survival possible. Venasha's story is a living testament to your work.

Thanks Juliette for this amazing story! We did not anticipate second places, but you deserve one! A cappie and chocolates will be heading your way!

WILDLIFE VETS NAMIBIA

Comparing rhino lady parts...

Wendy Furness – Worldwide Vets

Does comparing rhino lady parts count as a comedy wildlife vets encounter?
Saved the rhino an unnecessary sedation, but my phone is now dodgy!

Okay... This story requires a bit of explanation before you all start thinking weirdly about us 😂! We immobilized a rhino cow to dehorn her, and while monitoring, we noticed that her vulva seemed unusual. But how many of us have properly looked at rhino lady parts?! An extensive Google Search about 'rhino vulva's' was launched, experts were called, and in the end it all seemed there was nothing bad. Except maybe for Wendy's phone history! The things vets can get excited about!

Lekker ou dae

Bernie Simon – Simon Wildlife

Some stories are sweet and short;
lekker ou dae (good old days).

We guess some of these stories are better told around the fire and should not be written down 😂

OUR WINNER!

Marie Lemerle of the Brown Hyena Research Project!

A huge congratulations to Marie for sending in the winning story! Thank you for your beautiful story and for the passion you bring to brown hyena conservation. A well-deserved win and we hope you give the oryx sand painting a nice spot!

The two field trips we have done with Marie to the Tsau//Khaeb (Sperrgebiet) National Park to immobilize brown hyenas remain some of our most memorable experiences. It is a place completely different from our normal 'habitat'. Hiding between rocks and in between seals, waiting patiently for that one particular hyena to appear... We are incredibly proud of Marie. Since those trips, she has done a course with us, and got herself officially registered as a Wildlife Para-Professional, which means she can now dart and collar the hyenas herself. That is real conservation in action and we are glad we could be a small part of her journey!

WILDLIFE VETS NAMIBIA

How brown hyenas dragged Ulf and Mariska to a very special environment...

Marie Lemerle - Brown Hyena Research Project

In 2021, I was starting my PhD work with the Brown Hyena Research Project, based in Lüderitz. As part of my study, I needed to fit a few brown hyenas with GPS collars. This is when I contacted Ulf and Mariska, and we worked together for the first time. I think this field trip was quite unique for them. I dragged them all the way to southern coastal Namibia, into an area where very few people go... the restricted area of the Tsau//Khaeb (Sperrgebiet) National Park! For this trip, they had to provide their codes of conduct and get special permits from the diamond mining companies and the Ministry of Mines and Energy. They had to go through special induction talks before entering the area and even pass a breathalyser test! Not to worry, we sneaked some bottles of red wine in so that Ulf could survive the few days there.

Encounter on the beach with Boston... who was not on the darting list!

The team enjoying the view of the seal colony.

We camped near the Baker's Bay seal colony for a few days and tried to dart several of the brown hyenas from this area to fit them with GPS collars for research purposes. While we waited for the hyenas to arrive at the seal colony, we were sitting on a rock surrounded by Cape fur seals, watching the big waves crashing into the rocks and the seals surfing the waves. I'm sure Ulf and Mariska have had worse places to sit and wait for a darting opportunity. 😊

Working on Riyadh after Ulf dragged him out of the water.

Darting there wasn't the easiest! Hyenas are used to eating seals, so bringing any other type of bait did not interest them. They knew that we were up to something! The brown hyenas had to be free-darted, and believe me, it is hard to approach them in a discreet manner in such an open environment. For some reason, Ulf did not want to crawl on the beach and pretend to be a seal. Such a lack of dedication... But in the end, he still managed to shoot them successfully! We had a stressful moment when a young male called Riyadh ran away after being darted and decided to fall asleep on the flooded beach area after high tide. Luckily, Ulf was quickly on site and was able to drag him out of the water safely.

One evening, we found two hyenas further inland: Pisa and Seoul. Pisa was a good-looking hyena, easily recognised by his floppy ear. The other hyena was Seoul, who looked older and was missing a foot. I asked Ulf to aim for Pisa, who was a very good candidate for collaring for my study. However, in the evening light, Ulf ended up shooting Seoul. Maybe those bottles of wine were not such a good idea after all... Anyway, it was still a good opportunity to collect samples from Seoul and have a look at her. We were shocked when we realised that one of her back legs was dislocated, while her other one was missing a foot! She was completely relying on her front legs to walk, and she was even missing two canines. The hyenas at Baker's Bay show so much resilience, they are really amazing. Obviously, we did not collar her. She woke up nicely with a little booster of vitamins for the trouble. In the end, we ended up collaring another hyena called Geneva, who belonged to the same clan as Pisa, so I got the data that I needed! 😊

After a few intense days of darting, Ulf and Mariska got a free tour through the park. How often do you finish a work trip with a stop at the majestic Bogenfels Arch, a visit to a ghost town and a drive through the dunes? Luckily, they were here to drag me out when I got stuck in the sand...

Some well-deserved tourism at the end of the work trip!

It was a successful trip, and they came back the following year to do it all over again! Since then, we have worked together several times and I have also learned so much through all the courses and weekends that they have organised.

WILDLIFE VETS NAMIBIA

INTRODUCING KAYLEIGH!

This month's newsletter is already a big celebration, and now we have even more good news to share. We are very excited to introduce Kayleigh, the newest member of the Wildlife Vets Namibia team, who is now working full-time alongside Dr Max.

Kayleigh joined us by the end of May and has quickly built up solid experience with a wide range of wildlife species. She is a qualified veterinary nurse (registered with our Namibian Veterinary Council), and as such, she brings valuable skills to every capture or treatment. Kayleigh is not only Dr Max his assistant, but also his fiancée! Together they make a strong team in the field.

With two full-time wildlife veterinarians, each supported by qualified assistants, we can increase our availability and response capacity both in Namibia and abroad. Having trained assistants on the ground means that procedures run faster and more efficiently; the vet does not always need to land or stay with the animal until it wakes up. In the end, this saves the client both on helicopter hours and professional time!. Below is a short introduction from Kayleigh herself, we hope you get to meet her soon!

Hi everyone!

My name is Kayleigh Miller and I am so excited to have joined the team at Wildlife Vets Namibia as a veterinary nurse.

I graduated with a Bachelor of Veterinary Nursing degree from the University of Pretoria, Onderstepoort Campus in 2022. After graduating, I worked at a specialist veterinary referral practice in South Africa, where I gained valuable experience caring for a wide range of complex medical and surgical cases. This role has helped me develop my clinical skills and has prepared me well for this exciting new chapter in wildlife veterinary medicine.

I have always had a passion for animal health and welfare, and I feel incredibly fortunate to now be part of a team that is so dedicated to the conservation and care of Namibia's wildlife. I am looking forward to expanding my knowledge of wildlife medicine, contributing to the important work being done here, and learning from such an experienced and passionate group of professionals.

If I can be of your assistance, or if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Kind regards, Kayleigh

Contact details Kayleigh:

+264 81 421 8242

kayleigh@wildlifevetsnamibia.com

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Cheers, thank you for being part of our journey!

Dr Ulf Tubbesing
ulf@wildlifevetsnamibia.com
+264 81 128 0350

Dr Maximilian Krings
max@wildlifevetsnamibia.com
+264 81 760 0577

Mariska Bijsterbosch
mariska@wildlifevetsnamibia.com
+264 81 382 8473

Kayleigh Miller
kayleigh@wildlifevetsnamibia.com
+264 81 421 8242

Facebook:
Wildlife Vets Namibia

Instagram:
@wildlife_vets_namibia

YouTube:
Wildlife Vets Namibia

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