



MEDIA RELEASE

ISSUED BY: THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN WILDLIFE COLLEGE

OCTOBER 2017

IFAW PROVIDES SUBSTANTIAL GRANT TO HELP SUPPORT ANTI-POACHING CANINE CAPABILITY

Following a visit to the Southern African Wildlife College (SAWC) by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), represented by Dr Joseph Okori, IFAW Regional Director Southern Africa and Director of IFAW's Landscape and Conservation Programme, a substantial three-year grant was awarded to the SAWC by IFAW Internationaler Tierschutz-Fonds GmbH. This grant will support and enable the highest possible standards and best practices for the welfare of dogs working in the service of wildlife conservation at the College. This partnership is further aimed at supporting, training and building the capacity of the canine unit, which will in turn support the work of field rangers and wildlife law enforcement officers across Africa.

Dr. Joseph Okori said IFAW was pleased to be supporting the invaluable work of the SAWC and its canine unit. "During our visit to the College we were able to witness, first hand, the exceptional capabilities of the dogs and their handlers. There is no doubt that dogs trained by the SAWC's canine unit are an effective addition to the bouquet of tactics law enforcers employ in successfully tracking, apprehending and arresting poachers. We are delighted to be able to support the initiative," he said.

This valued grant from IFAW follows on from the grant awarded to the SAWC by the WWF Nedbank Green Trust, which enabled the College to start up the project and produce accredited dog handlers with the assistance of Johan van Straaten, the SAWC's Dog Master.

"Thanks to the support provided, we now have a fully fledged canine training unit. Both the dogs and the dog handlers are now operationally competent and are able contribute to anti-poaching efforts within the Joint Protection Zone of the Kruger National Park and the Greater Kruger Environmental Protection Alliance reserves on the western border. Ultimately we see this capability being used across the SADC region," said Theresa Sowry, SAWC CEO.

The scope of the WWF Nedbank Green Trust project included infrastructure development at the canine unit, operational costs, training equipment, course design and accreditation as well as the initial training of dogs in disciplines that are considered to be of most benefit to counter poaching. This includes line tracking dogs – trained to follow poachers on line with a handler and support group, free tracking or running dogs – trained to locate, track and indicate the presence of fleeing poachers; and incursion dogs or spoor cutters – trained to locate and indicate crossing of roads or borders by poachers. Other dogs that will be trained include gate dogs – trained to sniff out firearms and illegal substances as well as patrol dogs that will assist with locating and apprehending unauthorized personnel within conservation areas.

“All of these interventions are, with the support of the donor community, being developed and progressed to counter the current poaching incursions that are being experienced daily, more specifically in the Greater Kruger area. Training of dogs and their handlers across other reserves and protected areas is also being conducted at the K9 unit,” said Sowry.

“We look forward to a long and fruitful relationship with IFAW which, together with other donors, is enabling us to move forward with this critical project. Once properly trained, these dogs have proven to be one of the most effective anti-poaching tools available. Coupled with well trained and equipped field rangers, aerial support and assistance from the community, inroads are being made into the rhino poaching crisis, specifically in areas where this four tiered approach is being deployed,” she added.

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The Southern African Wildlife College, which is located 10km west of the Kruger National Park in South Africa, is a non-profit organization delivering conservation education as well as training and skills development programmes to help ensure the region's rich biological diversity and ensure that its threatened species are conserved and protected. In doing so, the College provide tomorrow's conservation leaders, field rangers and the community with the skills needed to become partners in saving the continent's natural heritage.

Founded in 1969, IFAW rescues and protects animals around the world. With projects in more than 40 countries, IFAW rescues individual animals, works to prevent cruelty to animals, and advocates for the protection of wildlife and habitats. For more information, visit www.ifaw.org. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). Photos are available at www.ifawimages.com