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RHINO MOTHER AND CALF FOUND BUTCHERED

Just weeks after Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife announced plans to dehorn rhino in a desperate effort to curb poaching a rhino mother and female calf were found butchered by poachers on a game reserve in the Magudu area yesterday morning.

Both animals had their horns cut off. Police and park officials are investigating the incident.

The Witness previously reported

that Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife had announced it would commence dehorning of rhinos in the Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park from April 8.

Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife spokesperson Musa Mntambo said that 109 rhinos were killed in the park since the beginning of this year. 231 rhinos have been poached in South Africa this year; 143 cases from KZN.

He indicated that the process of

dehorning a rhino has no impact on the animal. After being sedated, the rhino wakes up and shows no signs of discomfort.

"KZN has played a critical role in rhino conservation in Africa, which is why we are committing resources towards supporting the authorities in their efforts to protect rhinos. Beyond the dehorning programme, we will also be supporting Ezemvelo in its broader

efforts to implement the Ezemvelo KZN Guardianship Strategy for Rhinoceros," said WWF South Africa CEO Dr Morné du Plessis.

Ezemvelo's chief executive Sihle Mkhize had previously stated that the decision to introduce dehorning was made with a heavy heart given the departure from their traditional conservation methods. "Rhino dehorning goes against the grain of what we

stand for, but the persistent threat posed by poachers has necessitated more drastic measures to protect our rhinos," Mkhize explained.

Dehorning now forms part of a wider strategy aimed at bolstering park defences through increased patrols, enhanced surveillance, integrity testing and improved boundary fences. — Witness Reporter and *Northern Natal News*.