

Media Statement



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TO: ALL MEDIA

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RE: NPA OBTAINS A PRESERVATION ORDER FOR 2921 DONKEY HIDES

The Asset Forfeiture Unit (**AFU**) of the National Prosecuting Authority (**NPA**) has secured a preservation order on 10 May 2017 for 2921 donkey hides as well as the container they were kept in. The donkey hides has an estimated value of R4 381 500.

The successful recovery of the donkey hides was due to excellent work by the South African Police Service (**the SAPS**) that played a vital role in seizing the hides before they were shipped to China.

The NPA and the SAPS are committed to take drastic action to eradicate the unlawful stealing and slaughter of donkeys for their hides, which is exported for their medicinal use in the east.

Background

During the last few years, the sale of donkey hides became highly profitable. This is largely due to a huge demand in donkey hides from China. Due to the sudden increase in demand in donkey hides, donkeys are stolen in South Africa and then brutally killed in order to obtain their hides. This has spiked outrage from various animal rights groups. The outcry is due not only to the increase in theft of the animals but also the manner of their killings to obtain the hides.

It is currently legal to export donkey hides from South Africa but only if the donkey was first sold by the legitimate owner. The only legal way to slaughter a donkey to obtain its skin for export is via a registered abattoir. There are only 3 legally registered equine abattoirs in South Africa.

The details of the case

On 16 January 2017, Captain Ockert Jaco Van Der Walt of the Cullinan Stock Theft Unit received information that illegal donkey hides were dried and kept at Plot 29 in Benoni. On the same day he visited the scene and found some donkey hides in a shed. He was told that more donkey hides were kept in a nearby locked container.

Whilst still on the scene, a truck with an empty container arrived, which was contracted to transport the hides to Johannesburg and then to Durban Port. If not for the swift action of Captain Van Der Walt the hides would have been exported.

Captain Van Der Walt, obtained a search warrant for the premises and was able to open the container. It was full of donkey hides. In total 2921 donkey hides were seized on the scene and taken to the Cullinan Stock Theft Unit. The container was also seized.

After investigations it was uncovered that the shipping instructions were given by a company called Anatic Trading (Pty) Ltd. Anatic Trading was registered on 22 September 2015 as a private company at the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) with registration number 2015/340176/07. Its registered address is 51 Rollo Street, Cyrildene, Johannesburg.

Captain Van Der Walt was handed seemingly false invoices to account for the possession of the donkey hides. The invoices received only account for the purchase of 133 donkeys. This leaves the origin of 2788 donkey hides unexplained. It is the State's case that the only reasonable inference that can be drawn from the lack of documentation is that the remaining 2788 donkey hides, if not all, were illegally acquired or stolen, which is a contravention of the Stock Theft Act.

Captain Van der Walt obtained statements from 2 of the 3 registered equine abattoirs. Both Middelvlei and Vaalbank Abattoirs deny that the hides seized originate from their abattoirs. What is disturbing is that both Middelvlei and Vaalbank Abattoirs were approached by Chinese nationals after the search and seizure for false invoices. None of the 2921 donkeys were therefore legally slaughtered which is an offence in terms of section 7 of the Meat Safety Act.

Captain Van Der Walt obtained further shipping invoices of previous shipments of donkey hides by Anatic Trading. Anatic Trading shipped a total of 12 776 donkey hides to Hong Kong in the 6 months between July 2016 and December 2016. The 2921 donkey hides found on Plot 29 bring total to 15 697 donkey hides in the possession of Anatic Trading. The State estimates that at most only 10 500 donkey skins may be traded legally in South Africa per year.

It is submitted by the State that the container represents an instrumentality of an offence whilst the hides represent the proceeds of stock theft perpetrated against persons unknown to the state as well as the contravention of section 7 of the Meat Safety Act.

The AFU orders

On 10 May 2017, the AFU obtained a preservation order in terms of the Prevention of Organised Crime Act (**POCA**) in the Pretoria High Court, ordering that the hides and the container be kept at the Cullinan Stock Theft Unit until an application for a forfeiture order is sought. The AFU obtained the order on the basis that the container represents an instrumentality of an offence whilst the hides represent the proceeds of stock theft perpetrated against persons unknown to the state as well as the contravention of section 7 of the Meat Safety Act.

Kind Regards,

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