

Cyanobacteria in elephants in Tonunga Safari camp Botswana



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6th cycle Training of National Wildlife Focal Points

6e cycle de formation des Points focaux nationaux pour la faune sauvage

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- Background (Description of the outbreak)
- Challenges in reporting listed and non-listed WOH diseases.
- Solutions to identified challenges





Background

- Reports of elephant mortalities in CT1 game management area reached the office of the Director of Department of Veterinary Services on the 8th October 2020.
- Reports came from the Directorate of Department of Wildlife and National Parks wanting assistance in investigating the mortalities as they were thin on the ground.
- DVS joined the investigating team.
- As it turned out, the mortalities had occurred a lot earlier, the carcasses were putrefied, and a lot of autolysis had occurred.
- Nevertheless, epidemiological investigation (including interviews with locals and other stakeholders) was conducted, while clinical and pathological samples were collected and analysed.





Background

- Investigations also included vegetation, soil type, water (type and availability).
- Lab results concluded that the mortalities were due to cyanobacteria.



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Challenges in reporting elephant mortalities due to cyanobacteria.

Challenge 1: Competent authorities do not have complete clarity about their roles in animal (wildlife) health and disease reporting.

- DWNP reported the mortalities before making DVS aware of the situation.
- DWNP is responsible for conserving and managing fish and wildlife resources and their habitats.
- DVS's mandate is to protect and improve the health, quality, and marketability of animals, animal products, and veterinary biologics by preventing, controlling, eliminating and monitoring animal diseases.
- Therefore, there was an initial confusion on how to handle the outbreak.



Challenges in reporting elephant mortalities due to cyanobacteria.

Challenge 2: Extremely high interest of stakeholders in the incident, leading to a high-pressure situation

- Conservation groups
- Neighbouring countries
- Trading partners
- Global

There was pressure from multiple stakeholders to conclude the investigations and report on the cause.



Challenges in reporting elephant mortalities due to cyanobacteria.

Challenge 3: Technical issues

1. Navigating (uploading reports) the new WAHIS system
 - ✓ Attended training in Tunisia 2020

Other Challenges

1. Covid



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Conclusions/solutions

- Collaborating with DWNP on wildlife diseases and reporting
- Asking for technical assistance from WAHIS technical group



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