

**Publication:** Witness - Main

**Reach:** 6180

**Title:** ESCAPED LION KILLED NEAR VRYHEID AS SEARCH CONTINUES FOR TWO MORE

**AVE:**R 15037.11



**Publish date:** 05 Feb 2025

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## ESCAPED LION KILLED NEAR VRYHEID AS SEARCH CONTINUES FOR TWO MORE

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One of the three lions that had been living in the bush south-east of Vryheid, allegedly killing livestock, has been killed.

Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife said the lion was killed on Monday by a team com-

prising various government departments and private organisations.

Last month, Ezemvelo dispatched two teams to the area to search for the lions following reports of livestock being killed by wild animals, believed to be lions.

The Ezemvelo team, working alongside a second team led by a private professional hunter, lured the lions using a call-up method, which involves emitting sounds to attract them.

The operation involved

both ground and airborne forces.

Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife spokesperson Musa Mntambo said dogs also assisted with tracking.

"As the dogs followed the trail, two lions suddenly appeared at a distance from where the armed team was stationed," he said.

"During the chase, a third lion appeared nearby, and the dogs shifted their focus to it, allowing the professional hunter to kill it.

"The remaining two lions escaped into nearby bushes, prompting the

team to halt the search until the next sighting," Mntambo added.

Ezemvelo CEO Sihle Mkhize thanked various non-governmental organisations that assisted in the search using their own resources. Mkhize also conveyed his sympathy for community members who lost livestock to the lions.

"I know their spirits are crushed, as their livelihood depends on their livestock," he said.

"We empathise with them. The process of assessing the extent of

their losses will begin shortly.

"I appeal to the community to co-operate with our conservation officers once the process begins. In the meantime, I urge them to continue bringing their livestock home in the evenings to prevent further losses."

Ezemvelo appealed to the local community to inform local traditional leadership, the police, or Ezemvelo district conservation officer Lucky Zulu on 082 945 4255 if they spot the escaped lions.

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