

# Farmer found guilty for poisoning vultures

An Eastern Cape farmer, Armand Aucamp (34), has been found guilty for the illegal use of poison. Forty-eight Cape vultures were found poisoned on a farm in the Molteno district on 10 December 2013.



Aucamp had laced a sheep carcass with poison to target vagrant dogs for killing his sheep, but ended up killing vultures in the process.

The Eastern Cape Department of Nature Conservation charged Aucamp for the illegal use of poison. He pleaded guilty and was given a one year sentence and a R20,000 fine suspended for five years of which half the fine and sentence was lifted; in other words, if Aucamp commits a crime of this nature within the next five years, he will have to serve six months and pay the other R10,000.

The state prosecutor informed the court that the loss of the vultures is a huge blow to the environment and compared their numbers to that of the remaining rhino population. It is not only the death of these forty-eight vultures that is so devastating, but also their loss to their breeding partner and future chicks bred that has a devastating effect on the colony and its stability.

Cape vultures are classified as regionally endangered and globally vulnerable with under 4,000 breeding pairs left. The Cape vulture is the only endemic vulture species to Southern Africa and has already become extinct as a breeding species in Namibia, Zimbabwe and Swaziland.