

Namibia to sell rhinos and other rare animals

WINDHOEK (Reuter) The Namibian government is to auction six rare black rhinos, with bids starting at \$1 million.

They will be among scores of animals up for sale to breeders and game farmers on May 28, Hanno Rumpf, permanent secretary for wildlife, conservation and tourism, said Tuesday.

The two bulls and four cows will be sold only for breeding and not for hunting or to zoos.

"We believe that interested farmers can play an important role in the conservation of these animals," Rumpf said.

The reserve price on the rhino group will be three million rand, equivalent to about \$1 million, he said.

Also on auction will be 11 young elephants, 10 buffalo,

20 rare roan antelope, giraffe, zebra, eland and other animals.

The rhino are hunted for their horns of compressed hair, valued for medicinal purposes in Asia and for ceremonial dagger handles in Yemen.

Namibia pioneered the de-horning of black rhino in 1989 in a largely successful bid to halt poaching that had brought the animals to the brink of extinction.

"Successful management of certain species including black rhino and elephant has made sustainable utilization possible, resulting in a surplus of animals which can be made available to the public without affecting sustainable populations within game parks," Rumpf said.

Cruelty to pets rises in Britain

LONDON (Reuter) Britain, once known as a nation of animal lovers, has become a cruel and uncaring place for pets, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals said Tuesday.

The organization called for tougher sentences on animal abusers after announcing the number of convictions for such cruelty last year increased by 10 percent to more than 3,000.

"Banning all animal abus-

ers from keeping animals for many years is the only effective deterrent," said the RSPCA's Richard Davies.

Harry Greenway, a parliamentarian from the ruling Conservative Party, said he would urge the government to amend the law "as a matter of the utmost urgency."

Figures showed dogs were the most abused. But there was a 45 percent rise in cruelty to cats.