

Namibians warned not to use elephant dung to ward off virus

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Namibia's health minister on Tuesday warned against the use of elephant dung, traditionally steamed and inhaled as a cure for the flu, to ward off the coronavirus.

The sparsely populated southern African country has seen infections

double over the past month, with 4,464 cases and 37 deaths recorded to date.

Many Namibians have turned to [natural remedies](#) in the hope of protecting themselves against the viral disease, including the use of elephant dung.

The practice has not been scientifically tested.

"I am worried about unscrupulous people who would make other people spend money on useless remedies in the hope that they will be cured," Health Minister Kalumbi Shangula told AFP on Tuesday, denouncing elephant dung sellers as "opportunistic".

"A desperate person may do a desperate thing," he added. "It is unethical. Do not spend money on useless remedies."

Namibia's environment ministry said it had heard rumours of people buying and re-selling elephant dung as a treatment for COVID-19.

"We understand elephant dung is used traditionally as medicine elsewhere in the country," the ministry's spokesman Romeo Muyunda told local media on Monday.

He called on citizens not to trespass [national parks](#) in search of dung, warning that offenders would be fined.

"Collecting dung outside national parks is not restricted," Muyunda added. "We just urge people to do so cautiously."

Aside from the flu, elephant dung is widely believed to treat body ailments such as nosebleeds, headaches and toothaches.

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