



Wildlife Medicine and Chemical Immobilization Course

Etosha Heights Private Reserve, Namibia

1 – 12 June 2025

GCF is committed to securing a future for all giraffe populations and we envision a continent where giraffe live wild and free within their historical range, protected by the people who share their landscape.

To realize this vision, we collaborate closely with governments, NGOs, academic institutions, and local communities across Africa. Giraffe continue to face numerous human-induced threats—most notably habitat loss, fragmentation, poaching, and disease.

GCF currently supports giraffe conservation initiatives for all four species across 21 African countries, directly impacting over 100 million acres of giraffe habitat. Through this work, we have recognized the increasingly vital role of wildlife veterinarians—especially as conservation translocations have emerged as essential and effective tools for expanding the giraffe range. At the same time, the use of satellite GPS technology for wildlife tracking continues to grow in importance. Both require skilled veterinary support.

Wildlife medicine is one of the most demanding branches of veterinary practice. It often involves working in remote, unpredictable environments with potentially dangerous animals and potent drugs. Yet, most young wildlife veterinarians in Africa begin their careers with limited exposure to chemical immobilization, darting protocols, or best practices for wildlife handling—topics rarely addressed in standard university curricula. The lack of specialized training and management experience can make it difficult for them to gain a foothold in their profession.

GCF is committed to changing this.

In 2022, we launched the GCF Wildlife Medicine and Chemical Immobilization Course, an annual, hands-on training programme for African wildlife veterinarians. This intensive, 12-day course takes place in Namibia and brings together early-career vets from across

the continent with experienced mentors. Through a dynamic combination of lectures, safety training, and practical field exercises, participants build critical skills and confidence while working directly with wildlife.

Each year's course is unique—shaped by the participants, mentors and local conditions—but one thing remains constant: the immense value of the experience. It is a transformative opportunity for everyone involved. Beyond the technical and leadership skills developed, the course fosters cultural exchange, shared learning, and meaningful connection. Around the fire at the end of long days in the field, conversations continue—about conservation, challenges, and our collective hopes for wildlife in Africa.

This year, seven participants from Angola, Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia, each had the opportunity to take the lead on at least one immobilization of a zebra, wildebeest or giraffe. In addition, the training focused on emergency first aid in remote places, safe handling of dangerous drugs, immobilization protocols for a range of wildlife species, dart loading and darting practice, gun and helicopter safely, daring from the vehicle and helicopter.

To date, GCF has trained 32 wildlife veterinarians from 14 African countries; namely Angola, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. Together with their mentors, they form a growing network of skilled professionals driving conservation efforts across the continent—and giving giraffe, and other species, a better chance to thrive.

A special thanks goes to our donors, who enable us to hold this course annually as well as the amazing mentors who are so very generous with their time and sharing their invaluable experience.

