

Rhinoceros Immobilization at the San Diego Wild Animal Park

Jack L. Allen, DVM
Diplomate, American College of Zoological Medicine
Senior Veterinarian
San Diego Wild Animal Park

Abstract: Immobilization of rhinoceros is challenging. A successful procedure will include careful planning, knowledge of anesthetic agents, familiarity with darting systems, monitoring equipment, general equipment (ropes, blindfold, ear plugs, etc.) and an experienced veterinary/keeper staff. Immobilization of rhinoceros is complicated by their exquisite sensitivity to narcotic agents, respiratory depression while under anesthesia, large body mass and peculiar anatomic features. Narcotic agents used include etorphine and carfentanil. Supplemental agents used to extend anesthesia include: ketamine, propofol, GG, and a GG-ketamine mixture. Narcotic antagonists include naltrexone and diprenorphine. The phenomena of renarcotization is rare but does occur in rhinoceros. If possible, a 24 hour food fast and 12 hour water fast is ideal prior to immobilization. Various case scenarios will be discussed to illustrate these points.