

# RECOMMENDED TRANSPORT GUIDELINES FOR RHINOCEROS

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Rhinoceros can be crate trained and habituated to transport, with no obvious ill effects. However, since rhinoceros are not routinely transported, planning for movement should be started well in advance. Transport plans require coordination between animal keepers familiar with the individual animal to be moved, veterinarians and animal managers at the sending and receiving institutions, and the contracted transporter; and must comply with local, state, and federal regulations (United States Department of Agriculture). For additional information, refer to the AZA Rhinoceros Husbandry Manual and USDA-APHIS Animal Welfare Act.

The following information should be used as general guidelines when conducting transport of rhinoceros. The final decision for specific procedures should be made in partnership between the shipping and receiving institutions.

## PRIOR TO TRANSPORT

- Transport should be arranged with an individual or company experienced in and properly equipped for moving these species. Contact other institutions for references.
- A written transport plan should be developed.
  - Animal managers and veterinarians from the sending and receiving institutions should be involved and should agree upon a designee to write the plan.
  - Plan should detail responsibilities of all parties involved.
  - Facilities in route should be contacted in advance for assistance with possible emergencies.
- If a rhinoceros will be transported in a crate, it is best to contact other facilities with experience in crate design. The crate should be inspected and meet the following criteria:
  - Allow the rhino to stand comfortably.
  - Provide drainage for urine.
  - Be adequately reinforced.
  - Have adequate the capacity to maintain a temperature between 55 and 70 degrees F with adequate ventilation; if temperatures will be outside this range, the animal should be monitored more frequently. (A temperature data logger is recommended.)
  - Permit access for food and water for transport longer than 8-16 hrs.
  - Allow handlers to adequately monitor the rhino's condition.
- Rhinoceros shipped by airline must meet the guidelines of the International Air Transport Association (IATA).
- Acclimatization to the crate may take from 1-6 weeks depending on the individual rhino's temperament. This process should begin as early as possible before the transport date.
- Preshipment health assessment should be completed and results communicated between veterinarians and animal managers at the shipping and receiving institutions. (See VAG Preshipment Protocol for Rhinoceros for recommendations.)

## **DURING TRANSPORT**

- Handlers familiar with the individual rhino should travel with the animal to the receiving institution, whenever feasible.
- A two week supply of hay and grain should accompany the animal to the new facility. This allows a gradual transition to the new diet.
- The decision to use sedation or chemical immobilization for transport of a rhinoceros should be made in advance as part of the written transport plan.
  - If chemical immobilization or sedation is used to load the animal, the rhino should be observed for a period of time determined by the veterinarian prior to leaving or have a veterinarian accompany the shipment to avoid complications associated with drug effects.
  - Personnel accompanying the rhino must be familiar with common side effects of the drugs and actions needed to prevent or correct complications. Adequate equipment and supplies should be available.
  - If the rhinoceros is being transported by airplane, it is strongly recommended that a veterinarian accompany the animal. The effects of sedatives or anesthetic drugs combined with the effects of altitude may potentially lead to more serious side effects.
- During transport, the rhinoceros should periodically be provided with hay and should be given access to water if the transport time is greater than 16 hours.
- Personnel should regularly monitor the condition of the animal during transport. It is important that adequate ventilation and temperature control be maintained for the comfort and well-being of the rhino.

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