

**ELEPHANT TAG**  
**TRANSPORT GUIDELINES FOR ELEPHANTS**  
**July 2018**

Elephants can be trained and habituated to transport, with no obvious ill effects. However, zoo elephants are not routinely transported, and planning for movement should be started well in advance. Transport plans require coordination between elephant handlers familiar with the individual elephant to be moved, veterinarians and elephant managers at the sending and receiving institutions, and the contracted transporter; and must comply with local, state, and federal regulations. For additional information, refer to the Elephant Husbandry Manual, AZA Standards for Elephant Management and Care, and USDA-APHIS Animal Welfare Act.

The following information should be used as general guidelines when conducting an elephant transport. 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 an elephant. Contact other institutions for references.
- A written transport plan should be developed.
  - Elephant 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 an elephant will be transported in a trailer, the trailer should be inspected by the sending institution and meet the following criteria:
  - Allow the elephant to stand comfortably.
  - Provide drainage for urine.
  - Be adequately reinforced and allow the elephant to be safely tethered.
  - Have adequate heating or cooling systems to maintain the temperature between 55 and 70 degrees F with adequate ventilation; if temperatures will be outside this range, the elephant should be monitored more frequently.
  - Permit access for food and water.
  - Allow handlers to adequately monitor the elephant's condition.
- If an elephant will be transported in a crate, it is best to contact other facilities with experience in crate design.
- Elephants shipped by airline must meet the guidelines of the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

- Acclimatization to the trailer or crate may take from 1-6 weeks depending on the individual elephant's temperament. This process should begin as early as possible before the transport date. Note: access to the trailer being used for transport may not be feasible if the institution contracts with a private transporter.

## **DURING TRANSPORT**

- Handlers familiar with the individual elephant should travel with the elephant to the receiving institution.
- A two week supply of hay and grain should accompany the elephant to the new facility. This allows a gradual transition to the new diet.
- The decision to use sedation or chemical immobilization for transport of an elephant should be made in advance as part of the written transport plan.
  - If chemical immobilization or sedation is used to load the animal, the elephant should have the drugs tested prior to use on the day of loading to determine effect or potential adverse effects. It is ideal to have a veterinarian accompany the shipment to avoid complications associated with drug effects during transport.
  - Personnel accompanying the elephant 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 elephant is being transported by airplane, it is strongly recommended that a veterinarian accompany the elephant. The effects of sedatives or anesthetic drugs combined with the effects of altitude may potentially lead to more serious side effects.
  - Contact the SSP Veterinary Advisor for current recommendations regarding sedation or see AZA Elephant Husbandry Manual.
- During transport, the elephant 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 elephant.