

Kenya Wildlife Service



Guidelines for Translocation of Wildlife Species in Kenya (2018)



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) is the body corporate established by the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act of 2013 to conserve and manage wildlife in Kenya. In performing its functions, the Service undertakes translocations for the management of wildlife populations for various purposes.

These guidelines have been developed by the Biodiversity Research and Planning Directorate in response to the increasing occurrence of translocations in Kenya to address various wildlife management needs. They are intended to ensure that translocations achieve their intended purposes by acting as a guide for procedures useful to translocation activities. Noting that a translocation exercise can be a lengthy, complex and expensive process, the guidelines do not represent an inflexible code of conduct. Where prevailing circumstances are justified, they can be modified to ensure that each translocation achieves the intended objectives. The guidelines are based on best practices adopted from the IUCN translocation guidelines modified to suit local conditions and needs.

2. CONTEXT

The increasing number of translocations led to the development of these guidelines to guide the planning, implementation, monitoring and documentation of translocation programs to ensure that they have the highest chance of success and to maximise their contribution to wildlife conservation. The primary audience of these guidelines are decision makers, wildlife managers, scientists and veterinarians. The guidelines are to be implemented in the context of the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act of 2013 and other relevant legislations and policies pertaining to biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of natural resources in Kenya.

There are numerous factors that can influence this outcome and either make a success or failure of the project. The condition of animals immediately post- release is an important factor for the successful translocation outcome and as such all efforts should be implemented to ensure that the animals are released into optimal habitat and in good condition immediately prior to release. There are three common themes to successful translocation projects (Parker *et al.*, 2012):

- a) They are carefully planned and carried out by a multidisciplinary team.
- b) The translocation planning and methodology is underpinned by an intimate biological and ecological knowledge of the translocated species coupled with appropriate husbandry and release techniques.

- c) Stress is often cited as a significant reason for translocation failure and is thus considered both explicitly and implicitly (directly and indirectly).

3. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Translocation is the deliberate and mediated movement of wild animals from one location to another. The broader meaning of the term includes:

- a) Introduction: The deliberate translocation of a species into the wild in areas where it does not occur naturally and has not occurred historically but within an appropriate habitat and eco-geographical area, for the purpose of conservation. This is a feasible conservation tool only when there is no remaining area left within a species' historic range;
- b) Re-introduction: The deliberate translocation of a species into the wild in areas where it was indigenous in historic times but is no longer present. This is an attempt to establish a species in an area which was once a part of its habitat and has since been extirpated or extinct. ("Re-establishment" is a synonym);
- c) Re-enforcement/Re-stocking/Supplementation: The translocation of animals (species) to an area with an already existing population of con-specifics to improve the genetic makeup or increase in the numbers.

4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF TRANSLOCATION

4.1 Aims

The principle aims of any translocation are:

- a) A high post-release survival of translocated animals
- b) Establishment of a viable and free-ranging population of the species in the release site.

Translocations are now well entrenched as a conservation tool, with numbers of animals being released in reintroduction and re-enforcement projects increasing each year (Seddon et al, 2012). These projects aim to have:

- a) High post-release survival of the animals being translocated,
- b) Settlement in the release site and:
- c) Persistence through successful breeding, recruitment and population increase.

4.2 Objectives

The objectives of a translocation may include either or a combination of the following:

- a) To enhance species recovery programs;
- b) To maintain and/or restore natural biodiversity;
- c) To re-colonise former habitats of the species (re-introduction);
- d) To stop or reduce habitat destruction at the source site;
- e) To mitigate human-wildlife conflicts;
- f) To provide long-term economic benefits to the local and/or national economy;
- g) To promote conservation awareness;
- h) Vulnerable populations under threats for instance security and disease

5. DECISION MAKING PROCESS

- A translocation shall be approved only after a proposal prepared by the proponent is received and reviewed. T
- The proposal shall cover all relevant matters, including:
 - Objectives and justification: Any translocation will be justified with development of clear objectives, identification and assessment of risks, and with measures of performance and potential benefits to conservation;
 - Sufficient information about the target species including relevant knowledge about the biology, behavior and ecology of the species, its past and present distribution and conservation status;
 - Source and release environment and populations;
 - Post-release monitoring and research
- The department responsible for species conservation in KWS shall develop proposals emanating from the Service;
- Proposals from outside KWS shall be forwarded to the conservation area management. The area management shall conduct an assessment and prepare a report with clear recommendations, and forward to Director, Biodiversity Research and Planning;
- The Director, Biodiversity Research and Planning shall then forward the request and the conservation area assessment report for review by the Species Introduction and Re-introduction Committee on its contribution to wildlife conservation and management;

- The Committee shall make a report with recommendations to the KWS Executive Committee for further deliberations and forward the report to the Board of Trustees to make the final approval whether to proceed with the exercise or not; In the event the Board of trustees will be in transition the final approval will be made by Cabinet Secretary responsible for wildlife conservation and management.
- Translocations that shall require approval shall also include releases of captive (hand-raised) wildlife to the wild;
- Exempted from this process will be emergency translocations of animals involved in conflicts with humans that require immediate response that may not allow for a detailed translocation program. Such cases are justified by the objective of removing the animals from a demonstrably unavoidable situation that threaten human life and property. Such decisions shall be made by the Director-General.

6. LOGISTICAL COORDINATION AND PLANNING

A translocation is a lengthy and complex undertaking whose success or failure depends on accurate planning and effective coordination at all stages of the process. Every translocation therefore shall be planned and coordinated by a multidisciplinary coordination committee that will be responsible for planning all aspects of the process.

6.1 Multidisciplinary Coordination Committee

- Upon approval of a translocation by the Board of Trustees, the Director Biodiversity Research and Planning shall constitute a multidisciplinary team that shall bring together technical expertise in all aspects of the operation from relevant departments at KWS and stakeholders. The composition of this committee shall depend on the scope of the project.
- The overall team leader shall be the Director, Biodiversity Research and Planning. He/she shall be supported by sub-team leaders from the other disciplines. The overall team leader shall be responsible for coordinating the translocation exercise whereas the sub-team leaders shall be responsible for coordination of activities related to the areas of specialization including providing relevant scientific and technical inputs into the discussions by the committee so as to avoid making poor decisions regarding any aspect of the project.
- The overall team leader shall also coordinate with other relevant departments and provision will be made for publicity and public education about the project to ensure that

it is fully understood, accepted and supported by the local communities at the donor and recipient sites.

- The committee shall include but not limited to persons drawn from the following backgrounds:
 - a) Scientists (Ecologists, species specialists, environmental experts)
 - b) Security
 - c) Protected area managers (source and recipient site)
 - d) Veterinary doctors
 - e) Capture personnel
 - f) Airwing
 - g) other technical personnel will be co-opted on a need basis
- Other departments that may be incorporated during implementation of a translocation exercise will include:
 - a) Finance and/or funding bodies
 - b) Central workshop
 - c) Procurement
 - d) Corporate Communication
- The responsibilities of the committee shall be but not limited to the following:
 - a) Coordinate all phases of the translocation exercise;
 - b) Ensure that relevant government authorities and landowners (where applicable) approve the project;
 - c) Draw up a budget and secure adequate funding for all project phases. The budget shall cover the planning, execution and monitoring (pre- and post-translocation) phases;
 - d) Itemise and obtain the equipment and materials needed.
 - e) Manage the media coverage of the operation to ensure desired perception by the public

6.2 Planning Activities

- Adequate funding shall be secured for all the project phases prior to implementation.
- The departments responsible for species management and Ecological monitoring shall design and implement pre- and post-release programmes in consultation with areas' management of the source and recipient site to ensure the stated objectives of the operation are achieved. The programmes shall have capability to collect scientific data.

- The Veterinary Services division shall (and where applicable in consultation with the department responsible for species management) develop capture, translocation and release protocols that shall conform to international standards to guide execution of the project. These shall include but not limited to:
 - Capture, loading and transportation procedures
 - Release method (hard or soft). If soft release, the following shall be considered:
 - The holding facility (boma) design for the species to provide acceptable standards of animal welfare. These shall include spatial requirements and materials to avoid animals injuring themselves.
 - Appropriate holding period to allow animals settle and get used to new environmental conditions.
 - A veterinarian shall be regularly visiting to assess the health status of the animals during the holding period. However during the first few days there shall be a veterinarian on site at all times to address any emergencies as this is the most crucial stage as the animals acclimatise to their new environment.
 - Trained personnel with experience on animal husbandry shall be stationed at the boma at all times during the holding period to ensure animals are provided with all their needs.
- Every translocation shall adhere to internationally accepted standards for animal welfare, as well as comply with the legislation, regulations and policies on animal welfare in Kenya. Every effort shall be made to reduce stress. Stress in translocated animals may occur during capture, handling, transport and holding in bomas, including through confining unfamiliar individuals in close proximity. Soft release strategies may increase stress in wild-caught animals by prolonging their holding in bomas. Tranquillisers shall be used wherever possible to reduce stress during transportation and holding periods in bomas.
- The route shall be selected carefully to allow for the shortest possible driving time. It shall avoid towns and populated places where curious onlookers may increase stress to the animals. It shall however take considerations on the need for fuel stops.
- A suitable camping site with sufficient space to accommodate all equipment and personnel, accessibility to water and close to the capture site will be selected at the source site.

- The exercise shall not commence unless all relevant studies have been conducted and reports availed to the multidisciplinary coordination committee, and equipment and materials are ready.
- Pre-capture monitoring shall be undertaken in advance of the proposed translocation date to ensure that the most suitable animals are selected for translocation.
- All equipment needed for the operation shall be made available and in good working condition at least one month before the translocation. This shall include the following:
 - Any specialized equipment that will need to be built to specification prior to the operation.
 - Transport (aircrafts and vehicles) for delivery of personnel, equipment and animals.
 - Contingency planning where possible to respond to unexpected complications.
- Media coverage of the operation at the capture and release sites shall be managed by the head of the coordination committee and Corporate Communications department so that it does not stress the animals and compromise their safe release. In particular, media and VIP interferences shall be avoided at all costs.
- All access roads will be surveyed to determine serviceability and a report made to the coordination committee
- The head of veterinary services shall ensure all personnel requirements are available throughout the operation, as well as sufficient capture drugs (including antidotes and necessary emergency pharmaceuticals)
- Procurement for all requirements shall be carried out well before the target date of the operation. Drugs and darting equipment may be subject to certain legislative restrictions which may increase the time delays and therefore their procurement will be initiated several months before the translocation.

6.3 Planning the Timing of a Translocation

- As much as possible, unless with justified reason, translocations shall be undertaken when the ground is dry so as to avoid injuries to animals and personnel, as well as damage to vehicles and equipment. Dry ground also makes areas more accessible to the capture vehicles. It is preferable to plan captures for when the vegetation is less dense and leaf cover low so as to improve the helicopter team's ability to locate and keep animals visual from the air where helicopter darting is used.

- The end of the dry season and beginning of the wet season are inappropriate times for capture because of the poor condition of the animals. It is recommended that translocations are planned at the start of the dry season (end of wet season) when the condition of animals' are expected to be fairly good and the access roads have dried to facilitate capture and transport. Every considerations shall be made to compromise between condition of animal and good field conditions that will allow capture and transport.
- Capture of animals shall be timed to coincide with the cooler hours of the day (ideally below 25°C) to avoid the risk of hyperthermia and other heat related complications.

7. PRE-TRANSLOCATION ASSESSMENTS

7.1 Feasibility and Biological Assessments

- The Biodiversity Research and Planning Directorate, shall coordinate and undertake studies that shall inform the feasibility of any proposed translocation. These assessments shall be carried out in both the source and recipient environments and populations. Feasibility studies will cover the full range of relevant biological and non-biological factors. These assessments shall consider the following:
 - The justification and the objectives of the proposed translocation
 - Identification of source and recipient areas as well identifying the number, sex and age structures of animals to be removed from the source population(s)
 - Potential effects of translocated animals on the ecosystem at the donor and recipient areas
 - Analysis of preferred habitat by the concerned species which would guide long-term population management. Translocations shall only take place where the habitat and landscape requirements of the species are satisfied, and likely to be sustained for the foreseeable future. The area shall have sufficient carrying capacity to sustain growth of the translocated population and support a viable (self-sustaining) population in the long term.
 - Social behaviour, home range size, shelter and predators of species of concern
 - Food requirements, foraging and feeding behaviour
 - Identification and elimination, or reduction to a sufficient level, of previous causes of decline. These could include disease; poaching; conflicts with humans; pollution; poisoning; predation; and habitat loss.

- Water quality analysis at source and recipient areas shall be analysed and evaluated. Translocations shall only be undertaken only if water quality at recipient site is ascertained to be safe for consumption by animals.
- For migratory species, studies shall include the potential migratory areas.
- The translocation exercise shall be in conformity with the requirements of applicable environmental management and compliance regulations
- A disease risk assessment involving screening for any disease organisms in translocated animals including when possible, closely related species in the recipient areas shall be instituted so as to ensure:
 - a) Animals are as much as possible free from infections or contagious pathogens and parasites before transportation
 - b) Recipient site is free from diseases absent at the source site and to which the animals have no acquired immunity
- The Biodiversity Research and Planning directorate shall coordinate with the department responsible for security the identification and elimination of security threats and the short- and long-term protection of translocated animals.
- The Biodiversity Research and Planning directorate will where need be, undertake assessments into previous translocations outcomes of the same or similar species, and undertake consultations on various expertise.

7.2 Socio-Economic Assessments

The following will be considered prior to implementing a translocation:

- Assessment of the socio-economic impacts of translocations on local communities
- Assessment of attitudes of local communities to the project to ensure long term protection of the translocated animals, especially in areas prone to human-wildlife conflicts and poaching for the communities to fully understood, accept and support it.

7.3 Identification of Source Populations

- Individuals shall only be removed from a wild population after the effects of the translocation on the donor population have been assessed, and after it is guaranteed that these effects will not be negative.
- Optimal number and composition of individuals to be translocated (sex and ages) will be determined so as to promote establishment of a viable population at recipient site.

- Where animals are to cross international boundaries, appropriate veterinary measures shall be undertaken including quarantine arrangements and obtaining required permits to ensure health of the animals.

7.4 Release of Captive Animals

- Noting that hand-raised animals may be particularly vulnerable to predation, injury or stress in their new environments, such animals shall be rehabilitated sufficiently so as to give them an opportunity to acquire the necessary skills to enable survival in the wild. These may include through training in their captive environment or at the release site.
- Care will be taken to ensure that potentially dangerous captive animals such as large carnivores are not so confident in the presence of humans that they might be a danger to communities and/or their livestock.
- Appropriate post-release monitoring strategies shall be designed to assess the achievement of objectives of translocated hand-raised wildlife.
- Release of hand-raised animals shall always take a precautionary approach the objective being the contribution of the animal to the conservation value of the species. An animal shall be able to live independently in the wild before approval is given.

8. PERSONNEL, CAPACITY AND EXPERIENCE

- The composition and number of personnel shall depend on the scope of the translocation such as the species and number of animals being translocated, and the capture method (chemical or physical capture).
- The composition however, shall at the minimum comprise of the following personnel:
 - a) An experienced wildlife veterinarian;
 - b) Experienced capture personnel (Capture warden and rangers);
 - c) Veterinary and laboratory technicians who can assist in monitoring the immobilised animal, collect samples of blood, parasites and tissue following established protocols;
 - d) Experienced drivers and plant operators of appropriate vehicles and plants, respectively;
 - e) Pilots;
 - f) Vehicle and plant mechanics to handle any unforeseen breakdowns;
 - g) Artisans (if using wooden crates) and welders (if using metal crates);

- h) Representatives from the department responsible for species management to assist in locating and identifying animals;
 - i) Logistics personnel e.g. procurement officer, finance officer, administrative assistant;
 - j) Research technicians/biologists/field staff who can take photographs, measurements, fill translocation records' forms with details of capture/release location, ID of animal, age and sex of animals, planned destination of animal, and other relevant details. Additionally, technicians who can fit monitoring devices such as collars, radio horn transmitters and transponders, make ear-notches according to plan, etc. will be required where necessary;
 - k) Media liaison and management personnel;
 - l) Security personnel;
 - m) A trained first aid personnel
- A management hierarchy with a clear line of command and the roles and duties for each team member shall be made clear to ensure strict discipline, order and precision during the exercise.
 - Non-essential personnel shall be kept to a minimum and will have clear instructions on where to be at every stage of the operation.

9. VETERINARY CONSIDERATIONS

- Veterinary concerns during translocations are mainly focused on the immobilization and management of animals during the physical intervention phases of translocations to ensure optimal health and welfare of the animals being translocated. However, despite all veterinary precautions, some mortality as a result of translocation may be inevitable.
- All cases of death shall be reported to KWS management. Any mortalities during or in the post-release phase shall be investigated and a post mortem examination done to determine the cause(s) of death.
- In some instances during capture and translocation, there will be rare occasions when an animal needs to be destroyed, and the most likely reason is severe injury during translocation. Where the injury is likely fatal and cannot be treated, it will then be a matter of animal welfare and the decision on euthanasia shall be left to the veterinarian responsible at the time of the injury as this is the “best practice”. KWS management shall be informed by the overall veterinarian of any decisions to euthanize any animal.

10. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TRANSLOCATION

10.1 Capture and Loading

- The veterinary and capture teams shall devise appropriate capture methods depending on the species, ground conditions (terrain) and available equipment. These methods are either through chemical or physical restraint for instance using nets or mass capture systems. The method shall ensure safety and welfare of the animals and attainment of the translocation objectives.
- Capture using physical methods shall use helicopters and vehicles depending on the number and species of animals.
- If using chemical capture, appropriate drug combinations and dosage rates shall be used for each species. The drugs and dosage rates will be influenced by factors such as age, sex, health status, body conditions and terrain. The vet teams shall ensure that they are familiar with idiosyncrasies of the particular species being dealt with.
- The number of animals to be immobilized at any one time will be determined by the number of veterinary personnel (veterinarians, vet and lab technicians), vehicles and equipment available for recovery and loading as well as the capacity to follow darted animals and not lose them.
- The method of dart delivery will vary according to the situation on the ground and can either be from a helicopter, vehicle or on foot. For elephants and rhinos, this will be from a helicopter but in emergency situations, they can be darted from vehicle or on foot.
- The type of dart and projector (rifle) used will be decided according to the preference of the vet involved. Darting shall always be undertaken by an experienced wildlife vet. Hyalase may be added into the dart to shorten the induction times.
- Appropriate reversal agents for the immobilisation drug(s) used at recommended dosage rates shall be used to revive the animals after loading. Tranquilisers (short and long-acting) shall be used to calm the animals during transportation.
- The Chief Veterinary Officer or his designated representative shall be the overall veterinarian in-charge of the capture exercise.
- For anaesthetically compromised animals, the veterinary officer assigned the animal shall liaise with the veterinarian in-charge with regard to emergency interventions, expedited recovery or any other advice including reviving the animal without delay where expedited recovery and emergency interventions have failed

- Regular debriefing meetings shall be held during the operation. The method and frequency of the meetings shall be modified according to the prevailing circumstances and needs.

10.2 Transportation

- Animals shall be transported in secure containment with clear specifications on designs and numbers for the species involved
- Transport plans shall be instituted with special emphasis on ways to minimise stress and avoid injuries or illnesses during transit. This shall include departure as soon as the animals are loaded and stops en route will be as brief and infrequent as possible. Animals tend to settle when the vehicle is moving and unnecessary stops disturb them.
- Qualified and experienced personnel shall accompany animals during transport and be prepared to deal with emergencies (veterinary emergencies, escapes, vehicle breakdowns).
- Drivers shall be briefed at the start of the operation on driving tips to avoid injuries to the animals. They shall be told to avoid sharp breaks and accelerations, to drive slowly on rough roads, etc. Two drivers shall be used for long journeys to ensure a rapid, uninterrupted trip and to avoid problems with driver fatigue.
- Very aggressive species shall be transported in single crates. Females from many species can be transported together safely, while the males must either be separated or tranquillised to avoid inflicting injuries on one another.
- Animals will be tranquillised during transportation with short and long acting tranquilisers depending on the length of transportation time.

10.3 Release

- Offloading at the release site shall be done without any delay upon arrival so as to avoid keeping animals standing unnecessarily in the transport crate/container. Media and VIP visits shall not be allowed to delay offloading. There will be constant inspection of animals to ensure their safety during transportation.
- Animals shall be released according to agreed protocols to ensure the welfare and the species concerned. Depending on the species involved, the following release strategies shall be adopted:
 - a) Soft release- animals held in enclosures at or near the release site prior to release, to assist them in adjusting/acclimatising to their new environment.

- b) Hard release- animals not held in enclosures prior to release except during transport. Animals are immediately released on arrival at the recipient site. Sometimes, partial immobilization/tranquillization on release may be considered.
 - c) Other release strategies may include behavioural training including hunting and feeding particularly for captive animals.
- Development of conservation education for long-term support by local communities, public relations through the mass media and in local community and involvement where possible of local communities in the translocation project will be considered

11. DOCUMENTATION

- The translocation shall be recorded and documented at each stage in sufficient detail for future reference.
- Records of all translocations shall be deposited with the appropriate department in the Directorate of Biodiversity Research and Planning and shall be published in scientific and popular literature whenever possible.

12. POST-RELEASE ACTIVITIES

- There shall be in place a post-release monitoring strategy of all or a sample of the individuals translocated for a sufficient period of time in order to assess the outcome of the translocation.
- The monitoring shall include studies on the ecological and behavioural aspects, long-term adaptation, collection and investigation of mortalities, interventions (veterinary aid and supplemental feeding amongst other interventions), amongst other studies.
- The results of the monitoring shall:
 - a) Inform decisions over future translocation proposals for the species concerned
 - b) Be deposited with the relevant department in the Biodiversity Research and Planning Directorate and where appropriate be published in suitable scientific and conservation journals
 - c) Be communicated to relevant stakeholders and where appropriate to the media and the wider public

- Public relations activities, including education and mass media coverage shall be undertaken for an appropriate period of time to ensure support of the project by the local communities
- Resources to undertake this monitoring shall be included in the budget at the inception of the project.

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Cover Photograph: Providing solutions to Human-Elephant conflicts in Narok County: A case of successful translocation of over 200 elephants in September 2011.