

➤ **Capturing of Herbivores**

The following factors should be taken into account when deciding upon the capture method.

-Cost

This involves equipment such as:

- nets
- vehicles
- tranquillising equipment
- drugs
- feed
- bomas

The cheapest option is not always the best, though.

-Type of game

Certain game species require specialized capture techniques. Elephant, rhino, hippopotamus and giraffe are examples of this. Herd animals can be captured effectively in groups using a plastic boma and a helicopter.

-Area of capture

The vegetation and habitat will also determine which vehicles and method can be used.

-Number of animals

For capturing large numbers of game in a single exercise, a helicopter might be needed. This adds to the cost considerably.

Planning a Capture Operation

The following aspects must be considered when planning a capture operation:

- The physical condition of the animals, number of young and possible advanced pregnancy.
- The sexes and ages of the animals.
- The time of year, specifically relating to temperature and humidity.
- The safest and most effective capture method for the specific type of animal.
- The necessity of using immobilizing and tranquillising drugs.
- The availability of vehicles and single or mass transport crates.

Animal health requirements such as the quarantining of animals in foot and mouth control areas.

Nature conservation permits which may be required for the capture, holding and transport of animals.

Import and export permits between different areas and regions.

Principles for Successful Capture

Wild animals that are captured are under stress before, during and possibly even after the capture. Although game capture operations will always contain a measure of stress, the welfare of the animals involved is always of the utmost importance. The wildlife manager must therefore ensure that the method chosen also takes this into account, and that everything possible is done to minimize the stress on the captured animals.

A basic principle of successful capture is to eliminate as many factors as possible that cause stress in the animal. The following should be taken into account:

- The operation should be thoroughly planned beforehand.
- Every person involved in the operation should be briefed in detail about their task.
- There should not be any unnecessary persons. Observers are by and large inexperienced in game capture and frequently hinder operations
- Game capture should take place in the colder months of the year, as
- overheating of the animals can easily occur during capture.
- The condition of animals deteriorates during winter, and the capture should therefore also not be done too late in the winter.

- In warm climates it is advisable that the capture should start early morning and not stretch over the heat of the day.

- Animals must never be chased over long distances or for a long period of time. This is not the way animals react in nature, and it could prove fatal. If the capture boma is far away, the animals should be given time to rest and be herded to the boma slowly.
- The animals should be handled and disturbed as little as possible.
- If the animals are kept in temporary captivity after the capture, steps must be taken to ensure they do not injure themselves in the bomas.
- Bomas should be high enough that animals, especially antelope, cannot jump over the side.
- Noise levels outside the bomas and crates should be kept very low.
- Aggressive animals and mature bulls should be separated from each other to avoid conflict and injury.
- There should be enough food and water in the bomas before the animals are brought in.
- Ensure adequate protection against sun, cold and rain.