



महाराष्ट्र शासन
वन विभाग



प्रधान मुख्य वनसंरक्षक (वन बल प्रमुख), महाराष्ट्र राज्य, नागपूर यांचे कार्यालय.

O/o Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (HoFF) Maharashtra State

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प्रधान मुख्य वनसंरक्षक (वन्यजीव) महाराष्ट्र राज्य, नागपूर

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प्रति,

मुख्य वनसंरक्षक (प्रा), / वनसंरक्षक (प्रा), (सर्व),
क्षेत्र संचालक, व्याघ्र प्रकल्प (सर्व),

विषय :- राज्यातील विविध वन्यप्राणी बचाव केंद्रामधील उपचारा अंती बरे झालेले वन्यप्राणी यांना नैसर्गिक अधिवासात सोडतांना अवलंबवयाची कार्यपद्धतीबाबत (Standard Operating Procedure)

संदर्भ : मुख्य वनसंरक्षक तथा सदस्य सचिव, महाराष्ट्र राज्य प्राणीसंग्रहालय प्राधिकरण, नागपूर यांचे पत्र क्र. मराप्रासंप्राना/कक्ष तांलिक/ ७०/२०२४-२५, दिनांक ०४.०७.२०२४.

राज्यातील विविध वन्यप्राणी बचाव केंद्रामधील उपचारा अंती बरे झालेले वन्यप्राणी यांना नैसर्गिक अधिवासात सोडतांना अवलंबवयाची कार्यपद्धती (Standard Operating Procedure) महाराष्ट्र राज्य प्राणीसंग्रहालय प्राधिकरण, नागपूर यांनी तयार केलेली आहे.

त्यानुसार उपचारा अंती बरे झालेले वन्यप्राणी यांना नैसर्गिक अधिवासात सोडतांना सदर कार्यपद्धतीनुसार (Standard Operating Procedure) कार्यवाही करण्यात यावी. सुलभतेकरिता सदर SOP पाठविण्यात येत आहे.

सहपत्र : वरीलप्रमाणे


(महीप गुप्ता)

मुख्य वन्यजीव रक्षक तथा

प्रधान मुख्य वनसंरक्षक (वन्यजीव)

महाराष्ट्र राज्य, नागपूर

प्रतिलिपी :- अपर प्रधान मुख्य वनसंरक्षक (वन्यजीव), पश्चिम, मुंबई/पुर्व नागपूर यांना माहिती व आवश्यक कार्यवाहीस अग्रेषित.

**Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)
for
Release of Wildlife from
Forest offices, Transit Treatment Centres (TTCs)
and Rescue Centres.**

THE ZOO AUTHORITY OF MAHARASHTRA

REFERENCES

1. Manual of transport cages and nest boxes:

<https://cza.nic.in/uploads/ocuments/publications/english/TRANSPORT%208.1.2008.pdf>

2. SOPs for rehabilitation of Leopards:

https://ntca.gov.in/assets/uploads/sops/Compendium_SOPsbB

1. Introduction

Maharashtra forest department has witnessed a rise in the number of wild animal emergencies. The animals which need help, care and medical attentions are rescued either by forest department, NGO or by common people. After rescuing wild animals in distress, these animals are brought either to Transit Treatment Centres (TTCs), Rescue Centres or released back into the nature.

TTC and Rescue Centres are the facilities to provide temporary or long-term care, treatment and rehabilitation to wildlife with an aim to release them back into natural habitat immediately.

As the number of wild animals who require care and medical attention is increasing day by day, number of rescue operations are also increasing as per the requirement and at the same time, increase has been observed in the number of animals to be release back in nature.

However, there is no standard document available regarding release procedure of wildlife, so need is felt to document Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for release of wild animal.

By adhering to this (SOP), Transit Treatment Centres (TTC), rescue centres and forest offices can ensure a standardised, efficient and safe release process for rescued and rehabilitated wildlife.

The present SOP aims at carrying out necessary evaluations, identification of the release locations and provides guidelines for transport and release of wild animals.

2. Evaluations

Pre-Release Evaluation: The veterinarian conducting daily checks must certify the animal as medically fit and behaviourally sound for release. This evaluation should include a thorough physical examination and behavioural assessment to ensure the animal can survive independently in the wild. Apart from this loss of instincts, human imprinting, loss of canines (in case of carnivores), medical history of serious nature, load of ecto and endo parasites are some other factors to be considered.

3. Identification of Release Location

- a. **For Injured or Sick Wildlife:** Adult wild animals should be released at their original capture location unless there is a direct threat at that location such as accident-prone areas, or regions prone to wildlife crime like poaching or hunting or chance of conflict. In such cases, suitable alternative locations should be jointly determined by the Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF)/Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) and wildlife experts at the TTC. Habitat suitability and natural food availability must be ensured and certified before release.

- b. **For Trafficked Wildlife:** Release animal in areas where there is a natural distribution of the exact species with minimal threat. Avoid locations with known high human activity to prevent future incidents. If the species is not native for the area, then coordinate with the officer where the species is native and arrange for a release there. (Prior permission of the court must be taken before release of animal.)
- c. **For Wild Orphans raised in captivity:** Determine the necessity of a soft or hard release based on species. For soft release, implement gradual acclimatisation to the wild with support such as supplementary feeding. Coordinate with the Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF)/Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), veterinarian and biologist for species-specific release plans. In case of hard release, release directly at suitable alternative locations determined by the Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF)/ DFO, veterinarian, biologist and wildlife experts considering prerelease evaluation.
- d. **For Wildlife that was rescued Post-straying into Human-Habitation:** Identify the closest suitable release location with less human population density or the nearest forest area.
- e. **Animals Involved in Human-Wildlife Conflict:** Based on the Chief Wildlife Wardens (CWLW) decision, transfer to a lifetime care facility, Otherwise, release as per his/her orders.

4. Selection of Actual Spot at Release Location

- a. Before release of an animal, an actual spot where animal is to be released must be verified by Assistant conservator of Forest.
- b. Release vehicle should be placed in such a manner that the wild animal gets ample open space Infront of it to move in forest.
- c. Release location must have sufficient food and water.

5. Constitution of a local committee

A local committee must be constituted before release of wild animals having members such as concerning Deputy conservator of forest/ DFO, head of the TTC or Rescue Centre, veterinarians of TTCs or Rescue Centre, biologist and wildlife expert.

6. Release Timeline

Once a wild animal admitted to a TTC or rescue centre is certified as fit for release by a registered veterinarian, the release paperwork must be processed and the healthy animal should be released within 48 hours to minimise stress in extended captivity. Avoid unnecessary delay.

7. Application for Release

(A) Release Request Letter from TTC to Deputy Conservator of Forests; Release Request letter must have:

1. **Applicant Information:** Clearly state the name and position of the forest officer or Manager of the TTC/rescue centre who wants to release wild animal. Mention the name of the person to whom the transport permit should be addressed. Ensure that the driver of the vehicle must have permanent driving licence.
2. **Animal Details:** Specify the class, species, life stage, gender of each animal to be released, local name, scientific name, age, gender, identity mark (microchip, ear tags, etc, if any) and indicate the quantity if multiple animals are to be released at the same location.
3. **Transport Vehicle Details:** Include the name and registration number of the vehicle intended for use in transporting the animals. Ensure that the vehicle must have registration certificate.
4. **Signatory:** The letter should be signed by an authorized signatory from the Head of the TTC/rescue centre/forest office.

Fitness certificate must have: Details such as class, species, life stage, gender of the animal(s), quantity, local name, scientific name, age, gender, identity mark (microchip, ear tags, etc, if any)

(B) Letter From DCF Office to TTC/rescue centre/forest office –

Issuance of Transport Permit to TTC/rescue centre /forest office in the format prescribed in Section 48(A) of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (53 of 1972). It must mandatorily include the following details:

1. **Recipient Information:** Address the letter to the person responsible for transport of wild animal from the TTC/rescue centres/forest office as mentioned in the request letter.
2. **Transport Details:** Specify the transport details, including the locations from which and to where the animals will be transported.
3. **Animal Details:** Provide detailed information about the animals being transported, including class, species, life stage, gender, and quantity (if multiple).
4. **Vehicle Details:** Include the name and registration number of the transport vehicle.
5. **Validity Period:** Mention the period for which the transport permit is valid.
6. **Recommendations or Remarks:** Include any additional recommendations or remarks pertinent to the transport and release of the animals.

8. Transport and Release Guidelines

1. **Ethical Considerations:** Ensure all actions, prioritise the welfare and ethical treatment of the animals. Consider weather conditions when planning the release to avoid extreme

temperatures or adverse weather that could affect the animal's well-being. Release site and release date must be kept confidential.

2. **Feeding:** Wildlife should not be fed 4-6 hours prior to travel, based on species, distance and travel time to be specified.
3. **Vehicle Authorisation:** Use authorised vehicles (Forest Department or TTC/Rescue centre-managed vehicles) or use private vehicles with consent of Dycf/ DFO having authentic registration certificate, vehicle number must be printed on the transport permit. Ensure vehicles are suitable for the species being transported, providing adequate ventilation and space as per Central Zoo Authority and NTCA guidelines.
4. **Vehicle Disinfection:** Vehicle must be disinfected before loading a wild animal with suitable conventional methods.
5. **Presence of Personnel:**
 - a. For critical wildlife (e.g., large carnivores or ungulates), TTC/ Rescue centre Veterinarians must be mandatorily present during transport and ensure to carry all necessary medicines and drugs that may be required in case of emergency during transport. As well as one person from concern forest department must be present during transport.
 - b. Minimum one (01) representative from the forest department and trained wildlife handling personnel from the TTC/Rescue centre having safety handling equipment must be present at the time of release.
 - c. Emphasis should be given at the safety of a staff at release location. Staff must be equipped with medical kit and safety gear.
6. **Documentation and Record Keeping:**
 - a. The release of all wild animals must be documented, photographed with GPS coordinates on it and video for release evidence.
 - b. Photos, videos, and GPS locations and all details of the release must be noted and the forest department staff must also enter the necessary data into the Wild Animal Rescue Management System on the website of the Maharashtra Forest Department.
 - c. Activities of released animal must be documented timely.
7. **Installation of a camera at release location**
 - a. Cameras must be set before release of an animal.
 - b. Cameras must be positioned in such a locations that all movements while release of an animal can be captured.

ANNEXURE 1

Format of request letter for to grant release permission of wildlife animals from TTC/Rescue centre/forest office.

Date,

Name,

Deputy Conservator of Forest/Divisional Forest Officer (Territorial/wildlife), division,
Maharashtra Forest Department.

Subject: Request to grant release permission of wildlifekept at TTC/Rescue centre/Forest office.

Dear Sir/Madam,

This is to inform you that there are animals admitted at TTC/Rescue centre which are fit and ready for release. There details are listed in the attached document.

We request you to grant the permission to release the animals as per the list to the appropriate areas and issue a transit permit in the name of TTC/Rescue centre/Forest office. The transport of these animals will be done by personnel of TTC/Rescue centre/Forest office by vehicle No: MH.....

The release process will be undertaken in the presence of forest department officials.

We kindly request you to please grant us the permission at the earliest.

Thanking you.

Authorised signatory

Name.....,

Designation.....

Place.....

ANNEXURE 2

Format of certificate for To Transport Specified Animals etc. Under The Provision Of Section 48(A) Wildlife Protection Act,1972.

Permission is granted to shri/smt, head of the TTC/Rescue centre Forest office to transport below mentioned animals in manner specified below from.....TTC/Rescue centre/ Forest office to..... city, state, under section 48(a) of the wildlife (protection) act,1972(53 of 1972)

Sr.no.	Identity of an animal	Class	Species	Life stage	Gender(M/F/U)	Number

Date of issue;

Mode of transport;

Route;

Period allowed to transport;date..... to.....date.....

Remarks;

Authorised signatory

Name;,

Deputy conservator of forest/ divisional forest officer,

Office of the-- deputy conservator of forest/ divisional forest officer, (Territorial/Wildlife)

..... forest/wildlife division

Maharashtra forest Department

cc; RFO..... For information and necessary action.

ANNEXURE 3

Format for Certificate of Fitness from Veterinarian.

This is to certify that I have examined a male/Female aged approximately years from a distance in a treatment cage onat..... The appears alert and apparently healthy. There are no nursing injuries and the claws and canines are intact. There are no compromises in the gait and stance of the said animal. Based on the above observation the..... Is fit for the release in its natural habitat.

Name of veterinarian:

Name of TTC/Rescue centre/Forest office:

Date: