

NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER

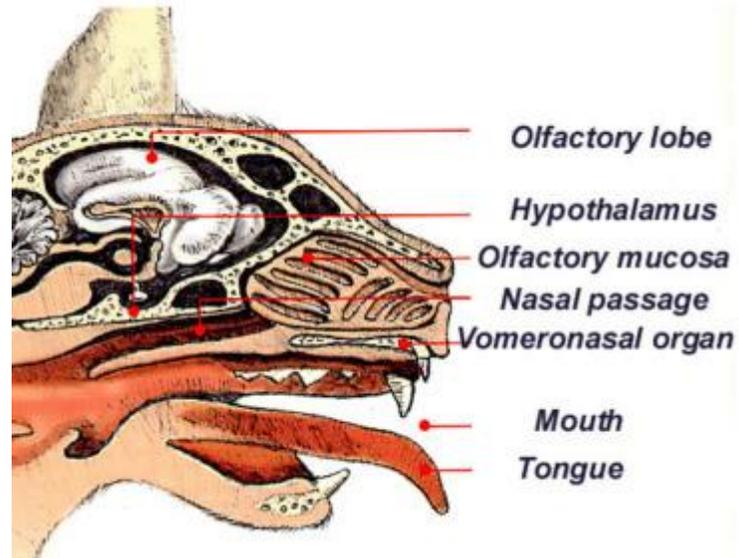
Dear clients,

In this newsletter you can read more about the infectious disease Anthrax. What is it and what can/must you do? You can find a more extensive article about Anthrax on our website. Furthermore, we have listed some guidelines of how to properly transport wildlife, as more and more people do it themselves. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us!

Kind regards, Ulf

WHAT IS A FLEHMEN RESPONSE?

The flehmen response, or simply said flehming, is a behaviour which is performed by most hoofed animals and felids. Flehming causes the ducts in the mouth and nasal passages to open, thereby allowing scent signals (pheromones) to be transferred to, and analysed by, the vomeronasal organ (VNO). In reptiles this organ is called the Jacobson's organ. This olfactory-chemosensory organ is located between the roof of the mouth and the palate. The animal conducts this behaviour to decode important information, such as sexual and reproductive status, dominance and identity. Strange smells can also lead to flehming.



Source: [Conscious companion](#)



Sable bull testing females in the herd for heat



Lion smelling, 'flehmen response', Masai-Mara Game Reserve, Kenya
©www.naturepl.com

ANTHRAX

Do you still remember Anthrax hitting the [news](#) last year? More than 100 hippos died off Anthrax in and around Bwabwata National Park and the Okavango river. Anthrax, in Afrikaans called miltsiekte, is a serious infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Bacillus anthracis*. Anthrax affects both domestic and wild animals worldwide and can cause severe and even fatal illness in humans when they come in contact with, or eat meat of, affected animals.

Hippo carcasses in Bwabwata NP (©New Era)



Anthrax spores are located in the soil. Animals acquire anthrax by the ingestion of these spores while grazing or browsing. Insects possibly also play an important role in disease transmission. When flies feed on the body fluids of infected carcasses, they can deposit their contaminated vomit and/or faeces on the trees and bushes. Browsing herbivores that eat the contaminated leaves may contract Anthrax in this way.



Sometimes bloody discharges from body openings are seen. Carnivores often show a swollen face, frequently confused with snake bite.

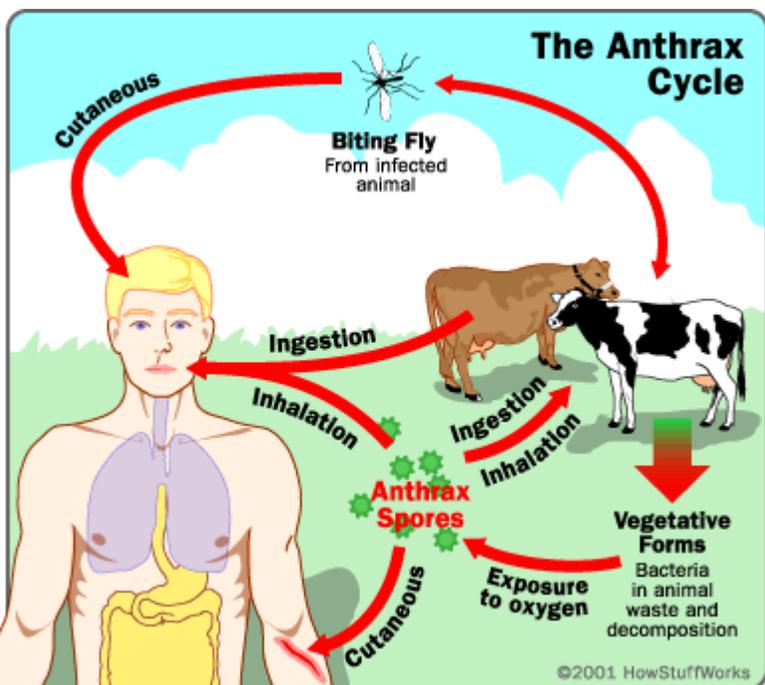


Biting flies may have played an important role in Anthrax outbreaks in hippos. Vultures are known to be carriers of spores.

Infected animals usually die before clinical symptoms are seen. A sudden death in apparently healthy animals with a very short period of disorientation should raise a high index of suspicion. Animals frequently have bloody discharges from body openings, such as the mouth, nostrils, ear and anus and skin. Other characteristics are rapid bloating of the carcass, an incomplete rigor mortis, early breakdown of tissue (autolysis) and the absence of clotting of the blood.

When Anthrax is suspected, DO NOT open the carcass to prevent infection and the release of spores! Inform a veterinarian immediately and stay away from the carcass. Pack branches around the carcass to prevent carnivores and vultures to break open the carcass and thus spreading spores.

Read more about Anthrax in our online article [here](#).



In areas where Anthrax commonly occurs it is highly advisable to vaccinate animals annually. There are different vaccines on the market which are cheap and effective, although vaccination of wildlife might become more expensive due to the need of a helicopter. The vaccine provides one-year protection. Note that cattle vaccines are NOT effective in species such as rhino and hippo, they should be vaccinated with Rhinovax®.

People can get infected with Anthrax when spores enter the body, or by breathing, eating or drinking infected meat or water. Wound contamination with spores will result in very painful infected skin lesions in people. About 2,000 people globally get affected each year. When the diagnosis is made early enough, Anthrax is in most cases treatable. Anthrax is not a contagious disease, meaning it cannot spread from person to person.



Some of the vaccines we use when we vaccinate against anthrax (Anthravax®, Supavax® and Rhinovax®)

TRANSPORTING WILDLIFE

Many wild animals are transported throughout Namibia and other southern African countries. There is a marked increase in people transporting their own game with specially build trailers (e.g. Bulperd) or home-converted trailers. Some of these conversions are utterly unprofessional, resulting in unacceptable animal suffering and mortality. For this reason, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) insists on people intending to transport game be specially registered with MET as either game dealers or game transporters. In this article we set some guidelines and give some examples about good and bad transport practises.

Being transported is obviously a highly unnatural situation for the animal(s), and thus causes stress. Stress increases adrenaline and cortisol hormones in the body. This causes an increased heart rate and respiration and suppresses the immune system. Long-term stress is also bad for the reproduction system, as it reduces the libido and reproductive hormones. It is up to us to minimize stress, and make sure the animals arrive safe and sound on their new destination.

Important aspects when transporting animals

When wildlife is to be transported, we strongly advise to make use of an experienced company with specialized wildlife trucks/trailer. Some important aspects concerning the mode of transport that must be taken into consideration:

- 🐾 Ventilation; trailers must be well-ventilated to avoid over-heating. Under very cold climatic conditions one should be able to close some ventilation slits to minimize draft and wind chill, which can easily be fatal.
- 🐾 Good flooring; non-slippery (e.g. rubber mats or cattle grids), comfortable substrate on the floor (hay or lucerne for bedding and food), dust free or little dust as possible, no obnoxious fluids or smells (heavily urine-soiled bedding emitting ammonia gasses can cause a pneumonia).
- 🐾 Atraumatic; the inner surface (walls, floor and roof) should be smooth, no protruding wires or sharp objects (e.g. bolts). If you convert a trailed (bars)-trailer you should ideally put shutter board on the INSIDE of the trailers (usually farmers put shade netting on the outside: this puts animals at risk of putting a leg or horn through and breaking this).
- 🐾 Minimize stress; shield the animal visually from people around it (don't use transparent shade netting etc.).
- 🐾 Ideally animals should be accessible through roof hatches for possible injections (e.g. tranquilizers) and/or to remove pipes from the horns.
- 🐾 Avoid over-heating by making use of a light colour for the trailer, especially the roof, and always try to park the trailer in the shade.
- 🐾 Avoid excessive noises such as rattling of chains when driving (esp. gravel roads).



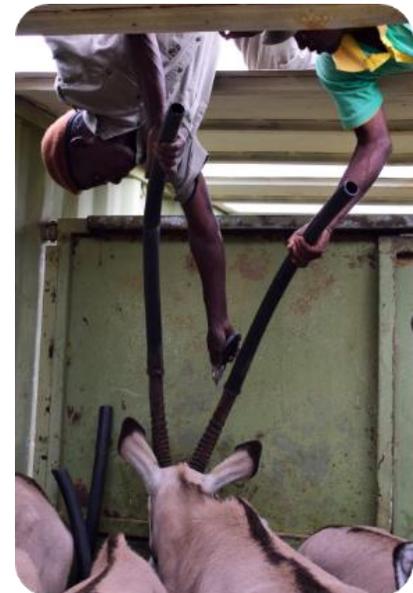
A good example of a bad transport! No bedding and even a hole in the floor. If the oryx gets its foot in this hole, chances are that it will break the leg. The compartments are open, the oryx can see each other, and can thus try to fight. They easily can get stuck with their horns, and break them. There are also loose chains which will rattle enormously on gravel roads.

This is one of our wildlife trailers; it has different compartments where the animals are visually shielded from each other, no sharp and/or protruding objects, enough bedding and ventilation slits on top, where you also have access to the animal to inject it with a pole syringe or take pipes off.



Species/animal-specific considerations

- 🐾 Do not load too young thin-horned animals (e.g. springbuck). It is likely that they will break horns when they jump, because their horn-skull base is still very weak/soft. For this reason, insurance companies won't cover transport losses in young springbuck for example.
- 🐾 Mature bulls of most species should ideally be loaded and transported individually to avoid fighting and mortality. Young bulls may still be loaded together with the breeding herd.
- 🐾 Ideally animals should be able to comfortably stand, lie down and turn in their compartment. Loading big kudu bulls into small compartments for example forces them to stand with their neck bent down. This may result in them lying down and this is known to cause mortality.
- 🐾 For some jumping species (e.g. impalas and kudus) it is advisable to hang branches in the top of the trailer. This provides them with some natural substrate, calms them down and prevents them from jumping up to try to escape to openings.
- 🐾 For e.g. oryx, impala, blesbuck and eland (big bulls should be transported individually!) we advise to place pipes over the horns, to avoid injury. Make sure that you can take the pipes off before releasing them via hatches on top of the trailer.
- 🐾 For female- and young sable and roan bulls it is better to take the pipes off once they are in the trailer (always put pipes on while transporting them on a bakkie!!), as it will be very difficult to get the pipes off again. Do make sure they are from the same herd when putting them in the same compartment. Again, mature bulls must be transported alone.
- 🐾 Do not transport sensitive species, such as nyalas, when it is cold or wet. These animals are extremely sensitive to cold climatic conditions, and easily die.



Before transport

One of the most important rules concerning transportation of wildlife is that the transport must be well-planned, quick and efficient. Make sure all the necessary permits are arranged before the transport and make sure you or your driver knows how to get to the destination (map, road description!) Obviously make sure the trailer is road-worthy; check lights, tyres and spare tyres etc.



When loading the animals, it is important to load same age groups together. Make sure that with sables and roans the pipes are taken off.

When (some of) the animals are loaded, do not stand/talk/smoke around the trailer. Move away from the trailer to avoid stressing the animals.

Don't not overload, it is not worth it putting too many animals in one compartment. It will stress the animals and increases the possibility of injuries. The chances that you will have losses are bigger than the extra animal you would gain.

Do NOT throw water over the animals once they are in the trailer. Due to the capture and stress the animals are often hot, and when you make the animals wet in the trailer, it will become a sauna. Rather be on your way as quickly as possible to get ventilation and fresh air into the trailer.

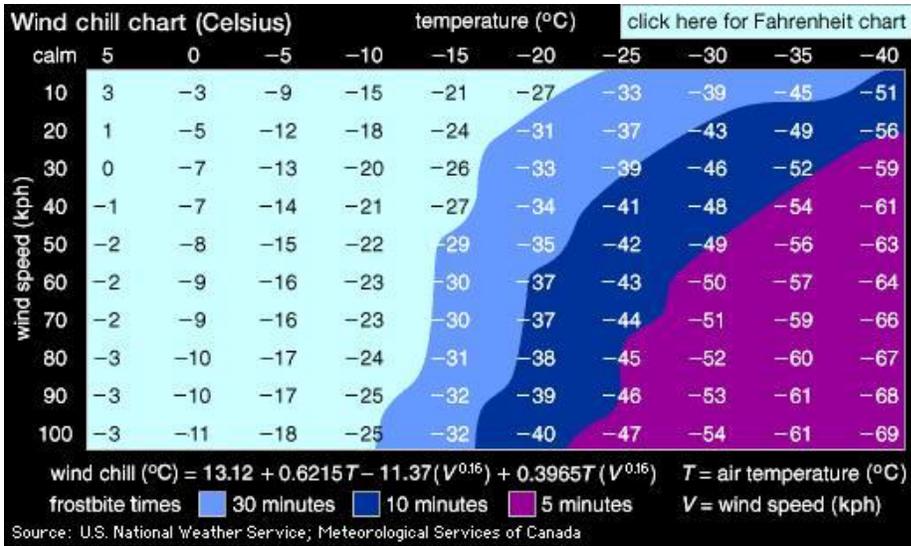
If needed, the animals can be given a tranquilizer to keep them calm during the trip. We usually inject Perphenazine®, which is a long-acting tranquilizer that works for about 7 days. Please note that you cannot just have and give this drug, it is easy to overdose an animal (this can be fatal!). When using tranquilizers make sure you do it in consultation with your veterinarian.

During transport

Ideally one must keep driving, until the animals reach their new destination. In case you have to stop, please stop over in a shady and quiet spot, and be as quickly back on the road as possible. Summer is approaching and leaving animals in a trailer in the hot sun is both unethical and bad for the animal's wellbeing!

During the drive, obviously do not speed, limit sudden braking and go easy around the corners. If you don't drive yourself, make sure your driver knows that he must drive carefully.





Be aware of the outside temperature. If it is 5°C in winter, and you are driving 60 km/h, the wind chill will feel as -2. When an animal is wet, it will feel even colder. If it is too cold, or too hot, rather transport the animals another day.

If a drive is over 18 hours or when it is very hot, give the animals water and make sure they have enough food such as grass and/or lucerne.

After transport – offloading

The best part of transporting animals... releasing them! Make sure before offloading that the fence is in a proper state, it would be a shame if your newly acquired animals are at the neighbouring farm the next day!



Choose your offloading spot wisely. Drive a bit into the camp, do not offload the animals just outside of the gate. It is important to offload the animals near water. If your camp is big, always place extra water in at least all the corners of the camp.

Do not rush and/or stress the animals. Some species, such as oryx, waterbuck, sable and roan can take their time to get out of a trailer. Open the trailer and leave, the animals will eventually go out on their own.

When the animals are offloaded, don't keep following them into the field, leave them alone to settle in. It has happened that released animals ran into fences and broke their neck when people wanted to check on them (especially in small camps) and thereby (unintended) stressing/chasing them. If there are problems with the animals, do not wait until they suffer and even die! Consult a veterinarian ASAP and inform the farmer you bought the animals from.

If you need to transport wildlife, we might be able to assist you. We have four specialized wildlife trucks, five wildlife trailers (including a giraffe/rhino recovery trailer) and nine specialized wildlife containers.

Contact us for more information and/or have a look at <http://wildlifevetsnamibia.com/translocation.html>



DR ULF TUBBESING
 P.O. BOX 50533, BACHBRECHT, WINDHOEK
 +264 (0) 81 128 3050
ULFT@AFRICAONLINE.COM.NA
WWW.WILDLIFEVETSNAMIBIA.COM
 FACEBOOK: [WILDLIFE VETS NAMIBIA](#)
 YOUTUBE: [WILDLIFE VETS NAMIBIA](#)