

---

**National Alliance of State  
Animal and Agricultural  
Emergency Programs  
(NASAAEP)**

---

**Species Evacuation and  
Transport Guide**

---

**NASAAEP Evacuation and Transportation  
Best Practices Working Group**

**September 2014**

## Contents

Introduction .....	3
Pet Birds .....	4
Snakes .....	6
Reptiles .....	7
Amphibians .....	8
Pocket Pets and Rabbits.....	9
Poultry, Including Backyard Chickens .....	10
Oiled Wildlife Spills .....	11
Authors.....	12

## Introduction

Emergency planners must be prepared to evacuate and transport not just dogs and cats, but a wide variety of animal species. As with any planning, it is ideal for planners to have researched their communities in advance to determine what types of animals may be encountered.

As stated at the beginning of this document, the responsibility to evacuate pets in any disaster lies with the animal owner. A disaster is a stressful time for animals, so any preparation that can be made ahead of time by the owner to ease the animal's stress is recommended. Ideally, the owner should already have the necessary type of temporary housing for their animals and have them acclimated to it. All documents concerning the import, sale, or other actions involving an animal should be kept with the animal or owner to demonstrate ownership or legal importation.

The following pages contain guidance for the transportation and evacuation of pet birds, reptiles, pocket pets, poultry, and oiled wildlife. Emergency managers are encouraged to discuss these guidelines with the local personnel that would be tasked with evacuating pets and to include these guidelines in disaster planning and response documents.

## Pet Birds

**Note:** To minimize the stress on the birds and to eliminate any disease exposure, pet birds should not be transported with any other types of animals.

### Caging:

Caging for birds must have ventilation along three sides of the container. The birds need to be contained in such a manner that they do not have too much space to move around as that will increase the likelihood of the bird injuring itself. Mating pairs may be housed together if the cage is sufficient for the birds and if access to food, water bowls and substrate are available. For large pet crates, non-cardboard or paper dividers can be inserted to partition the cage into smaller enclosures as long as adequate ventilation is ensured.

For perching birds, the transportation caging should be large enough so the bird's tail does not touch the bottom of the cage unless a plastic 'travel carrier' with a perch is used, in which case long-tailed birds may have contact with the floor. The bird's head should not be able to hit the top of the cage while the bird is on the perch. In addition, the perch itself must be the appropriate size for the bird to grip the perch firmly and comfortably and be of a suitable material, such as any soft wood. Smooth plastic perches made out of PVC or similar material are not acceptable. As an alternative, a plastic perch can be wrapped in elastic tape or VetWrap. Astroturf will be caustic for small pet birds and larger species may chew it up. Towels and rope can be chewed and strings can catch on bird's toes. To mitigate this concern, birds owners should be advised prior to any evacuation to identify their bird's preferred perching size and material and to have these perches available in case of an evacuation.

### Caging Substrate:

The preferred cage substrate is flat, not shredded, regular newspaper or paper towels; no glossy inserts as they are not as absorbent. The newspaper must be changed every 12 hours. In order to minimize stress during transport, it is best to have sufficient bedding to provide for longer lasting absorbency, unless specific arrangements can be made with qualified animal professionals to change the bedding. Hay is not to be used as that may cause respiratory problems for the bird(s).

### Transportation:

The recommended mode of transportation for birds is a climate controlled cargo van. This method of transportation allows for a passenger to monitor the birds from the front of the vehicle as no physical barrier is necessary between the birds and the people. The van also provides ideal temperature control. The interior of the vehicle must be maintained at a temperature of at least 68 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit (20 to 21 degrees Celsius), if the birds are in a stable health condition. If the birds' health has been compromised, the temperature in the vehicle should be higher than 70 degrees Fahrenheit (21 degrees Celsius) but not exceed 85 degrees Fahrenheit (29 degrees Celsius). To minimize the stress on the birds, the vehicle should be kept as quiet as possible and conversation should be kept to a minimum. A radio may be used if it can maintain a constant audio source of moderate volume to provide sufficient white noise; otherwise it should be turned off.

Adequate ventilation is crucial when transporting birds and the ventilation must be by the birds' heads, but not directly on the birds' heads as this can be harmful. The birds should also be positioned so they are not in direct sunlight, or, if at night, in line with oncoming headlight shine. The cages may be

covered by a light sheet or burlap that will reduce the stress on the birds by reducing light transmission and creating a visual barrier yet still allow for adequate ventilation. Ensure that cages are not so close together that a bird can stick its toes or foot through its cage and reach a bird in the neighboring cage, as this can result in serious injury and/or blood loss.

As with all methods of transportation, the cages must be secured within the vehicle to prevent them from shifting during transport. By not stacking cages on top of one another, you may also ensure better ventilation for the birds. If transported in a passenger van, the cages must be kept level (not slanted on the passenger seats) so a towel or other support should be placed under the bottom cage to ensure it remains level.

Water should not be left in the cages during transport as it is likely to spill. Any water spilled on a bird will make the bird hypothermic and pose a risk to the bird. Water and food may be offered while the vehicle is stopped. As long as the birds are stable, they may be transported for up to eight hours before stopping.

In certain cases involving small birds (parakeets, cockatiels, etc.), the birds may be transported in a small cage on the owner's lap as long as the cage is covered and the temperature and noise are maintained as described above.

#### **Housing:**

Once the birds arrive at a shelter, they should be transferred into new caging. Due to the risk of disease exposure to the birds, the birds should not be housed in open agricultural facilities. To minimize stress to the birds, they should be isolated or otherwise housed as far away as possible from predatory species.

Pet birds only need to be fed and watered once every 24 hours, but food may be left in the cage. Birds will not feed in the dark, thus sufficient lighting must be provided during feeding time in order for them to see their food.

## **Snakes**

### **Caging:**

As with any exotic pet, it is preferred that the animal owner provide the necessary animal enclosure for the transportation of the animal.

Rigid plastic containers may be used as long as there are holes for ventilation that will not allow the snake to escape from the bin. Snakes do not require a great deal of ventilation and, if the ventilation is too cold it could be harmful. The container should be large enough to enable the snake to have contact with their whole ventral surface to the floor of the container. In addition, the container must have a locking mechanism to prevent the snake from pushing the top off. Plastic ties may be used to help secure the lid to the container.

A snake may also be bagged in a pillow case and placed in a Styrofoam container, with adequate ventilation, if climate conditions are variable. For larger snakes, a sleeping bag may be used instead of a pillow case. When using a pillow case or sleeping bag, the opening must be secured by either knotting the material or secured with a rope, duct tape, or plastic ties. In order to prevent injury to the snake, they should still be placed in a secondary rigid container such as a box or plastic trash can. Multiple animals in a single container should be kept separate, not stacked.

### **Caging Substrate:**

Newspaper is the ideal substrate for snakes. The paper must be changed once it has been soiled.

### **Transportation:**

The preferred methods of transportation for snakes are climate controlled vans or box vans. Care must be taken to ensure the appropriate temperature is maintained for the snakes while they are being transported. If transporting snakes in plastic containers, the containers may be stacked on top of each other so long as they are secured to prevent shifting.

Due to many members of the public having a fear of snakes, it is not recommended to have snakes be transported on the lap of the owner on public transportation, unless the reptile is double packed as described above and there is no label on the container describing its contents.

### **Housing:**

Housing for snakes in a shelter must be separated from other types of animals and the room must have an electrical source to allow heating pads to be utilized. If the shelter is without power, a small portable generator should provide sufficient power for the heating pads.

## **Reptiles**

### **Caging:**

Due to the different types of caging that reptiles require, owners should be educated prior to a disaster that they will be expected to bring their reptile's enclosure with them when they evacuate. Absent that, as with snakes, other reptiles may be kept in rigid plastic containers that can be sealed. The container should be large enough to enable the reptile to have contact with its whole ventral surface on the floor of the container. In length, the container size should be at least from snout to vent of the animal, plus half of its tail length.

### **Caging Substrate:**

Newspaper is the preferred caging substrate.

### **Transportation:**

In certain circumstances, permits may be necessary to transport reptiles across county/parish or state lines. Emergency planners are encouraged to research any such permitting issues prior to an emergency and ensure the transportation of the reptiles will not be impeded. State veterinarians should consult with state veterinarians in neighboring states to ensure the efficient evacuation and transportation of reptiles from one location to another.

The preferred method of transportation for reptiles are the climate controlled vans or the box vans. Care must be taken to ensure the appropriate temperature is maintained for the reptiles while they are being transported. Temperatures between 60 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit (16 to 21 degrees Celsius) are recommended. In addition, when using a climate controlled van, use a ventilation system that does not create too much of a draft on the reptiles or place the containers in such a manner so the draft does not blow directly onto the containers. If transporting reptiles in plastic containers, the containers may be stacked on top of each other so long as they are secured to prevent shifting.

### **Housing:**

Feeding needs and accessibility to water vary greatly with reptiles and, as such, a person trained in the proper housing and care of the species of reptile should be consulted. Emergency planners should contact a local herpetological society or a facility that regularly houses and cares for reptiles.

### **Special Considerations for Turtles:**

Adult turtles should be housed singly in individual compartments. Turtles from different locations or even ponds cannot be housed together due to the risk of disease exposure.

Turtles taken from the wild must be released back to the exact area from where they were rescued, otherwise they will walk miles to get back to their original home.

## **Amphibians**

### **Caging:**

Amphibians should be transported in rigid plastic containers with ventilation holes. The amphibians may be kept in moist cloth bags or ventilated plastic containers with moist substrate within the container. The container must be tall enough to allow the amphibians to move around yet shallow enough to prevent a frog or toad from jumping as they risk injuring their snouts. For a toad or frog 6 inches (15 cm) or larger, they must have one inch (2.5 cm) of clearance. Frogs and toads smaller than 6 inches (15 cm) should have a maximum of 2 inches (5 cm) in clearance.

In general, amphibians should be transported in both a primary and secondary container. The animal is placed in a bag or rigid container and then packed in a secondary larger container that might hold several such primary containers.

### **Caging Substrate:**

A moist substrate is required when evacuating and transporting amphibians in order that the amphibian may maintain a specific humidity. Because the skins of amphibians are extremely sensitive, no burlap or other rough material should be used as a substrate.

### **Transportation:**

The preferred methods of transportation for amphibians are climate controlled vans or box vans. Care must be taken to ensure the appropriate temperature is maintained for the amphibians while they are being transported. If transporting amphibians in plastic containers, the containers may be stacked on top of each other as long as they are secured to prevent shifting.

### **Housing:**

Amphibians vary in their needs as to type of food, accessibility to water, and humidity levels. As such, a person trained in the proper housing and care of amphibians should be consulted. Emergency planners should contact a local herpetological society or a facility that regularly houses and cares for amphibians for guidance.

## **Pocket Pets and Rabbits**

### **Caging:**

Metal mesh-lined caging can be used to ensure the animal does not escape. As an alternative, small plastic pet carriers are suitable for the evacuation of pocket pets and rabbits. Plastic carriers should be monitored regularly to ensure the animal has not gnawed a hole in the material.

### **Caging Substrate:**

Wood shavings are acceptable for pocket pets, excluding rabbits. For rabbits, shredded newspaper is the preferred substrate.

### **Transportation:**

Ideally, these small animals may be transported in a plastic carrier on the owner's lap during an evacuation. If they are not transported with the owner, they should be transported in climate controlled cargo vans with cages secured to prevent shifting.

### **Housing:**

Animals that are normally housed together in their home environment may be transported in the same container provided the ground temperature does not exceed 75 degrees Fahrenheit (24 degrees Celsius). If the ground temperature exceeds that limit, the animals must be separated to prevent overheating. In extreme cases, frozen plastic water bottles can be placed in the animal's cage to help prevent over-heating, but the bottle must be secured to prevent it from rolling around and injuring the animal. Temperatures over 75 degrees Fahrenheit (24 degrees Celsius) are potentially lethal to chinchillas.

Pocket pets and rabbits only need to be fed once a day. They must be given regular access to water through bowls or water bottles.

## **Poultry, Including Backyard Chickens**

Due to the risk of disease transmission or disease exposure, poultry cannot be evacuated or transported with pet birds under any circumstances. In addition, chickens that have not been tested for diseases such as Newcastle disease or avian influenza cannot be evacuated. Untested poultry cannot be transported with poultry that have been tested and found to be negative.

### **Caging:**

Plastic pet carriers are the preferred method of evacuating and transporting poultry. Perches are not necessary for poultry.

### **Caging Substrate:**

Newspaper or wood shavings are suitable substrates for poultry.

### **Transportation:**

Due to concerns over disease transmission, emergency planners should research any issues regarding the transportation of poultry from one location to another prior to an event, as well as what, if any, requirements may be waived in an emergency. The State Veterinarian or the Agricultural Extension Office are ideal contacts regarding the movement of poultry.

In the normal transportation of poultry, health certificates are required as well as identification of the individual bird and negative tests for both salmonella pullorum and gallinaourum.

Birds are nervous creatures so care must be given to prevent the caging from being jostled.

### **Housing:**

Poultry only need to be fed once every 24 hours. As poultry will not feed in the dark, sufficient light must be provided in order for them to see their food.

## Oiled Wildlife Spills

In any event involving oil, it is imperative that the type of oil that has been spilled and its associated human health risks be identified prior to any response. This information can usually be obtained from emergency health responders or be available publicly.

Birds have a very sensitive respiratory system and will be affected before people will in an oil spill. The symptoms, however, may not be visible in the birds except to a trained professional.

### Caging:

Plastic transport carriers are the best caging for oiled wildlife. However, once a carrier has been used to transport an oiled animal, the carrier must then be identified as a “dirty” carrier and dedicated solely to the transportation of oiled wildlife. Simply put, the carrier will never be clean enough to house or transport a non-oiled animal again.

### Caging Substrate:

The type of substrate will depend upon the type of animal being transported. The preferred substrate is either newspaper or towels/sheets. Absorbent pads may be used for dry birds. If these substrates are not available, or if transporting wet birds, then use no substrate in the caging.

### Transportation:

Due to the animals being coated in oil and possibly having ingested some of the oil, an expert in oiled wildlife should be on-site to assess the animals’ condition. In some cases, it may be necessary to provide fluids to the animal as well as thermoregulatory-assistance prior to the transportation.

The preferred method of transportation that should be used when transporting oiled wildlife is the climate controlled cargo van. However, different from the transportation of pet birds, when transporting oiled wildlife, there should be a partition between the animals and the humans, to minimize the inhalation of oil fumes from the animals. As an alternative, a pickup truck with a camper shell will suffice.

The vehicle itself must be well ventilated and the interior temperature of the vehicle should be maintained between 75 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit (24 to 27 degrees Celsius).

### Housing:

Oiled wildlife must be housed in well ventilated, warm rooms. Care must be given to monitor for over-heating if the wildlife is covered in thick, black oil and the animals have been in the sun.

### Resources for Oiled Wildlife:

Louisiana State Animal Response Team (LSART): (800) 524-2996

Tri-State Bird Rescue - Oiled Wildlife Emergency Response: (302) 737-9543

International Bird Rescue Emergency Response: (888) 447-1743

## Authors

The following individuals have contributed their time and expertise to the creation of these guidelines and the Evacuation and Transportation Best Practices Working Group sincerely appreciate their collaboration.

Daniel DeSousa: County of San Diego Department of Animal Services

Renee Poirrier, DVM: Director, Louisiana State Animal Response Team

Beth Adcock: Mississippi Animal Response Team

Barbara Callahan: Response Services Director, International Bird Rescue

Frank Kohn: Humane Transport Specialist, US Fish and Wildlife Service

Steve Olson: Vice President, Federal Relations, Association of Zoos and Aquariums

Sarah Tegtmeier: Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research