

THE USE OF PORTABLE CORRAL SYSTEMS AND TAMERS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF CAPTIVE AND FREE RANGE HOOFSTOCK.

Mark MacNamara¹ and Andy Blue²

¹ Fauna Research, Inc., 8 Bard Avenue, Red Hook, NY 12571, USA.. faunaresearch@yahoo.com

² San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park, 15500 San Pasqual Valley Road, Escondido, CA 92027, USA.

The responsible management of captive collections of exotic hoofstock begins with the proper identification and tracking of each animal together with the provision of preventative veterinary care based on the individual animal's biological history.

Essential and necessary equipment in this effort might include portable capture, sorting and holding corrals and TAMERS. The TAMER is a restraint device designed so that each animal can be physically and safely restrained without the use of immobilising drugs. Due to the variety of hoofstock species, with often large numbers of specimens in expansive areas, TAMERS are adjustable in size and are very easily transportable. Mobility allows collection managers to bring the equipment to the animals, rather than moving animals to established facilities that could be hundreds of kilometres away.

During a five day period in February, 2006 at the Endangered Wildlife Breeding and Conservation Center (EWBCC), in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates we used a portable corral system and two mobile TAMERS to individually handle 263 antelope and wild goats, including: 25 nubian ibex, (*Capra ibex nubiana*), 82 transcaspian urial, (*Ovis* sp.), 10 impala, (*Aepyceros melampus*), 29 springbok, (*Antidorcas marsupialis*), 45 markhor, (*Capra falconeri*), 56 Cretian goats, (*Capra aegagrus cretensis*) and 1 sable antelope, (*Hippotragus niger*).

Equipment: Modular corral systems were used to hold, sort, and move individual animals into the TAMER. These corrals are easily transported and erected quickly under most conditions. They consist of 1.22m wide by 2.44m high panels and gates that are connected together with steel pins and designed so that installation requires no specialist tools. Each panel and gate is constructed of 3.81 cm² high-strength, galvanized steel tube covered with 1.27cm thick high impact plastic sheets. Swing doors and slide doors together with alleyway pushboards facilitate the movement of animals from the pens into and out of the TAMERS.

The TAMER Jr., a light weight (225 kg) drop floor chute, is designed to restrain small hoofstock up to 200 kgs. It was used at EWBCC to restrain, nubian ibex, transcaspian urials and springbok. Constructed of galvanized steel tube and plastic sheeting, it is adjustable and can accommodate a wide range of body sizes, from 10kgs to 200 kgs. It is easily operated and allows for unrestricted access to restrained animals for veterinary and management procedures. The TAMER Jr. can be moved, set in place by hand and can be transported by pickup truck or all terrain vehicle.

The TAMER II is a larger drop floor chute, approximately 2.44m long by 1.83m wide and 2.44m high. The TAMER II can safely, restrain animals such as roan antelope, (*Hippotragus equines*), kudu, (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*) waterbuck, (*Kobus lechee*) or oryx, (*Oryx*, sp.), amongst others. At EWBCC it was used to handle, sable, markhor, impala, springbok, and Cretian goats. The TAMER II is equipped with over the road tires and can be towed by a tractor, truck or ATV.

Each TAMER was equipped with a TruTest electronic scale, consisting of a battery powered indicator and loadbars, so each animal could be weighed while in the TAMER. The weighing system was also compatible with Allflex electronic ear tags. Link 3000 software enabled the user to download the data from the load cell indicator into an ASCII file. Once downloaded, it can be imported to a spreadsheet or data base for later use.



Tamer II being brought on site ©Tom Bailey

Day 1 in Al Ain saw the TAMER Jr. used to handle Nubian Ibex, Uriaals, and Cretian Goats. Portable panels were put together to form a small catch pen where the animals were sorted, separated and individually run into the TAMER Jr.



Scimitar horned oryx being restrained in a Tamer II
©Tom Bailey

Day 2 involved a team of 5 erecting a 30m long by 1.2 m wide alleyway (in less than 1½ hours) to safely move 65 urials across a paved road that was separating two enclosures. Once across the road they were worked into the TAMER Jr. as before.

Day 3, 4 and 5 saw the addition of an alleyway and TAMER II to the end of an existing loading chute from a quarantine and holding facility. Markhor, impala, springbok, and sable were moved from holding pens into the TAMER II. A small crew of people; four animal handlers, one vet tech, and one veterinarian (without the use of immobilising drugs) ran 90 animals through the system and individually treated each one, without injuries or losses.

While restrained in the both the TAMER Jr. and TAMER II, each animal was given a regiment of several medications, vaccinations, a typical health exam and if required, a hoof trim, horn trim, or other veterinary procedure including minor surgery. Weights were recorded as above and each animal was tagged with an electronic Allflex ear tag.

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