



Do you wonder why rhinos were relocated by helicopter?

Rhinos blindfolded and suspended upside-down by their ankles from a helicopter, these images evoke amazement and often awe; I frequently encountered arguments such as, "That must be painful" or "Why is the rhino not transported on the ground?"

What effect does this have on the animal? Is it torture? Is there a reason why helicopters are being used in such operations?

In response to this call for answers, researchers explored the impact on animals in 2018. The findings were surprising.

Before I go into the facts, I'd like to explain why helicopters are important in wildlife conservation efforts. What is the rationale behind it?

The translocation of wildlife, such as rhinos or elephants, is a critical conservation measure to prevent poaching and ensure their survival and reproduction. In some cases, the environment is difficult to access via ground transportation or the long distance may be too harsh for the animal to tolerate.

The helicopter is the perfect tool. Safe, Fast, and can Land everywhere.

In Hoedspruit, South Africa, I met a company called [Hope for Wildlife Helicopter Service](#), run by the extraordinary helicopter pilot, Jana Meyer. It's worth taking a look at their work and learning more about the use of helicopters in conservation efforts.

What are the findings of the study which was awarded in 2021?

The researcher expected at the beginning of the study that this posture would compromise respiratory gas exchange more than lateral recumbency transported on the ground.

But this was not the event.

For the [*study](#) twelve (nine male, three female; median age 8 yr old [range: 4–25]; median weight 1,137 kg [range: 804–1,234] body weight) wild black rhinoceroses in Namibia were immobilized by aerial darting via remote intramuscular injection from a helicopter with etorphine and azaperone. At the data collection station, the rhinos were held for 10 minutes in lateral recumbency or suspended by their feet from a crane (as a simulator for the helicopter) to monitor their respiratory system and the tolerance of the medication.

The researcher's conclusion:

A rhino suspended by the helicopter had slightly better respiratory performance than one positioned laterally transported on the ground.

Reference:

*Journal Wildlife Disease Association