

## **Developments & Requirements for Housing and Crating / Environmental Enrichment**

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The title of this presentation alone requires a rest stop. Unfortunately, I am not able to address the subject of environmental enrichment except perhaps for my own which is being in a local pub with good friends.

I, like you, am more familiar with developments in housing and crating. International requirements have not kept pace with the development (but, isn't that true in most endeavors?) There are some countries that are recently disallowing certain species of lumber being used in crating. We've learned in shipping certain animals over all these years that they chew on crating . . . crating treated with chemicals. We lost several rhinos, for instance, before someone correctly observed that the cause of those rhino deaths was poisoning. The treated crates were not only used as housing prior to shipping, but were being used after arrival. All the attention and care and expense and prayers and research . . . yet the solution was simple. The lesson learned by the transporter was: check what your crate is made of, how it was treated, see what coatings were applied, what materials were used to clean the crate prior to loading and, lastly, that the animal might have been sprayed or treated with a topical insecticide that reacts with temperature changes or stress. We learn lessons at great expense to the animals.

There are some animals which, of course, don't chew . . . they scratch to destroy the crate. When choosing housing and crating for either domestic or exotic animals, you must know what the escape habits are for that species. You should ask "how would this animal escape if given time?" Last month we translocated a pair of mature female gorillas. The zoo of origin sedated and crated the animals the evening before truck transport, then they decided to switch to smaller crates because the crates specified were needed for another, upcoming shipment. The larger crates would have been quarantined for the same 30 day period as the gorillas. The original crates were larger and designed to be locked. The substitute crates were closed with a bolt and nut. The drivers returned to the zoo and checked the tie-downs and padding around the cages that were placed in the truck by the zoo attendants. No one was apprised of the switch of cages even though the documentation specified larger more secure caging.

For those that don't know, gorillas like to rock and roll in their cages. A 200 pound gorilla can dislodge anything that is not bolted and locked or welded. At the time of inspection at the international border, the traveling attendants and drivers checked and the gorillas were still secure, their cages strapped with tiedowns . . . all was quiet. Since the destination was only five hours from the border, the drivers decided to forgo the normal 4-hour off-road inspection. The destination team was informed of anticipated arrival time and the off loading crew was readied, but they were not prepared for a gorilla to be standing in the doorway when the drivers opened and very quickly shut the back door of

the truck. Had the four-hour inspection occurred road side, we would likely have had an international incident. This was a detail, easily overlooked by drivers and attendants alike. The lesson, in hindsight, is to check each detail and assume nothing. If specified cages are switched, your documentation is invalid. Never move a gorilla in a cage that's not locked! That's an understatement that might save a life.

Many of us transport mice and other rodents. Fortunately, we are moving away from composition/cardboard boxes. The reasons for change have been obvious for many years, but finally we are moving toward hard plastic boxes with nearly indestructible vents and inspection windows. These boxes are made in several sizes and can withstand warehousemen, wet floors, short falls and collisions with forklifts. Those hard plastic boxes from the same sources can stack without slipping, but do topple if stacked too high.

But, plastic has its shortfalls as well. The underside of plastic boxes degrade after repeated use and cleaning. Being brittle, it can be factured barely enough for a small mouse to squeeze through. Again, the urge to escape. Recently several boxes were placed on the front counter in our office, in anticipation of customs clearance and subsequent delivery. When I passed and glanced at the boxes, I noticed some tiny black pellets between two boxes. I proceeded several steps and realized what those pellets were. The bottom of the box was checked and a tiny crack had a tiny bit of bedding hanging out. Since then I am visited daily in my gleaming glass and chrome office by a tiny mouse that could set speed records the equine committee would envy. So here we are, two steps forward and one step backward in the innovation of new housing/crating.

Crating and housing should not be unsafe, or inhumane, or uncomfortable, or illegal. IATA has the best guidelines written to date, to assist the carpenter and cage maker. With our assistance, IATA can continue to update and improve those guidelines and the consistency they offer the world. But, we should never blindly accept current guidelines as the final word. We can - all of us, through our collective experiences, communication and concern - use common sense and reasoning to assure the safe, secure and humane movement of all live animals.

KNOW YOUR SPECIES

OBEY THE LAWS

BE ALERT

REFER TO THE IATA GUIDELINES

ALWAYS FOLLOW YOUR PROTOCOL

COMMUNICATE



