



## TRANSPORT OF CHAMELEONS

I am moving... OMG

Should I leave the chameleon here to someone or can I transport it to my new destination even if it is 36hours drive from here? Will he survive? Is it not too stressful and risky?

I am the first one to preach a respectful and careful and gentle handling of chameleons. But they are not made out of snowflakes!

If you need to handle, handle!

If you need transport, transport!

If you need to send, send!

If you need to move to a new home, move and take it with you!

It is stressful?

Yes, but most of the stress we can eliminate by few tricks.

Is it risky?

Yes, but not highly if we use the tricks, it is pretty safe!

36 hours is nothing... even 48.... when they make their way from he wild to US, it is much longer way and they survive!

There are few tricks, you need to know...

## **PREPARATION**

- Do not feed at least 3 days prior to transport
- Do not give water at least 1 day before transport
- Switch off lights and basking lamp at least 3 days before transport
- Cool it down if possible, best to the level of normal sleeping temperatures or few degrees lower.
- Put it into transport box at night while sleeping.
- Never transport chameleons that:
  - is about to lay eggs
  - is heavily sick, unless you have no option.
  - all other cases are possible and OK (just hatched, juvenile, pregnant, on ATB course, old...)

## **Transport rules condensed:**

- 0 One by one**
- 1 Good transport box**
- 2 Always transport stick**
- 3 Small but present ventilation**
- 4 Low humidity**
- 5 Low temperature**
- 6 Darkness**
- 7 No handling**
- 8 No feeding**
- 9 No water**
- 10 Always shade**
- 11 No frost**

## **TRANSPORT**

Always transport chameleons ONE BY ONE

### **1 Transport box**

- Should be enough for the chameleon to be comfortable and not too squeezed, but not unnecessarily big. If there is space 1-2 inches either way off its body and head, it is more than enough. The material should better be plastic than paper (see humidity) and should be neither transparent nor translucent, best of neutral dark color (black, brown).
- It can be additionally made soft in placing there artificial fabrics (better not paper or anything that can easily soak with water, as it will desiccate the chameleon unnecessarily). But this is not necessary unless you expect rush shaking and sudden movements during the transport.
- Avoid anything hard and sharp that could hurt the chameleon. If you drill holes, drill them inside out and make sure the margins are not sharp.

### **2 Transport stick**

- To feel safe, chameleons need to firmly grasp a stick, otherwise it is stressful for them. So, put lengthwise close to the bottom a stick and fix it so that it does not move.

### **3 Ventilation**

- Put small holes to the box either all around or at sides or at the top. 10 holes of 3mm diameter are OK for average chameleon, do not put more! It will provide the airflow necessary for it to breathe.
- Make sure, during the transport these holes do not get covered...
- Too many holes provide too much air exchange and lead to desiccation, plus they provide too much light preventing the chameleon to sleep.

### **4 Humidity**

- Plastic box with holes as above is best because the chameleon creates through its own breathing own atmosphere and does not desiccate too much as it is breathing moist air



## **5 Temperature**

- It is better to cool the chameleon down than to warm it up.
- Drop of temperature is normal at night and chameleons reduce their activity and sleep.
- If the temperature is too high, they become active which leads to scratches and injuries.
- Moreover, cold temperature slows down their metabolism which reduces the stress of the body with unnecessary digestion and exchange of gases etc.

## **6 Darkness**

- If the box inside is dark, the chameleon will reflexively sleep in as in the wild or in the terrarium.

## **7 No handling**

- Let the chameleon sleep, do not wake it up, do not open the box, do not feed do not provide water. It would destroy the microclimate and his sleep and expose him to stress through handling, sleeping in again, unnecessary metabolism etc.

## **8 No feeding**

- Do not feed during transport!
- No need: all chameleons can survive easily many weeks without food (the easier is it for our captive overfed ones), so few hours or days is not an issue! It is better the metabolism is at basal level and does not need energy and activity.

## **9 No water**

- Never let chameleon drink during he transport!
- It should drink enough before and that is it.
- It is better, it gets slightly desiccated during transport than overhydrated. Slight desiccation is easy to compensate and the focus on drinking will calm him down once moved to the new enclosure and make the adaptation to it more easy.
- If you overhydrate a chameleon, it can vomit and it can increase the humidity to such level that he becomes sick (skin lesions, mycoses, URI etc. are he result).



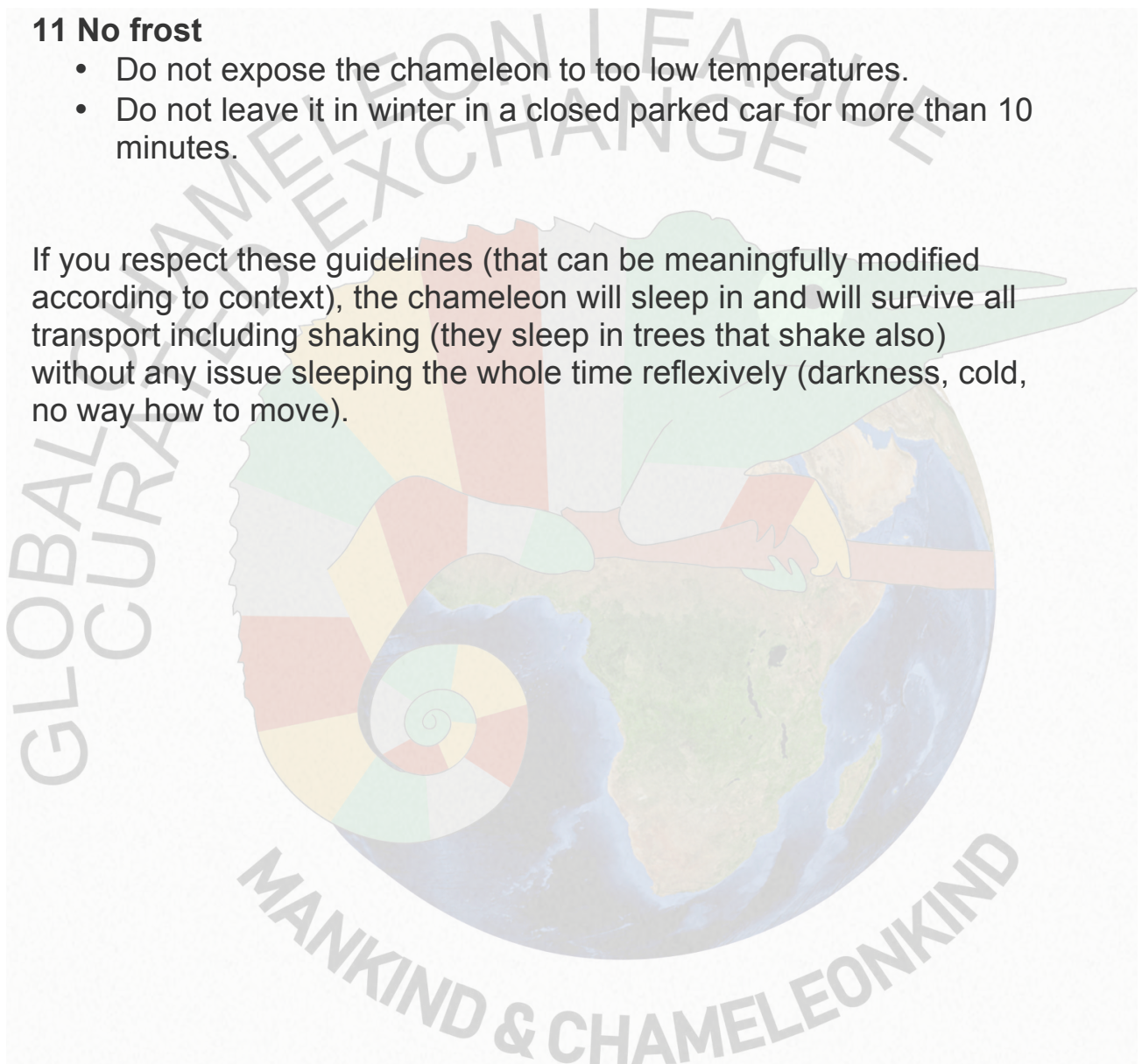
### **10 No insolation: always shade**

- Be careful: in a closed box, once insolated by sun (even through windscreen in a car that is air conditioned), the temperature can raise quickly and the chameleon can die on thermal shock.
- Never leave it in warm weather in the parked car even for few minutes! Take the box always with you. When you are comfortable, the chameleon will be also.

### **11 No frost**

- Do not expose the chameleon to too low temperatures.
- Do not leave it in winter in a closed parked car for more than 10 minutes.

If you respect these guidelines (that can be meaningfully modified according to context), the chameleon will sleep in and will survive all transport including shaking (they sleep in trees that shake also) without any issue sleeping the whole time reflexively (darkness, cold, no way how to move).



## AFTER TRANSPORT ADAPTATION

- Take the chameleon out of the box and inspect him thoroughly. Look especially for signs of:
  - Injuries or scratches
  - Dehydration
- Do not look for stress signs, they will be there and they will go anyway.
- If injured, handle appropriately.
- If desiccated, rehydrate SLOWLY!
- Remember, you can kill a dehydrated chameleon with water because his shrink cells will tear if exposed to the osmotic pressure of hypotonic water.
- Heavily dehydrated chameleons need to be rehydrated using isotonic saline solutions.
- Then mist the cage heavily.
- Then put he chameleon in his cage.
- Do not feed immediately, best the other day only. He needs to get comfortable first, most will anyway refuse to eat even few days after transport. Do not panic, it is normal and will stabilize during few days.

