



In the past, people trapped falcons to use them for hunting purposes. At the end of the hunting season, those falcons were released again at the time of the return migration. As it was mainly Saker females that were used as the traditional Arab hunting falcon, their breeding cycle came to a complete stop when falconers began to keep these falcons throughout the year. This may have contributed to a dramatic decrease of falcons living in the wild.

H.H. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates recognised this deteriorating situation and established the Falcon Release Programme in 1995.

The falcon release programme helps to maintain the wild population by releasing wild caught falcons back into the wild



Veterinary Health Screening and Conditioning

- 1) Falcon Identification
- 2) Veterinary Examination
- 3) Morphometric measurements
- 4) Pre-release conditioning
- 5) Additional Pre-Release Considerations



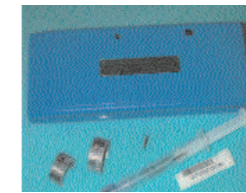
Veterinary Health Screening and Conditioning

1) Falcon Identification: All falcons are identified as to species, age, sex coloration and source, if known. A colour photograph is taken of each falcon and placed in front of the birds individual

medical history file. Permanent identification is accomplished by AVID passive integrated transponder. This is a unique 9 digit numbered chip which is placed subcutaneously lateral to the sternum. A unique hospital number is also assigned which runs consecutively based on chronological order.

2) Veterinary Examination: Falcons are given complete physical examinations on a recurring basis to include but not limited to the following:

- ◆ Weight
- ◆ Radiography



- ◆ Superficial and Organ system examination
- ◆ Anathematic screening and treatment: falcons are routinely checked for internal and external parasites. Treatment for specific parasites is administered when appropriate. Broad spectrum anathematic is given in the absence of specific indication.
- ◆ Pre-release physicals should include endoscopy of the air sacs if at all possible
- ◆ Physical exams include but are not limited to the following: Superficial examination and organ system physical. Beaks and talons are trimmed



and sharpened, primary flight feathers are examined and any broken ones repaired. Behavioural assessment, faecal analysis and weight are recorded. All birds are subjected to cloacal swab and virus culture testing for presence of pathogenic virus.

◆ Prophylactic Immunizations: All falcons are given a two dose immunization series of Attenuated Paramyxovirus-1 vaccine. The first dose of 1/2 ml is followed by a second dose after 30 days. All birds are given a booster on a yearly basis.

3) **Morphometric measurements** are recorded and a blood sample is taken for genetic studies.

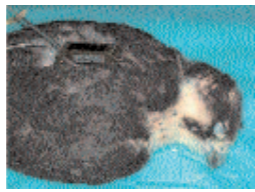
4) **Pre-release conditioning** of at least one month. Could include a variety of methods starting with "flying in place" exercises then advancing

to flying on crane (line); or stooping lure and or live pigeon as in falconry at end of hunting season. Ideally birds should be brought up to a fat condition for 3-4 weeks in advance of the release rather than releasing obese birds.

5) Additional Pre-Release Considerations -

All birds are maintained in isolation facilities at least one month prior to release. During the pre-release phase the birds are given twice daily exercise sessions to maintain muscle tone and conditioning. Birds are fed once or twice daily to

achieve and maintain appropriate conditioning and fat reserves. All falcons are handled in such a manner that they can be safely transported to include hooding, perching and handling. Close association and taming are discouraged so as to maintain wildness. Based on psychological screening tests, birds are transported to the release site hooded and either perched on padded transport carriers, or ventilated and darkened cardboard carton. The bottom of the carton is covered with plastic grass carpet with sponge perch fixed to the center of the box floor. All falcons transported by carton have their tail feathers protected by removable plastic tail envelope. Any fractious birds are calmed by supplemental low dose tranquilizer.



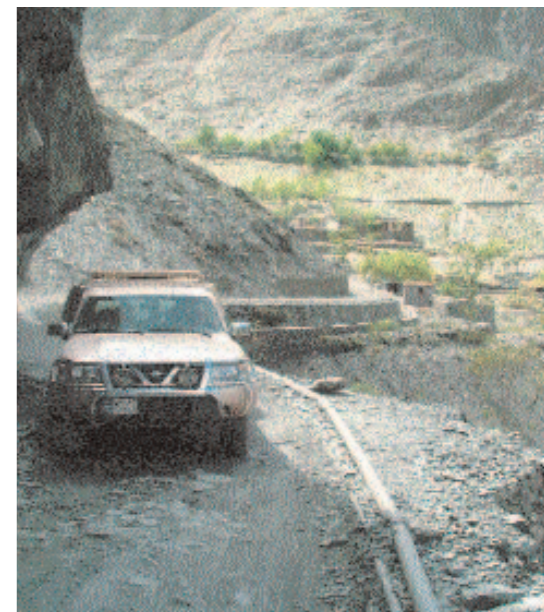


ABU DHABI FALCON HOSPITAL مستشفى ابوظبي للصقور

Administrative Measures

Administrative Measures

- 1) Advance Notice of Anticipated Release and Date - For Planning purposes-Especially hospital director. Release date should be planned for in advance of the anticipated onset of the molt.
- 2) Make in Advance – "Lock-on" raptor Bands of appropriate size, grade of metal and engraving quality.
- 3) To ensure accuracy in species, sex, age, band numbers- there should be close coordination between secretarial staff preparing CITES permits and Veterinary staff selecting falcons for release.
- 4) Customs clearance procedures should be handled in advance in such a way that details of the shipment, and paperwork procedures are merely expedited signatory exercises.
- 5) Carefully planned timings, estimations of travel conditions and anticipated routing difficulties should be conveyed to all concerned.
- 6) Participants should be assigned specific duties according to time and place such that each man knows exactly what is expected of him at any point in the trip and knows what and where he is to perform next. A chronological schedule with specific assignments should be typed and handed to each participant.
- 7) Procedures should not be altered except at the senior level after consultation with other principals so as to not introduce the issue of confusion in the release plan.
- 8) Advise all parties of change as soon as previously planned logistical procedures are known to have been altered, or are considered to be inaccurate.
- 9) Any plans involving photographers should be choreographed in advance, especially when the exercise involves moving large number of birds simultaneously in marginal weather or when timing is critical.
- 10) Instruct drivers of trucks transporting luggage to check with all individuals concerned prior to leaving the area with personal baggage and equipment.
- 11) Develop a system of priority for release and stick to it. Example release fractious birds immediately upon arrival in release area. This is especially pertinent when dealing with birds which have not been manned for several years or are unmanageable.





Transportation to the Release Site

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- 1) Plan in advance of final hunt to bring along any old birds that are redundant so that they can be handled, trained and conditioned in preparation for transport direct to the release area.
- 2) Birds should be handled to the extent that they can be transported in a box safely or should be manageable on sheddas. If space is at a premium, larger numbers of birds can be transport-



ed in boxes (birds/square foot of space) than sheddas.

- 3) Birds should be fed without casting about 18 hours prior to boxing.
- 4) Tranquilization with Ketamine/Rompun (10 mg/kg Ketamine mixed with 0.5-1 mg/kg Rompun) is preferred when initially boxing birds for shipment. The quiescent period lasts about 3 1/2 hours.
- 5) Carry plastic **water spray pumps** for cooling, soaking, and providing drinking water for birds in transport.

- 6) The leash should be left lying on the floor of the box so that it can be grasped quickly when removing the un-anesthetized falcon later.
- 7) Air-conditioned buses with seats removed are excellent conveyors of boxed birds as well as falcons perched on sheddas. Ensure air-conditioning in all vehicles which are transporting falcons - good working order.
- 8) Insist on tried and proven equipment design and usage - e.g. Gebba and boxes for restrained birds. If falcons are to be transported in rugged terrain or by rough road the boxes should be designed to ensure that restrained birds do not slide out of the box. Gebba's should be constructed of the latest design. They should be put on with care by indi-



viduals knowledgeable in their use. Birds should not be held in a Gebba longer than 3 hours without re-tranquilization.

- 9) **Carry trapping gear** to be used in the event of post-release mishap or observed illness.
- 10) **Live healthy pigeons** of a suitable number should be available to serve as easily caught prey items for post-release birds.
- 11) **Bring extra equipment** i.e. hoods, sabook and mersil, sufficient wakers, extra gloves and mangalas.





The Release



The Release

- 1) Feed birds in the camp in a routine manner. E.g. if they have only been fed on the block indoors then unhood them and feed inside a tent or building, then hood immediately. Keep stress to a minimum if at all possible and at all

- 2) Falcons are to be released in suitable habitat in which wildlife, especially primary prey species are in abundance. Concentrate releases in areas which have available water resources within perching, resting and hunting habitat, especially where birds are released which have been in captivity for a number of years.
- 3) Feed all release birds early in the morning on release day.
- 4) **Birds which begin to get nervous** or suffer increasing stress should be released immediate-



- 5) **Topographical maps** of high resolution should be used if considering cross country release routes.
- 6) Before releasing any falcon the surrounding area should be searched for signs of **territorial predators** or presence of large and dangerous predators such as Steppe Eagles.
- 7) Two individuals should **read the band number** prior to release to verify accuracy.
- 8) Strike the braces prior to cutting the sabook.
- 9) Birds should be released into the wind in an area where they have a clear flight path in



- 10) Every effort should be made to determine that a newly released falcon lands safely and is perched in a safe location.
- 11) **Bands should be removed** from any bird which dies during the release process.