



Lao People's Democratic Republic

Peace Independence Democracy Unity Prosperity

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

Department of Forestry

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Disposal of Deceased Captive Tigers



May 2025

Acknowledgement from the Department of Forestry (DOF), Lao PDR

The Department of Forestry (DOF), as the CITES Management Authority for Lao PDR, formally acknowledges and adopts the “Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Inspection and Disposal of Deceased Captive Tigers to be implemented Lao PDR”. This SOP provides clear and standardized protocols for inspecting and documenting deceased tigers in captive facilities, thereby strengthening the transparency, oversight, and accountability of such events.

By applying this SOP, we aim to enhance the monitoring, verification, and regulatory processes concerning the deaths of captive tigers, ensuring alignment with national conservation goals and international CITES obligations.

We sincerely thank all the partners who contributed to the development of this SOP, in particular WWF and its technical collaborators. Their expertise, research input, and sharing of best practices have been instrumental in shaping a practical and scientifically sound approach to tiger carcass inspections.

On this day, the Department of Forestry reaffirms its commitment to the rigorous implementation of this SOP. We believe it will play a critical role in protecting biodiversity, maintaining credible records of captive tiger populations, and ensuring responsible facility management in accordance with national and global standards. 

Vientiane Capital, Date..... **15 MAY 2025**

Director General of the Department of Forestry



Assoc.Prof.Dr. Somvang PHIMMAVONG

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Disposal of Deceased Captive Tigers

This SOP addresses the procedures required for tigers that die in captivity, with regards to the handling and disposal of carcasses, record keeping and reporting requirements. This includes tigers of all ages, including still-born and other cubs. Its purpose is to direct the disposal and management of deceased captive tigers¹ to avoid misuse of carcasses for illegal trade in tiger parts and products. Additionally, a better understanding of the cause of death through postmortem examinations and laboratory investigations and better management of carcasses will help identify and reduce potential risk to human and animal health from preventative infectious and zoonotic disease, aligned with a One Health approach.

This SOP is directed at government authorities (including the CITES² Management Authority (MA), enforcement authorities, the veterinary authority and public health authorities), and captive tiger facility owner(s)/manager(s) (whether private or public)). The government authorities should ensure all relevant parties are aware of the guidance and held accountable.

Upon the death of a tiger in captivity in any type of facility the following procedures should be followed:

1. Captive facilities must record the death of a specimen in the facilities' own official register and secure the carcass. As soon as the death of the animal is discovered, the situation should be recorded (preferably through written and photographic means), and the carcass secured in an appropriate location to protect the health and safety of other animals, the facility operatives, and the wider public, while maintaining its integrity to facilitate postmortem examination. The record should include information on identifiers for the individual tiger such as DNA profile, stripe pattern photo and microchip number, where available.
2. A postmortem examination (PME) by a qualified veterinarian to determine conclusively the cause of death. Postmortem examinations should be carried out quickly and avoid freezing the carcass beforehand, if possible. In the event of the postmortem being inconclusive and no specific reason for death identified, samples of the tissues and organs, blood, viscera etc. should be sent to an approved qualified diagnostic laboratory for further examination to identify the cause of death. Costs should be borne by the facility.

A DNA sample should be taken from the carcass to verify it matches the identifier records for that individual.



¹ The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Resolution Conference 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) urges Parties with facilities keeping tigers in captivity to ensure that adequate management practices and controls are in place and strictly implemented, including for the disposal of deceased specimens to prevent parts and derivatives from entering illegal trade from or through such facilities.

² Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

Where the PME and/or lab results highlight potential risk of zoonotic disease the relevant agencies (Department of Livestock and Fisheries (DLF), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and Department of Communicable Disease Control (CDC), Ministry of Health) should be notified. Where existing policy on potential zoonotic outbreaks exists, such as Articles 46-51 of the Law on Wild Animal (Revised 2024) and the SOP for Wild Animal Health in Laos, appropriate protocols should be followed.

The results of any PME and/or laboratory investigations should be added to the record of death held by the facility.

3. Captive facilities must report the death of a specimen to the Department of Forestry (DOF) within 24 hours of the animal's death.

This should be done as soon as possible, and within one working day of the death, so that arrangements for step 4 can be made. This should include information on identifiers for the individual tiger such as DNA profile, stripe pattern photo and microchip number, where available.

4. A deceased tiger and all of their parts and products should be disposed of by incineration on site immediately after the PME.

The immediacy of this action will help reduce the risk of spreading any potential pathogens and the risk of leakage of parts and products into trade.

For the purposes of transparency and to prevent any possibility of smuggling or illegal trade in the parts or products, the carcass should be incinerated in the presence of a district forestry official, to ensure that the disposed carcass is intact and matches that entered in the record. The procedure should also be recorded on video (time stamped and geolocated), and the footage held by the authorities.

The tiger's microchip, where there is one, should be handed to the Department of Forestry (DOF) representative, at the time of incineration. Where a specimen-specific CITES certificate/permit/licence is required under national legislation for the keeping of captive tigers, the certificate/permit/licence for that specimen becomes invalid and should be handed back to the authority representative, at the time of incineration.

While some countries may retain some parts or products for educational purposes, this should be prohibited in Laos, given the risk of trade.

5. Captive tiger facilities should report full details of the death to the relevant authorities

When available, the results of any PME and/or laboratory investigations should be reported to the authorities.



In addition to the individual records, a stock record of all animals must be kept and a copy forwarded to the government authority annually.

6. A national government authority should maintain records of reported numbers of tiger deaths centrally at the national level through a central register for the purposes of traceability.

This central register should be accessible to all CITES management and enforcement authorities and should contain, inter alia, information on the number of tigers nationwide and by which facilities, relevant documentation, and any information on deceased specimens. PME reports and other documentation provided should be uploaded to the register.

The register should record the following details for every deceased captive tiger. From the date of incineration:

- 1) Reference number (matching tiger stock records from national audits)
- 2) Name of the captive tiger facility where the tiger died
- 3) Owner of the captive tiger facility where the tiger died
- 4) Whether the animal was previously recorded by the relevant authority
- 5) Identification information reported by the owner (DNA profile, stripe pattern photo, microchip number)
- 6) Birth date of the animal
- 7) Date of death
- 8) Photo of stripe pattern of the carcass
- 9) Confirmation that the stripe pattern photo matches that of the animal when alive
- 10) Time and date of incineration
- 11) Where and how the carcass was kept between death and incineration
- 12) Name of authority representative present for incineration
- 13) Link to video of incineration of carcass
- 14) Confirmation that any registration licence for keeping the tiger has been returned and destroyed
- 15) Confirmation that any microchip has been returned and destroyed.

Within 30 days of the death:

- 1) Reason for death, and attach the PME report, and where needed, lab report
- 2) Confirmation the DNA profile from the carcass matches the DNA profile reported from the animal when alive
- 3) When the reason for death is a potential zoonotic disease, when was the public health authority notified, by whom, to whom, and how.



The relevant authority should review the recorded and reported information and act upon anything which may raise suspicion of illegal activity, e.g. the records not aligning, suspicious deaths, etc.

Authorities should assess the information in the register and use this in inspections and audits of the captive tiger facilities to determine any unusual movement or loss of tigers.

Timeline to be followed upon the death of a captive tiger:

Timeframe	Requirement	Responsible	Details
Immediately upon death of the tiger	Secure carcass	Facility owner/manager	Use a suitable location to protect the health and safety of other animals, staff and public. Maintain integrity of the carcass for PME, avoiding freezing if possible.
Within 24 hours of death	Record death in facilities register	Facility owner/manager	Include photographs as well as written notes. Include information on individual identifiers (DNA profile, stripe pattern photos, microchip number, where applicable)
ASAP and within 24 hours of death	Report the death to DOF	Facility owner/manager	This should include information on identifiers for the individual tiger such as DNA profile, stripe pattern photo and microchip number, where available.
ASAP and within 24 hours of death	Post-mortem examination (PME). If that is inconclusive send samples to an approved qualified diagnostic laboratory	Facility owner/manager	Secure a professional veterinarian to carry this out. Determine cause of death

Signature

ASAP and within 24 hours of discovery of cause of death	Inform full details of cause of death to DOF	Facility owner/manager	
ASAP and within 24 hours of discovery of cause of death	Should the cause of death have a potential risk of zoonotic disease inform relevant authorities	Facility owner/manager	Inform the Department of Livestock and Fisheries (DLF), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and Department of Communicable Disease Control (CDC), Ministry of Health
	Detain or destroy wild animal carcasses, parts and products, waste or equipment that could risk spreading the disease to other areas	Agriculture and Forestry sector	Coordinate with relevant parties as needed. This is in compliance with Article 51 of the Law on Wild Animal (Revised, 2024)
	Carry out the cleaning and disinfection of the disease agents and contaminated equipment	Agriculture and Forestry sector	Coordinate with relevant parties as needed. This is in compliance with Article 51 of the Law on Wild Animal (Revised, 2024)
	Issue warning notices and control the movement of vectors, such as: humans, live wild animal and vehicles transporting wild animal products into or out of the outbreak zone	Agriculture and Forestry sector	Coordinate with relevant parties as needed. This is in compliance with Article 51 of the Law on Wild Animal (Revised, 2024)

	Suspend the breeding of wild animal species in the outbreak area;	Agriculture and Forestry sector	Coordinate with relevant parties as needed. This is in compliance with Article 51 of the Law on Wild Animal (Revised, 2024)
	Provide drugs or chemicals to prevent wild animal diseases in disease-free zones	Agriculture and Forestry sector	Coordinate with relevant parties as needed. This is in compliance with Article 51 of the Law on Wild Animal (Revised, 2024)
	Implement disease surveillance and apply certain hygiene measures on the basis of risk analysis in the outbreak zones to ensure the outbreak subsides	Agriculture and Forestry sector	Coordinate with relevant parties as needed. This is in compliance with Article 51 of the Law on Wild Animal (Revised, 2024)
	Conduct public advertisement and education campaigns to raise awareness of and participate in disease prevention and control	Agriculture and Forestry sector	Coordinate with relevant parties as needed. This is in compliance with Article 51 of the Law on Wild Animal (Revised, 2024)
Upon discovery of the cause of death	Add results of any PME and/or laboratory investigations to the record of death at the facility	Facility owner/manager	
Make plans ASAP after receiving report of death and carry out immediately after	Incinerate the tiger carcass	DOF	Work in conjunction with the facility owner/manager. The carcass should be incinerated

the PME is complete			<p>in the presence of a district forestry official, to ensure that the disposed carcass is intact and matches that entered in the record.</p> <p>The procedure should also be recorded on video (time stamped and geolocated).</p> <p>The tiger's microchip, where there is one, should be handed to the DOF representative, at the time of incineration.</p> <p>Where a specimen-specific CITES certificate/permit/licence is required under national legislation for the keeping of captive tigers, the certificate/permit/licence for that specimen should be handed back to the authority representative, at the time of incineration.</p>
Within three days of the incineration	Record available details around the death on the authority register	DOF	This should include all the information as detailed in section 6 above.
Within 30 days of the death	Complete the full details around the death on the authority register	DOF	This should include all the information as detailed in section 6 above.
Within 30 days of death	Review the recorded and reported information and act upon anything which may raise suspicion of illegal activity, e.g. the	DOF	

	records not aligning, suspicious deaths, etc.		
Ongoing	Assess the information in the register and use this in inspections and audits of the captive tiger facilities to determine any unusual movement or loss of tigers.	DOF	

7. The template for documenting the carcass of a deceased tiger.

No.	Section	Details	Notes
1	General Information	Reference number (matching tiger stock records from national audits)	
		Name of the captive tiger facility where the tiger died	
		Owner of the captive tiger facility where the tiger died	
		Whether the animal was previously recorded by the relevant authority	
2	Identification Details	Birth date of the animal	
		Identification information reported by the owner (DNA profile, stripe pattern photo, microchip number)	
3	Carcass Verification and Handling	Photo of stripe pattern of the carcass	
		Confirmation that the stripe pattern photo matches that of the animal when alive	
		Where and how the carcass was kept between death and	

		incineration	
4	Carcass Disposal Process	Time and date of incineration	
		Name of authority representative present for incineration	
		Link to video of incineration of carcass	
5	Documentation and Compliance	Confirmation that any registration licence for keeping the tiger has been returned and destroyed	
		Confirmation that any microchip has been returned and destroyed	
6	Examination Record	Date & Time of Examination	
		Location/Facility Name	
		Examining Veterinarian	
		Witnesses (Name, Job title, Organization)	
		Tiger Identification (Sex, Age, Weight, Body Condition Score, External Temperature)	
7	Circumstances of Death	Date & Time of Death	
		Reported By	
		Location of Death	
		Circumstances Leading to Death	
		Carcass Storage Conditions	
8	External Examination	General Body Condition,	
		Skin & Fur Condition,	
		Presence of External Injuries,	

		Abnormalities, Swellings, Parasites	
		Rigor Mortis	
		Discharges	
9	Internal Examination	Musculoskeletal System	
		Cardiovascular System	
		Respiratory System	
		Digestive System	
		Urogenital System	
		Nervous System	
		Lymphatic System	
10	Laboratory Samples Collected	Blood Samples, Tissue Samples, Stomach Content Samples, Swabs (Oral, Rectal, Nasal), Other	
11	Provisional Diagnosis / Cause of Death	Initial Findings	
		Possible Cause(s) of Death	
		Further Tests Required	
12	Additional Notes & Recommendations	Further Investigation Recommendations	
		Disposal Instructions	
		Legal or Reporting Requirements	

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Date & Time:.....

Signatures

1) Examining Veterinarian(s)

2) Witness/Official Present