

Dangerous Wild Animals (Northern Ireland) Order 2004

# Guidance on the keeping of Tapir



**Environment &  
Heritage Service**  
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1. **Species Names** *Tapirus terrestris* Brazilian or Lowland tapir  
*Tapirus pinchaque* Woolly or Mountain tapir  
*Tapirus bairdi* Baird's or Central American tapir  
*Tapirus indicus* Malayan or Asiatic tapir
2. **Additional information** Tapirs are often thought to be meek and gentle animals, however their behaviour can be very unpredictable and they have been known to attack without warning. Keepers should not trust the animal to be tame. Tapir attacks can result in serious wounds, the loss of fingers, or even death.
3. **Conservation status** All species of tapir apart from the Brazilian or Lowland tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*) are classified as Annex A species under EC Regulation 338/97 (relating to the Convention on TRADE IN Endangered Species (CITES).  
  
Special permits must be obtained to buy, sell, breed or use Annex A species for any commercial purpose.
4. **Housing overview** Tapirs need both indoor and outdoor accommodation. It is recommended that enclosures should have a smaller holding facility for the tapirs, to allow keepers to safely enter enclosures to clean, and to permit the veterinary treatment of the animals if necessary. This may double as the animals' indoor accommodation.  
  
Tapirs are forest animals and need access to shade throughout the year. They also require a bathing pool.

- 5. Keeping experience** In order to protect the welfare of these animals, keepers must be able to demonstrate a good knowledge of husbandry and handling of these animals.

## Housing Recommendations

- 6. Construction** Tapir are large, solidly muscled animals. Any enclosure must be resistant to this. Outdoor enclosures must be strong enough to support the weight of tapirs running or jumping at the fence, but elastic enough not to injure them if they collide.

Any concrete or synthetic floor surfaces should be non-slip. Tapir have sensitive foot pads, therefore the surface of hard floors should not have a rough finish which might abrade the feet. Concrete should be avoided or covered with a good depth of bark. Rubberised floors indoors are ideal

The walls of interior holding pens should be 2 m (6 ft) high, and solidly constructed of wood, concrete, or vertical steel bars with a maximum of 20 cm (8 inches) between the uprights. Horizontal bars should not be used unless the spaces between the bars are blocked to prevent the tapir climbing through.

## 7. Fencing

Chain link fencing, light steel bar fencing, or walling with a sunken fence or ditch (a “ha ha”) are appropriate means of enclosure. Fences should be a minimum of 2 metres high (6 ft), and where chain links are used, the fence should be secured along the lower edge to prevent the tapir from pushing underneath. Chain link fencing should be 10 gauge or heavier.

Fence posts should be concreted into the ground, to prevent the tapir from pushing posts over.

Tapir are agile climbers, and can squeeze through surprisingly small gaps and are capable of jumping. The surface of fencing should be smooth, and should not provide a foothold to allow climbing. There should not be any furniture, rocks, or trees that might provide a foothold for the tapir.

Fences should be checked regularly to ensure that they are kept secure and in good repair.

The use of barbed wire is not appropriate for tapir. Electric fencing in addition to other means of containment may be used if appropriate.

A stand off barrier, at least a metre from the main fence, or a solid wall is required to prevent visitors, or members of the public having contact with the tapirs.

## 8. Size

A minimum outdoor area of 200 m<sup>2</sup> (2000 ft<sup>2</sup>) for a single tapir is recommended. This size should be increased depending on the number of tapir kept.

There should always be enough space allowed for chasing behaviour to be expressed during the breeding season, and when animals are first introduced to each other.

Indoor tapir stalls should have a minimum floor space of 9 m<sup>2</sup> (100 ft<sup>2</sup>). Stall entrances should be sliding gates that can be used without the keeper entering the stall, or stable doors. Each tapir kept should have its own stall, so that they can be separated for medical treatment, behavioural problems, or to clean the outdoor enclosure.

## 9. Temperature and Shelter

Normal outdoor temperatures in Northern Ireland should be tolerable for tapir, however adequate shade, protection from the elements, and access to indoor housing should be provided. Tapir should be provided with sheltered accommodation such as a horse loose-box.

Temperatures of the indoor housing should be kept between 18° and 30° C (65-85° F), with a humidity level above 50% unless an indoor pool is provided for the tapirs to use. When temperatures drop below freezing, floor temperatures should be monitored, and extra bedding provided. Ice can cause particular problems for tapir.

Bedding such as straw must be provided in their sleeping quarters for warmth, security and to protect the animals' feet. If the tapir are to be housed for longer periods, more space must be provided.

## 10. Lighting

Tapir require natural daytime lighting. If animals are to be kept indoors, suitable artificial lighting must be provided for at least 8 hours during daylight, and it must be adequate for the keeper to clean and work in the accommodation.

Tapir are much more active at night, and should be allowed a normal night and day cycle so that they may express natural behaviour.

## 11. Ventilation

Fresh air ventilation must be provided in the housing areas to prevent the build-up of noxious gases.

## 12. Drainage

The drainage of the enclosure must be capable of rapidly removing all excess water. Drains should be designed to avoid injury to the tapir, and sited so as not to impede their movement. Any open drains, other than those carrying surface water, should be outside the enclosure.

The pool provided for the animals must be capable of being drained.

## 13. Cleanliness

Outdoor enclosures should be maintained in a clean state, with faeces, food debris and litter being removed on a daily basis. Indoor enclosures should ideally be built with materials that can be easily cleaned and disinfected.

The pool should ideally be emptied and refilled every day with clean water. Tapirs regularly defecate into water, and depriving them of the ability to carry out this behaviour could endanger their health.

The enclosure should be checked for foreign bodies on a daily basis and anything which could cause harm should be removed.

Keepers should be strongly discouraged from entering the enclosure with the animals. A separate holding enclosure should be incorporated that allows the keeper to enter safely to clean and maintain the main enclosure.



**14. Social dynamics and behavioural considerations**

Tapir are kept most easily as single animals. If more than one tapir is kept, space is needed for the animals to live separately and avoid each other.

An enclosure with planted trees and undergrowth will allow the tapirs to express natural behaviour and provide sheltered areas for them to hide.

**15. Protection of young**

Tapir young should not be allowed access to the pool for at least a week to reduce the risk of drowning. Tapir young should not be kept on concrete flooring. Adequate bedding is recommended for them to keep warm.

**16. Prevention of escape**

In addition to the fencing requirements, enclosures should be securely locked at all times. Great care should be taken to ensure that tapirs do not slip through gaps in the enclosure, or climb or jump over fencing. Gates must be the same height as the surrounding fencing.

If a keeper must enter the enclosure whilst the animals are loose, a double door must be erected to prevent the animals pushing past the keeper as the gate is opened.

If the enclosure is accessible by the public, for example, adjoining a public highway, steps should be taken to prevent the possibility of the public gaining access to, or being injured by, the tapirs. This may require the erection of a secondary fence (a stand-off barrier), or a solid wall on the accessible sides of the enclosure. Warning signs may also be required.

**17. Food, drink and bedding**

Tapirs are herbivores, eating plants, fruit, and leaves. In the wild tapir eat small amounts very often, it is therefore important to make sure that there is adequate food available at all time.

A combination of herbivore pellets (pony nuts or horse nuts), hay and a mix of vegetables and fruits is a good diet for tapir. Bananas and other sweet fruit are appreciated as a treat, and can be used as positive reinforcement to help manage tapir behaviour.

They must be provided with adequate quantities of appropriate food at least once every 24 hours.

When more than one tapir are kept together, feed must be located to allow all of the tapirs to feed at the same time.

Fresh drinking water must be provided at all times. If the tapir are being housed indoors and there is no pool available, they should be hosed down at least once a day.

Tapirs require dry absorbent bedding material that is not attractive to eat.

**18. Visiting interval**

The tapirs must be visited at appropriate intervals, normally at least twice every 24 hours.

**19. Exercise and enrichment**

The enclosure should be big enough for the animals to exercise.

A pool should be available for the tapirs at all times. Pools should be large enough to allow two full sized tapir to bathe at the same time. The ramp into the pool should be a gradual incline and non-slip.

**20. Provision for capturing the animals**

The enclosure must have a facility for catching up the tapir. The animals can either be bribed with food into the holding pen, or herded using a race (chute) and capture pen with a non-slip floor and solid sides.

Veterinary treatment should be provided on-site.

These animals may only be moved with prior permission of the Department of the Environment. Specially constructed transport crates will be required.

**21. Emergency planning**

There should be a written contingency plan in place to be used in the event of an emergency, for example fire, flood, animal escape or injury to the keeper.

- 22. Notification Requirements** **A licence, issued by the Department of the Environment, for the keeping of these animals may specify procedures to be followed in the event of an escape and on the provision of information to the Emergency Services (e.g. the Fire Service) on the dangerous wild animals being kept.**

You are required to notify the Department of the Environment of any intentions to breed the animals.

- 23. Prevention and control of spread of infectious disease** Provision should be made to allow isolation of sick or injured tapirs. This may be achieved by closing the doors to the stall, with the tapir inside, or by fencing off an area of the paddock.

The keeper should provide details of their veterinary arrangements with a practice willing to treat tapirs. A schedule of veterinary care, including routine parasite control, is necessary and the keeping of records of veterinary attention is encouraged.

Arrangements should be in place for the emergency humane euthanasia and disposal of tapirs.

There are no potential zoonoses risks for members of the public.

## Explanatory Notes

These notes have been produced to provide people wishing to keep dangerous wild animals with guidance on the requirements they may have to meet. In determining whether or not a licence should be issued, the Department of the Environment will consider the information provided by the applicant when applying for a licence. The Department will also arrange for a suitably qualified person to carry out an inspection of the premises at which the animal or animals will be kept and the inspector's report will also be taken into consideration. It is at the Department's discretion to waive certain recommendations, or add additional ones, to the guidance provided in this document. There is a right to appeal within 21 days if a licence is refused or if the applicant contests conditions applied to a licence.

## Contact Information

***For further information on the Dangerous Wild Animals (Northern Ireland) Order 2004, contact the Department of the Environment, Environment & Heritage Service, Biodiversity Unit on 028 9056 9605***

### **For CITES enquiries:**

Wildlife Licensing and Registration  
Service  
Global Wildlife Division  
**Department for Environment,  
Food and Rural Affairs**  
Zone 1/17 Temple Quay House  
2 The Square, Temple Quay  
Bristol BS1 6EB

Tel 0117 372 8691

### **For rabies quarantine enquiries:**

Quarantine Section  
**Department for Environment,  
Food and Rural Affairs**  
Area 209  
1a Page Street  
London SW1P 4PQ

Tel 020 7904 6918





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