

Pre-Release Boma



A pre-release boma is a temporary structure which, depending on materials used, can be build up and taken down within 1 or 2 days. Animals that are being translocated are released in this boma, which is then opened 1 to 3 days later to release the animals. In this article we explain why it can be advantageous to build such a structure, and how to build it.

The use of a pre-release boma

We have used such bomas for our translocations in both the DRC and Angola, and we see many advantages of releasing animals in such a boma:

- ❃ Especially after translocations over long distance, it gives the animals time to rest and regain their strength. In the boma water and food must be provided; animals thus don't have to search and walk far to get water and food.
- ❃ Families and breeding herds get time to regroup. When animals are released directly into a big reserve, they usually split up and run in all directions. This causes unnecessary stress and it takes time and energy for the animals to regroup. In a pre-release boma the animals are quickly back together.
- ❃ The animals can be observed better while being in the boma (note that one not must stress the animals!!)
- ❃ After opening and taking down off the boma the animals usually stay in close proximity of the boma, as this is their safe place. Slowly they will move further and further.

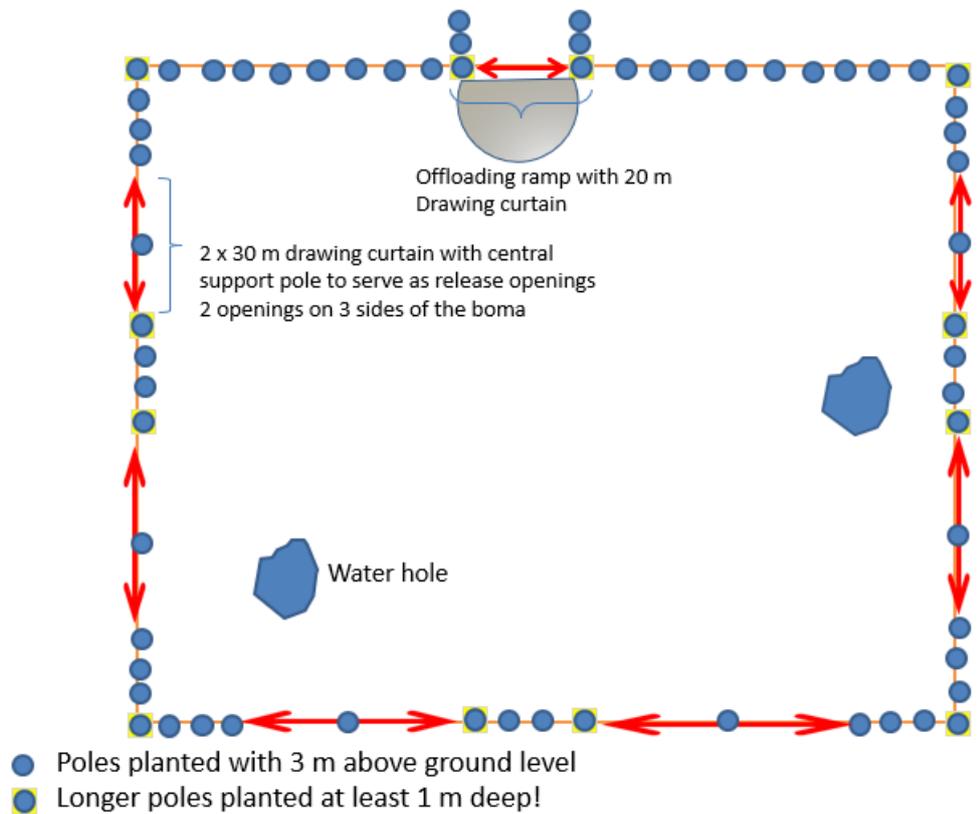
These bomas are very advantageous in especially big farms/reserves and/or after a long travel time. A pre-release boma must be situated in a quiet area (away from people activity), and include sufficient natural substrate (grass, bush and trees), which also provides cover, shade and food for the animals.

In bigger bomas animals of different species can be offloaded simultaneously without any inter/species conflict being observed. We have offloaded as many as 250 animals of 6 different species simultaneously in into a 300x300 m boma. At no stage did we observe any aggression (even between males of the same species). We believe this is because there is no pre-existing territorial dominance, nor does such a pre-release boma expose the animals to excessive stress.

Example of a pre-release boma

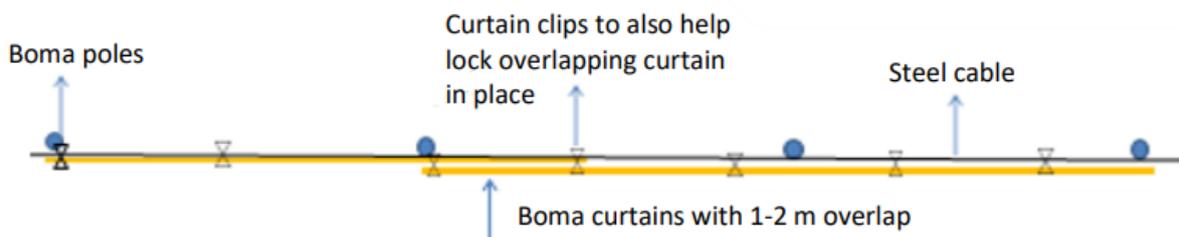
The schematic drawing on the right shows how a pre-release boma should look like.

We advise to make the boma around 100x100 m, but the exact size and shape of the boma should be adjusted depending on the location and the number of animals released at any one time.



Curtains

The curtains that ideally should be used are proper boma curtains and animals should not see through them. The boma curtains are 100 m long. To ensure you have enough curtain material for the boma, DO NOT make the boma exact 100x100 m, but rather 95x95 m, since you have to overlap the curtains where an old curtain stops and a new one starts (see schematic picture below).



Start a new boma curtain at the centre pole of a closing curtain and extend from there. Place the animal release drawing curtains in such a way that it works out with the curtain lengths and if possible, avoid cutting the curtains.



Chain Segment

We typically use 50 mm pipe x 3 m lengths that are used to build a boma with. At the top and bottom of these pipes we welded eyes of the chain (cut open as seen in the pictures) where the steel cable can easily be hooked in. These then ensure that the bottom cable is kept at ground level whilst the top level is at 2,8 – 3 m.

As an alternative, poles can be planted, we then suggest you use 6” nails partially beaten into the poles and then bent around the cable to fix it on top and bottom.

A steel pin is hammered into the soil and the pole put over it to prevent it from shifting and to keep it upright.

Cables

We prefer to have the cables cut in lengths appropriate for the boma size, with ends spliced as in the pictures on the right. This makes them a lot more pleasant to work with and it gives the easy option to link cables together for longer cables if/where needed.



On the right some examples of cable pullers we use to tighten the steel cables before boma curtains are put up. It is very important that the cables are spaced at the right distance from each other and that they are pulled very tight to ensure that the curtains are fitting properly and tight.

Loose curtains will flap in the wind and be noisy thus stressing the animals AND they will be very prone to wear and tear.



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Hanging the Curtains

Boma curtains should be provided with a ski Roap hemmed in on the top and bottom and eyelets every 1-2 m both on top and bottom. You can use the custom made boma clips (top right) or carbine hooks (bottom right) to hang and attach the curtains to the steel cable on top and at ground level. The custom-made clips are easy to put up, the carbine hooks are a bit more work, and more prone to theft (many universal applications...).



Water and Food

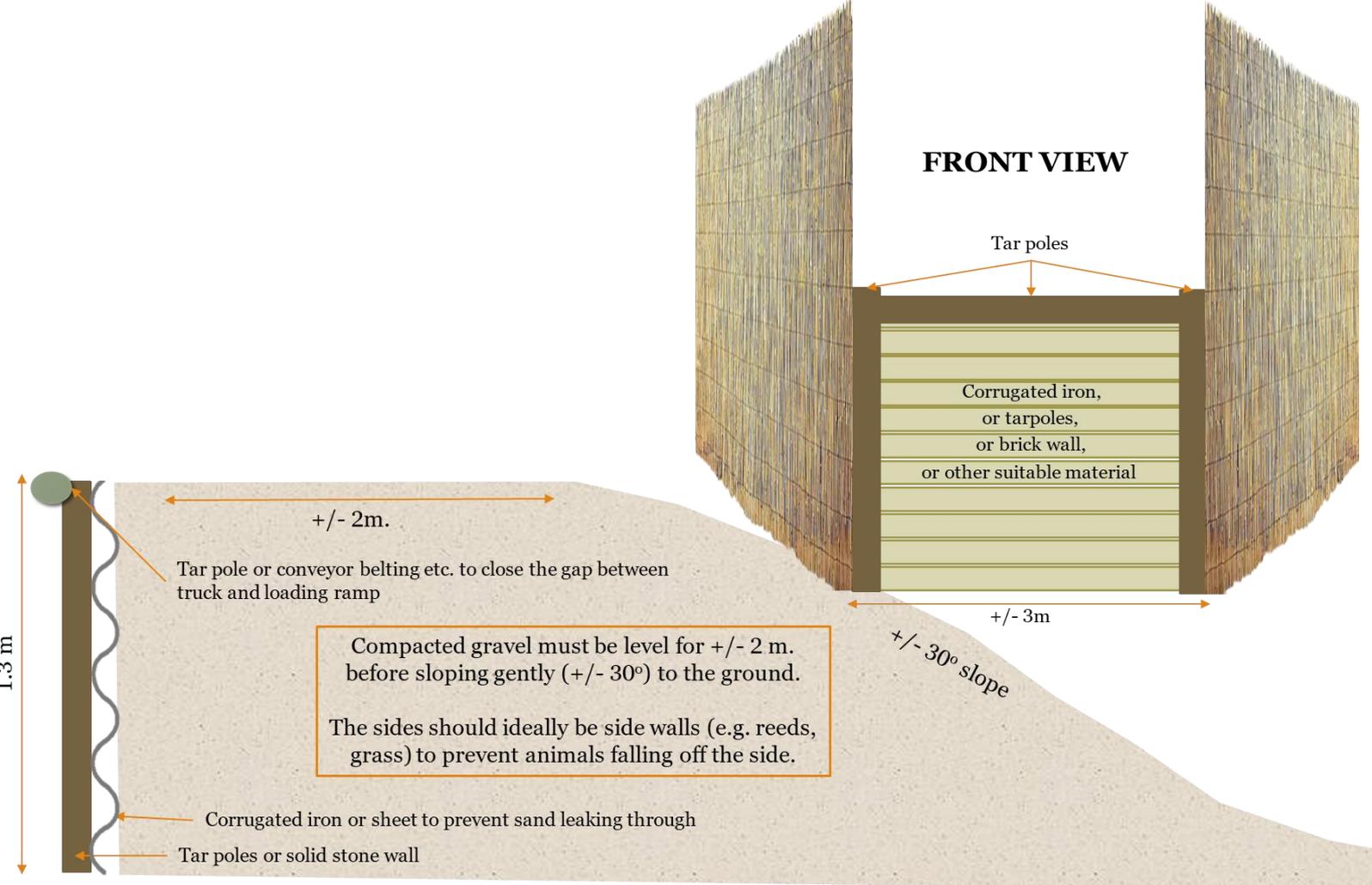
Provide at least two water sources in the pre-release boma, and provide lucerne and/or hay in several spots in the boma. One can consider to provide game pellets in feeding bowls.



Offloading Ramp

It is important to have a good access road to the offloading ramp (easy access for trucks, no loose sand/mud, sharp rocks/stumps etc.). The offloading ramp should be 1.3 m high and positioned to allow offloading of game at from the right side of the trucks. On the next page a schematic overview of an offloading ramp is shown.





SIDE VIEW

To eliminate the potential gap (see red arrow below) between the truck opening and the offloading ramp, an extra pole or piece of conveyor belt may be used. Make sure the side walls are high enough that the animals cannot escape via the sides.



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Opening the Boma

After 1 to 3 days, depending on the animal's condition, the boma can be opened by simply opening the curtains. Let the animals go out in their own time, never chase them out. This boma is their safe place, it might take a while for the animals to leave.

In most cases (depending on the amount of water in the area), the animals often come back to the boma to drink here. After 1 or 2 months, when all animals are out and adjusted, the boma can be removed.

