THE ACCREDITATION STANDARDS & RELATED POLICIES

2025

ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS & AQUARIUMS

The Accreditation Standards & Related Policies

SIGNIFICANT ADDITIONS & CHANGES 2021-2025

2025

"Welfare" changed to "wellbeing" in various locations

Definitions: **NEW:** Campus Plan, Dangerous Venomous Animal, Venomous Animal, **REVISED:** Animal Welfare, Animal Wellbeing, Master Plan

Animal Care, Wellbeing, and Management: **REVISED:** 1.5.0, 1.5.2.1

Veterinary Care: **REVISED:** 2.0.2.2, 2.5.3

Conservation: **REVISED:** 3.2.1

Safety and Security: **NEW:** 11.2.9, 11.5.0, 11.5.2.1, **REVISED:** 11.3.2, 11.5.1, 11.5.2

Campus & Strategic Planning: **REVISED:** 13.1, 13.2, 13.3

Policy Restricting the Use of Non-human Primates as Ambassador Animals **NEW**

General Administrative Policies: **REVISED:** Multiple Facilities Under One Authority

2024

Definitions: **NEW:** Wellbeing, Breath-hold Diving, Diver, Explanation, **REVISED:** Animal Welfare, Strategic Plan, **REMOVED:** Certification

Animal Welfare, Care, and Management: **NEW:** 1.8.3, **REVISED:** 1.2.2, 1.3.1, 1.3.2, 1.5.7, 1.5.9, 1.5.13, 1.6.1, 1.8.1, 1.8.2, **REMOVED:** 1.5.14

Veterinary Care: **NEW:** 2.0.2.1, 2.0.2.2, 2.0.5, 2.0.7, 2.0.8, 2.0.8.1, 2.1.3, 2.1.4, 2.1.5, 2.1.6, 2.1.7, 2.2.1.1, 2.2.3, 2.3.3, 2.3.4, 2.3.5, 2.5.4, 2.7.1.0, 2.7.4, 2.9.2, **REVISED:** 2.0.1, 2.0.2, 2.0.3, 2.0.4, 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.3.2, 2.7.2, 2.8.1, **MOVED:** 2.4.2

Conservation: **REVISED:** 3.1.1

Education and Interpretation: **REVISED:** 4.3.1

Scientific Advancement: **REVISED:** 5.4

Staff: **NEW:** 7.6.1, **REVISED:** 7.6, 7.9

Physical Facilities: **REMOVED:** 10.3.3

Safety and Security: **NEW:** 11.1.4.1, 11.2.8, 11.5.4, 11.6.4, 11.7.6, 11.7.7, **REVISED:** 11.3.5, 11.3.6, 11.6.3, 11.7.2, 11.7.5, **REMOVED:** 11.3.3

Guest Services: **REVISED:** 12.6

Position Statement Regarding Animals Acting as Ambassadors: **REVISED**

Policy on Animal Program Engagement: **NEW**

2023

Animal Welfare, Care, and Management: **REVISED:** 1.2.2, 1.3.1, 1.5.0, 1.5.3, 1.5.4, 1.5.7, 1.5.9, 1.5.12, 1.5.13, 1.5.16, 1.6.1

Veterinary Care: **REVISED:** 2.2.1

Conservation: **NEW:** 3.3.0, **MOVED:** 3.3.1, 3.3.2 (Now 1.8.1, 1.8.2)

Physical Facilities: **NEW:** 10.2.1.1, 10.2.1.2, **REVISED:** 10.2.1

Elephant Standards: **REVISED:** E.4.2.1.1

Ambassador Animal Policy: **REVISED**

Recommendations for Developing a Facility Ambassador Animal Policy: **REVISED**

General Administrative Policies: **NEW:** Implementation of New Standards, **REVISED:** Offsite Facilities, **REVISED:** Provisional Accreditation

2022

Definitions: **NEW**: Support Organization

Conservation: **NEW**: 3.2.3, **REVISED**: 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2

Physical Facilities: **REVISED**: 10.2.1

Cetacean Standards: **REVISED**: C.1 General Considerations

General Administrative Policies: **NEW:** Museums Within Animal Facilities

2021

Staff: **REVISED**: 7.9

Safety & Security: **REVISED**: 11.5.2

General Administrative Policies: **REVISED**: Mentoring Program

Elephant Standards: **NEW**: E-4.2.1.1

Table of Contents

The Accreditation Standards & Related Policies **1**

Significant Additions & Changes (Last 5 Years) 1

Important Notes Regarding These Standards 4

Definitions 5

Acronyms 8

Accreditation Standards **9**

Preamble 9

1. Animal Care, Wellbeing, & Management 11

2. Veterinary Care 19

3. Conservation 25

4. Education and Interpretation 26

5. Scientific Advancement 28

6. Governing Authority 29

7. Staff 30

8. Support Organization 32

9. Finance 33

10. Physical Facilities 34

11. Safety/Security 36

12. Guest Services 43

13. Campus & Strategic Planning 44

AZA Standards for Elephant Management & Care 45

AZA Standards for Cetacean Care & Wellbeing 72

Related Policies **80**

Ambassador Animal Policy 80

Policy Restricting the Use of Non-Human Primates as Ambassador Animals 82

Position Statement Regarding Animals Acting as Ambassadors 84

Recommendations for Developing a Facility Ambassador Animal Policy 87

Apes in Media and Commercial Performances 93

Policy on Animal Program Engagement 94

AZA Policy on Responsible Population Management 95

Code of Professional Ethics 104

General Administrative Policies of the Accreditation Commission **109**

IMPORTANT NOTES REGARDING THESE STANDARDS

1. Achieving and Maintaining AZA Accreditation: To achieve and maintain AZA accreditation zoological parks and aquariums must be judged by the AZA Accreditation Commission as meeting and/or exceeding AZA standards, and embracing AZA practices and philosophies.

2. Documentation: Having proper documentation of programs, activities, and other occurrences is essential to meeting these standards. If an institution is taking proper steps to comply with a standard but fails to document such action, it will not be considered in compliance (*for example*, having determined that collectors have the necessary permits, but having no documentation of this).

3. Accreditation standards: These standards are for accreditation of institutions and related facilities. In the case of related facilities, an education program is not required, nor are standards directly related to the presence of the visiting public. However, if the facility has an education program, and/or hosts public groups on a regular basis, all related standards must be met.

4. Authority: The Accreditation Commission, and its agents, shall determine if a facility is meeting standards, and incorporating modern zoological practices and philosophies. The Visiting Committee is an arm of the Accreditation Commission. However, the Accreditation Commission is the final authority in interpreting these standards and assuring they are applied equally to all.

5. Order of Sections: Placement of items in this document has no bearing on importance to accreditation processing as *all* areas are considered pertinent for the operation of a professional institution.

6. Performance standards versus engineering standards: With few exceptions, AZA standards are primarily *performance* standards (i.e., measuring the level of achievement considered acceptable to fulfill a performance characteristic, and choice in method for meeting the goal). This differs from *engineering* standards, where exact and precisely measured steps are required to fulfill an engineering characteristic, with little or no variation in method for meeting the goal.

7. Subjectivity: Due to the large number of variables existing between institutions, some standards necessarily allow for certain levels of subjectivity by both the Visiting Committee and the Accreditation Commission. In addition, the opinion of one team may be slightly different than another team. In such cases, the Accreditation Commission is the final authority in interpreting these standards and assuring they are applied equally to all.

8. Continuous Progress and Rising Standards: As the science of zoology and aquatic studies grows in knowledge, so too do AZA standards rise to accurately reflect current understanding and modern practices, and to drive continuous improvement in institutions accredited by AZA. What was acceptable under AZA standards in the past may not be considered sufficient five years later when an institution's next accreditation inspection takes place. Institutions are expected to continually progress and improve in all areas so as to keep up with rising standards and qualify for AZA accreditation.

9. Policies: It is possible that a newer version of a policy contained in this book may have become available since the book was assembled. In such a case, the most current version of the policy would apply.

DEFINITIONS

ACCREDITATION: the establishment and maintenance of professional standards and the qualitative evaluation of organizations in the light of those standards. Through this process a profession is judged based on criteria selected by experts in that field, rather than by outside agencies and/or individuals that are not actively employed in that field.

ADJACENT: Next to, close to, adjoining.

AESTHETIC: Pertaining to the beautiful.

ANIMAL WELFARE: An animal's collective physical, mental, and emotional states over a period of time, measured on a continuum from good to poor. Animal welfare refers to the science of animal welfare and is measurable using both input- and output-based measures. The science of animal welfare supports and informs our understanding of animal wellbeing (see "animal wellbeing" definition below).

ANIMAL WELLBEING: A state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy; achieved by AZA facilities giving animals lifelong opportunities to thrive. This is supported through: leadership, culture, and operations; science and innovation; expertise and passion; collaboration and sharing; engagement and communication; and our approach to the conservation of species and natural spaces. Wellbeing is a concept used to communicate the desire to provide an overall positive balance of comfort, health, and happiness to the animals in our care. Wellbeing, for the purposes of this document, is conceptual. This contrasts with animal welfare (see "animal welfare" definition above) which is a science and measurable. The science of animal welfare supports and informs our understanding of animal wellbeing.

AQUARIUM: Usually at least one public building which contains aquatic animals. However, the animals are usually split into numerous exhibits. [For full definition see *Basic Definitions, 2025 Guide to Accreditation of Zoological Parks and Aquariums*.]

BREATH-HOLD DIVING: A diving mode in which the diver uses no self-contained or surface-supplied air supply.

CAMPUS PLAN: A written long-range plan that provides an organization with direction to develop or improve land, facilities, a building complex, etc.

CEO/DIRECTOR: The person with the authority and responsibility for the operation of the institution. Other titles may include president, chief executive officer, superintendent, supervisor, manager, etc.

CONSERVATION: Conservation is understood to be active stewardship of the natural environment, including wildlife, plants, energy and other natural resources.

CURRENTLY ACCREDITED APPLICANTS: Currently accredited applicants are those facilities that are AZA-accredited *at the time the application is submitted and processed.*

CURRENTLY UNDER REVISION: Policies within this document are continuously being revised as science moves forward and we continue to learn new and better methods. If a policy is currently being reviewed for updating (noted as Currently Under Revision) the current policy appearing in this booklet still applies, but the notation serves as a notification that the document is being reviewed and may be updated in future editions.

DANGEROUS VENOMOUS ANIMAL: A venomous animal capable of causing human harm requiring special treatment beyond standard first aid.

DEFENSIVE INTERVAL PERIOD: A financial metric indicating the number of days an entity can operate without needing to access long-term assets or additional outside financial resources.

DIVER: An employee (paid or unpaid) working in water using an apparatus (including snorkels) which supplies breathing gas at ambient pressure.

ENGINEERING STANDARDS: Standards that require exact and precisely measured steps to fulfill an

engineering characteristic, with little or no variation in method for meeting the goal.

ENRICHMENT: A process to ensure that the behavioral and physical needs of an animal are being met by providing opportunities for species-appropriate behaviors and choices.

EXPLANATION: A component of the standard that provides additional details regarding the requirements of that specific standard.

GOVERNING AUTHORITY: The agency with authority to govern the operations of the institution (such as the city, county/provincial, or federal government body, private corporation, foundation, society, board of directors, or other similar entities).

INSTITUTIONAL COLLECTION PLAN (ICP): An ICP is a document designed to thoughtfully assess the reasons for having each taxon in the collection. The ICP must be updated on a regular basis (minimally every 5 years). The ICP should include a statement of justification for all species and individuals in the institution's planned collection.

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: Institutions located outside the United States may apply for accreditation under the same rules as those located within the United States. In some rare cases, processing of applications for international institutions may not be possible within the standard six-month time frame, and may require a year or more before the Commission hearing can be scheduled. In addition, the amount of the Visiting Committee deposit may be higher due to increased travel costs associated with inspecting institutions located outside of the United States. If possible, AZA will assign an individual who is fluent in the applicant's native language to the inspection team for all international institutions, but the questionnaire and all *primary* materials submitted must be in English. If AZA is unable to assign individuals who speak the native language, the institution is responsible for providing an interpreter. Brochures and other pre-printed materials must be accompanied by a translation. If you have any questions about this please contact AZA.

MASTER PLAN: See "campus plan" above.

MENTOR (PEER CONSULTANT): An individual deemed qualified and assigned by the Accreditation Commission to assist an AZA-accredited institution in addressing identified concerns or preparing for the AZA accreditation process. Non-accredited facilities see Pathway Towards Membership below.

MODERN ZOOLOGICAL PRACTICES AND PHILOSOPHIES: Understanding, engaging, and committing to the advancement of standards, practices, related policies and philosophies in all areas assessed by AZA through accreditation constitutes "modern zoological practices and philosophies". These accepted best practices and philosophies define excellence in our profession and are what distinguish AZA-accredited institutions from other institutions that have animals for guests to see and appreciate. The word "practices" represents the tangible while "philosophies" refers to an overall perspective.

NEW APPLICANTS: "New" applicants are those institutions applying for accreditation for the first time, *or* any institution that is *not currently AZA-accredited*, regardless of whether it has been AZA-accredited in the past.

OCEANARIUM: Usually aquatic animals housed in several public buildings contained in a park setting. The exhibit scale is very large with other attractions/services scattered among the exhibits.

PATHWAY TOWARD MEMBERSHIP (PTM): PTM is a program for non-member facilities that are interested in preparing for and eventually undergoing the AZA accreditation process, and who wish to have a Coach assist them. As part of the program a Coach will be assigned by AZA to help the facility identify areas that need to be addressed, will review and help update policies and procedures, internal documents, record keeping, and all areas involved in the accreditation and AZA membership process. The Coach can advise as to the facility's readiness, and can also provide guidance on assembling the application, if desired. Additional benefits are included with the program. Check with AZA's Membership Department for more information.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS: Standards that measure the level of achievement considered acceptable to fulfill a performance characteristic, and choice in method for meeting the goal.

PERMANENT (cultural institution): An institution founded by an authority which intends it to continue indefinitely.

POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS ANIMALS: Potentially dangerous animals are those species that could likely cause serious injury or death to a human through attack, disease transmission, etc. While some species are obviously dangerous, the Commission acknowledges there is not complete agreement of potentially dangerous species among all zoo/aquarium professionals or regulatory agencies. Member institutions are expected to provide their own analysis and justification of the species they consider potentially dangerous in their collections and to demonstrate that appropriate procedures are in place to prevent harm to staff, guests, volunteers, etc. Institutions are encouraged to err on the side of caution in determining what species should be considered potentially dangerous.

PROFESSIONAL STAFF: A paid full-time employee who commands an appropriate body of special knowledge and has the professional training, experience and ability to reach zoological park or aquarium management decisions consonant with the experience of peers, and who has access to and knowledge of the literature of the field.

REGULAR BASIS: Regular hours, so that access is reasonably convenient to the public.

RELATED FACILITY: Organizations holding wildlife that are not commercial entities, and are not open to the public on a regularly scheduled, predictable basis. The facility shall be under the direction of a professional staff trained in animal husbandry, and shall be further defined as having conservation and preservation as part of its mission—a mission that shall have a beneficial, tangible, supportive impact on the zoological and aquarium professions. This includes wildlife refuges or rehab centers, non-invasive research facilities, survival centers, breeding farms, and/or similar organizations." The Accreditation Commission, and its agents, shall determine whether a facility meets the definition of a related facility.

STRATEGIC PLAN: A written plan defining an organization's focused direction and core mission areas, including main goals and resources necessary to achieve these goals and strategic success.

SUPPORT ORGANIZATION: A subordinate or independent organization and non-governing entity, usually a public charity, one of whose primary purpose is to support through a formal agreement an accredited zoo or aquarium by performing mutually agreed upon functions such as fund raising, endowment, membership, education, guest services and public relations.

VENOMOUS ANIMAL: An animal which envenomates by biting, scratching, stinging, or direct contact, but not by ingestion.

WILDLIFE: Non-domesticated animal life.

WILDLIFE PARK: Animals maintained in a public park setting, usually in very large exhibits that include animals which are free-ranging within the exhibit.

ZOOLOGICAL PARK: A collection of animals which are housed in many public exhibits, both indoors and outdoors. [For full definition see *Basic Definitions, 2025 Guide To Accreditation of Zoological Parks and Aquariums, page 13*.]

ACRONYMS APPEARING IN THESE STANDARDS

AAZV – American Association of Zoo Veterinarians

ACM – Animal Care Manual

AED – Automated Emergency Defibrillator

APMC – Animal Population Management Committee

ARKS – Animal Record Keeping System

AVMA – American Veterinary Medical Association

CAP – Conservation Action Plan

CBSG – Conservation Breeding Specialist Group

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

CITES – Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species

FDA – Food and Drug Administration

FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency

GFI – Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter

ICP – Institutional Collection Plan

ICS – Incident Command System

ID – Identification

NASPHV – National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians

OSHA – Occupational Safety and Health Administration

PPEQ – Permanent Post Entry Quarantine

RPM – Responsible Population Management

SAG – Scientific Advisory Group

SCUBA – Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus

SDS – Safety Data Sheets

SSC – Species Survival Commission

SSP – Species Survival Plan

TAG – Taxon Advisory Group

TB – Tuberculin/Tuberculosis

TRACKS® – An electronic animal records-keeping system

UL – Underwriters Laboratories

USDA – United States Department of Agriculture

UV – Ultraviolet

WAZA – World Association of Zoos and Aquariums

ZIMS – Zoological Information Management System

Accreditation Standards

PREAMBLE

AZA Accreditation – PURPOSE

AZA accredited zoos and aquariums are complex operations with important goals. The highest goals of AZA accreditation include exemplary animal care and wellbeing, and inspiring guest engagement through effective education and conservation. AZA accreditation standards and requirements represent decades of modernization utilizing science, experience, and an unrelenting resolve to create environments where animals thrive, a positive and lasting impact on guests, and to conserve our world's wild animals and wild places.

The AZA Accreditation Program provides all zoos and aquariums the opportunity to examine, meet, or exceed the highest standards in the profession. The accreditation process combines internal (stakeholder) and external (peer-review) comprehensive assessment, resulting in the most scrutinized, specialized and dynamic organizations in the world dedicated to animal care and wellbeing, public engagement, education, and conservation and science.

Institutions successfully accredited by AZA must continuously demonstrate excellence in all areas of operations and regularly adapt to new and evolving standards.

AZA Accreditation – PROCESS

To achieve AZA accreditation, an institution requires extraordinary vision and leadership, and a comprehensive team effort to attain excellence in all areas of operations and management. The accreditation process begins when institutional stakeholders study and commit to the gold-level standards available under the accreditation tab at AZA.org. AZA accreditation requires full adherence to all standards on a daily basis. The core areas of self and peer evaluation include:

- ***Animal Care, Wellbeing, & Management*** (Excellence in Animal Care and Wellbeing)
- ***Veterinary Care*** (Excellence in Animal Health Care)
- ***Education & Interpretation*** (Innovation in Science and Conservation Education)
- ***Conservation & Scientific Advancement*** (Measurable Impact in Science)
- ***Strategic & Master Plan*** (Values, Goals, Plans, and Outcomes)
- ***Governance*** (Oversight, Ethics, and Community Leadership)
- ***Finance*** (Business Management and Accountability)
- ***Staff*** (Professional Team Development and Management)
- ***Guest Services*** (Quality Guest Amenities and Attraction Services)
- ***Safety & Security*** (Public and Animal Safety, Staff Training, and Preparedness)
- ***Physical Facilities*** (Quality Construction, Maintenance, and Design of all Facilities)
- ***Support Organizations*** (Internal Support and Partnerships)

(continued next page)

Understanding, engaging, and committing to the advancement of standards, practices, related policies and philosophies in all areas assessed by AZA through accreditation constitutes “modern zoological practices and philosophies.” These accepted best practices and philosophies define excellence in our profession, and are what distinguish AZA-accredited institutions from other institutions that have animals for guests to see and appreciate. The word “practices” represents the tangible while “philosophies” refers to an overall perspective.

Because of the many variations among institutions, the majority of AZA standards are carefully designed to be *performance* standards (i.e., assessing the level of achievement considered acceptable to fulfill a performance characteristic, and choice in method for meeting the goal). This differs from *engineering* standards, where exact and precisely prescribed steps are required to fulfill an engineering characteristic, with little or no variation in method for meeting the goal. AZA institutions may achieve performance standards in a variety of ways, but *all* standards *must* be met.

AZA Accreditation – PRODUCT

AZA accredited institutions are differentiated as exemplary facilities through the vigorous and voluntary commitment to shared high standards, achieving measurable goals, and continually pursuing outcomes that benefit animals, guests and communities. These standards include assuring excellence in animal care and wellbeing, conservation, education, and research. Accredited institutions house, display, present, and interpret all animals in their care in a manner that is respectful to the animal and that inspires appreciation for wildlife and nature, while prioritizing animal and human health and safety. Animals are housed and cared for in a manner that meets their social, physical, behavioral, and nutritional needs, with considerations for lifelong care. Meaningful conservation messages are integral components of exhibits and interpretation.

Distinguishing characteristics of an AZA-accredited institution include:

- Extraordinary focus on animal care and wellbeing*
- Modern facilities and practices for comprehensive veterinary care
- Scientific advancement in animal care and conservation
- Focus and participation to support sustainable animal populations
- Exhibit aesthetics and habitat studies, planning, and design
- Innovative and inspirational educational programs and experiences
- Excellence in guest engagement and effective guest services
- Economic development and community partnerships
- Professional staff development and training
- Comprehensive preparedness in public and animal safety
- Sound business planning and financial management
- Dynamic and mission-driven strategic and master planning
- “Raising the bar” and regularly advancing operational standards

*****AZA zoo and aquarium standards support the premise of five opportunities to thrive. These tenets propose that animals: (1) Nutrition - receive nutritionally complete diets that bring out the natural feeding response and behavior; (2) Environment - are afforded comfortable living experiences with choice and control to promote mentally and physically healthy behaviors; (3) Physical Health - experience good physical health; (4) Behavior - are provided quality spaces to live in with appropriate social groupings that promote natural, species-appropriate and motivated behavior; and (5) Psychological Wellbeing - develop natural coping skills and avoid chronic stress; and comfort, interest, and tranquility are commonly experienced.

IMPORTANT NOTE: All AZA accredited institutions and related facilities must follow all local, state, and federal laws and/or regulations. Some AZA standards may be more stringent than existing laws and/or regulations. In such cases, the AZA standard(s) must be met.

1. ANIMAL CARE, WELLBEING, & MANAGEMENT

General Considerations:

Animal care and sustainable population management are among the most critical and complex tasks performed by AZA zoos and aquariums. Administration and management must be guided by modern professional principles establishing plans and procedures to execute those functions.

Providing excellent animal care and public education about wildlife results in direct and indirect contact between animals and humans, whether staff, volunteers, or guests. Benefits of such contact are multifold. They include maximizing quality in healthcare, behavior management, and sanitation, along with the educational value of connecting an increasingly urban public to animals and nature. In doing this there are significant risks to consider as well, such as injury to animals and people, psychological stress, and potential transmission of infectious disease. It is important for all zoos and aquariums to strategically assess the benefits and risks of animal contact throughout their institutions, and to implement the best, most productive and safe human-animal interactions possible. (See standard 11.4.1 for further information.)

Wellbeing Considerations:

AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums operate based on three core principles: animal wellbeing, safety, and guest engagement. Excellence in animal wellbeing is the underlying foundation on which all standards and practices are premised and developed. All reasonable concerns regarding the wellbeing of individual animals or groups must be thoroughly assessed and corrected. Institutions should incorporate commonly accepted animal care and management guidelines and follow a documented process for assessing animal wellbeing that is rooted in animal welfare science. Failure to comply with the wellbeing and welfare-based standards present in all sections of this document will result in the loss of AZA accreditation.

1.1 Local, State, Provincial, and Federal Laws

1.1.1. The institution must comply with all relevant local, state/provincial, and federal laws and/or regulations, including those specific to wildlife. It is understood that, in some cases, AZA accreditation standards are more stringent than existing laws and/or regulations. In these cases the AZA standard must be met.

1.2. Animal Care Manuals

1.2.1. As available, the institution must review and provide access for all paid and unpaid animal care staff, to all AZA Animal Care Manuals (ACMs) that have been approved and that apply to species at the institution.

Explanation: A listing of approved ACMs is available on AZA's website at: Institutions should check regularly for updates.

1.2.2. The animal's habitat should be of a size and complex nature to promote and support behaviors appropriate to the animal's biology. AZA housing guidelines outlined in the Animal Care Manuals (ACMs) should be followed when available.

1.3. Documents and Policies

1.3.1. The institution must follow an Institutional Collection Plan (ICP). The ICP must be re-evaluated and updated at minimum every five years.

Explanation: The purpose of an ICP is to establish and manage a systematic decision-making process to select and sustain all the species in a facility's animal collection. A functioning ICP should address and contain the components described in the Institutional Collection Planning Guidelines written by the AZA Animal Population Management Committee, which can be found online in AZA's Accreditation Resource Center at https://assets.speakcdn.com/assets/2332/institutional_collection_planning_guidelines.pdf (you will be requested to log in using your individual membership user name and password).

1.3.2. The institution must follow a written policy on responsible population management that incorporates all requirements contained in AZA's Policy On Responsible Population Management [AZA's "RPM Policy"]. (See pages 95 – 103 of these standards for further information).

Explanation: Policies on animal acquisition, transfer (including breeding loans), euthanasia and reintroduction must be regularly reviewed and kept current with all applicable laws and/or regulations. Such policies must also incorporate all policies and/or resolutions adopted by AZA regarding hunting ranches, animal auctions, research, pets, participation in SSPs, and TAGs, and other issues involving the acquisition, transfer, euthanasia or reintroduction of wildlife.

Records must be maintained for all transactions involving acquisition, transfer, euthanasia or reintroduction of animals to and from the institution and must include the terms of the transaction. In making the decision to transfer an animal(s) to a non-AZA accredited facility the AZA institution must document that the receiving institution is willing and able to provide proper care for and promote wellbeing of the animal(s) and that the transfer is done in accordance with AZA's RPM Policy.

Copies of all relevant permits, importation papers, declaration forms, titles, and other appropriate documents establishing a record of legal acquisition must be maintained (as detailed in AZA's RPM Policy). When such information does not exist (the institution's maintenance of confiscated wildlife) an explanation must be provided regarding such animals.

1.4. Records

1.4.0. The institution must show evidence of having a zoological records management system for managing animal records, veterinary records, and other relevant information.

Explanation: The institution's zoological records management system includes the overall philosophy and operational framework by which animal records, veterinary records and other relevant information are created and managed. The scope of records management should include all stages of the information life cycle from the time of creation, use, preservation, and disposition. Key elements include guidelines for documentation of transactions for animals or parts thereof, government/legal compliance (e.g. import/export permits, licenses), record keeping procedures (e.g. role that staff members play in creating and managing records, data flow, timeliness of records entry, data quality control, validation, extraction, analysis, reference and use, managing public requests for information), recordkeeping hardware and software specifications, records retention and archives management for long-term retention of vital records.

1.4.1. An animal inventory must be compiled at least once a year and include data regarding animals added and removed from the institution's collection whether by birth, transfer, death, or introduction to the wild.

1.4.2. The inventory must include all species owned by the institution and those on loan to and from the institution.

1.4.3. Animals must be identifiable, whenever practical, and have corresponding ID numbers. For animals maintained in colonies/groups or other animals not considered readily identifiable, the institution must provide a statement explaining how record keeping is maintained.

1.4.4. Animal records and veterinary records, whether in electronic or paper form, must be duplicated and stored in a separate location. Animal and veterinary records are defined as data, regardless of physical form or medium, providing information about individual animals, or samples or parts thereof, or groups of animals. Digital systems are preferable. A disaster preparedness and business continuity plan should be in place for vital animal and veterinary records, and those that have long-term or permanent retention requirements.

Explanation: The institution must prevent animal and veterinary records from being lost or destroyed in a catastrophe. A complete and up-to-date set of these records must be duplicated and stored in separate locations (e.g., not in the same building, if kept on site). Consideration should be given to physical distance, natural hazards, and assessment of records storage vendors to assure they provide appropriate storage conditions and adhere to federal requirements when selecting the separate location.

For electronic systems, backups should be performed weekly, at a minimum. The integrity of the backup system should be periodically assessed to assure that data can be reliably restored from the backup location.

The institution must have a copy of the software vendor's business continuity plan if animal and veterinary records are cloud hosted, and internal business continuity plans for all record systems hosted by the institution. For records maintained in paper-based systems, the institution must be able to demonstrate its process for business continuity including duplication, dispersal/remote storage, and backup/recovery procedures.

Vital animal and veterinary records are those required to reestablish animal care in the event of a disaster.

1.4.5. At least one set of the institution's historical animal and veterinary records must be stored and protected. The institution should be able to demonstrate how it provides security, protection, and long-term access for vital animal and veterinary records that have enduring legal, research, or reference value, including, but not limited to permits, titles, declaration forms, and other pertinent information.

1.4.6. The institution should develop a records retention schedule and policy for its animal and veterinary records to make certain they are created, managed, and appropriately preserved or otherwise disposed of according to minimum legal, administrative, and historical values. [See 2.0.4 for veterinary records.]

1.4.7. A paid staff member must be designated as being responsible for the institution's zoological records management system. That person must be charged with establishing and managing the institution's animal records, as well as with keeping all paid and unpaid animal care staff members apprised of relevant laws and regulations regarding the institution's animals.

1.4.8. At least one member of an institution's paid staff responsible for animal record keeping must have the proper training required to properly manage the system.

Explanation: AZA's Institutional Records Keeping (IRK) course and the Zoological Registrars Association (ZRA) Training Certificate Program are examples of options to obtain appropriate training.

1.4.9. Training should be provided for all staff who record data directly into the institution's zoological data records system (registrars, animal care specialists, veterinarians, etc.) to assure consistent data entry and data management.

1.4.10. Animal records must be kept current.

Explanation: For animal care specialists and other paid line staff, animal events, identification, and husbandry information should be recorded in animal care specialist reports or via direct entry into the zoological records management system on the same day whenever possible, but no later than the day following. Acquisition, transfer, death, and reintroduction data should be entered into the zoological records management system within two weeks and retained for at least five years after the animal's death or transfer.

1.4.11. The institution must have a zoological records management system that provides sufficient detail to enhance husbandry, welfare science, breeding, conservation, and medical health advancements to move forward the critical knowledge of the species through permanent and retrievable information and analysis.

1.4.12. When a specimen is transferred to another institution, all data for that animal within the zoological records management system, including any historical data from previous holding institutions, must be transferred with the animal to assure the receiving institution can provide the best possible care.

Explanation: The zoological records management system is the application in use by the transferring institution – i.e., Species360, Tracks, Oerca, other digital record keeping, or paper-based systems. Animal care records include, but are not limited to husbandry, medical, lab, welfare assessment, and documentation for imported animals such as cleared permits, customs clearance, wildlife agency clearance, etc.

For the sake of ease, efficiency and enhanced analytical capabilities, digital systems are preferable with records transferred in a computer readable format. If the institution does not use a digital animal management system and/or additional records are stored outside of the system, copies of all paper records for the animal must be transferred to the receiving institution.

1.4.13. For AZA studbook-managed species, all data required to manage these programs effectively must be submitted to Species360 for use in ZIMS for Studbooks.

1.5. Animal Care, Wellbeing, and Welfare Science

1.5.0. The institution must have a process for assessing animal wellbeing via welfare assessments.

Explanation: This process must be both proactive and reactive, transparent, and include staff or consultants knowledgeable in assessing quality of life for animals showing signs of physical or mental distress or decline. Welfare assessments for *all* animals must be conducted at least annually. The process must also include a mechanism to identify and evaluate the impacts on animal wellbeing of significant life events or changes in the animal's environment as identified by the individual institution. Examples of life events/changes could include construction events, unusual weather events, noise intrusion, change in housing, changes in animals exhibited/housed with or nearby, change in an animal's role within the collection, or involvement in informal or structured presentations/programming as an ambassador animal, involvement in research projects,

etc. Further information on the establishment of an animal welfare assessment process is available from AZA, and online in AZA's Accreditation Resource Center at https://www.aza.org/accred-resource-center (you will be requested to log in using your individual membership user name and password).

1.5.1. All animals must be well cared for and presented in a manner reflecting modern zoological practices and philosophies, exhibit design, and balancing animals' wellbeing requirements with aesthetic and educational considerations.

1.5.2. All animals must be housed in habitats/environments which are safe for the animals and promote their physical, social, and psychological wellbeing.

1.5.2.1. All animals must be kept in appropriate groupings which promote wellbeing and meet their social needs.

Explanation: Animals experience a spectrum of social experience in the wild depending upon the species, age, herd, flock or schooling behaviors, food availability, and breeding receptivity, among other variables. When properly managed in a zoo or aquarium, these social experiences, inspired by nature, may significantly enhance the wellbeing of the animal and further the education and conservation mission of the institution. Single housing of a naturally social species should be the exception unless justified based on social incompatibility, veterinary concerns, or necessity based on availability of conspecifics. Not all individuals of a social species are compatible at all times. The wellbeing benefits and risks of both affiliative and aggressive species-typical natural behavior must be considered. Social housing of incompatible animals can induce chronic stress, injury, and even death. When necessary, single housing of social animals should be limited to the minimum period necessary and, where possible, visual, auditory, olfactory and, depending on the species, protected tactile contact with compatible conspecifics should be provided. In the absence of other animals, additional enrichment should be offered, such as safe and positive interaction with the animal care staff, as appropriate to the species of concern, periodic release into larger enclosures, and the addition of compatible companion animals in the housing area. The institution's practices and exceptions for single or social housing of animals should be reviewed on a regular basis using the formal animal welfare assessment process.

1.5.2.2. All animals should be provided the opportunity to choose among a variety of conditions within their environment.

1.5.3. If animal presentations are part of the institution's programs, an educational/conservation message must be an integral component. Messages may include conservation, animal welfare, natural history information, etc.

1.5.4. If an animal is acting as an ambassador, a written policy on the use of live animals in programs must be followed and incorporate the elements contained in AZA's "Recommendations For Developing an Institutional Ambassador Animal Policy" (see pages 87 – 92) and include a risk management plan for each ambassador animal (see 11.4.1). Animals in ambassador programs must be maintained and cared for by paid and/or unpaid trained staff, and housing conditions in their primary enclosures must meet AZA standards. While outside their primary enclosure, although the conditions may be different, animal safety and wellbeing must be assured at all times.

Explanation: An animal is considered to be acting as an ambassador when it meets the conditions outlined in the "Guide to Assessing When an Animal is Acting as an Ambassador" flow chart (see page 83). As stated in the AZA Ambassador Animal Policy, the management of ambassador animals requires special consideration. Although the

housing conditions for ambassador animals may look different at times in comparison to those provided to exhibit animals, institutions must provide comparable social, physical, behavioral and nutritional opportunities to ambassador animals. Primary housing enclosures (this does not include short-term holding for programs or transport) for any given ambassador animal species must provide sufficient space for comfort, exercise, and shelter, and have sufficient complexity for animals to engage in species-appropriate behavior. Ambassador animals should be housed socially when appropriate for the species and individual animals, except in cases where the animal(s) may not be able to thrive or compete with conspecifics (e.g. hand-reared, imprinted, or certain non-releasable rehab animals). Also, providing ambassador animals with enrichment activity and opportunity for choice and control in their environment and incorporating time limitations (including animal rotation and rest periods), where and when appropriate, is essential to ensuring effective care and management. Activities associated with programs may provide some of these needs from time to time, but should not be instead of enrichment and housing complexity in their primary enclosures. An education, conservation, and wellbeing or welfare science message must be a component of all programs.

1.5.5. For animals used in offsite programs and for educational purposes, the institution must have adequate written protocols in place to protect the rest of the animals at the institution from exposure to infectious agents.

Explanation: To protect the health of the animals at the institution, written protocols required above, and their implementation, must include a veterinary risk assessment and veterinary approval.

1.5.6. Institutions that include elephants in their collection must follow the AZA Standards For Elephant Management & Care.

1.5.6.1. Institutions that include cetaceans in their collection must follow the AZA Standards For Cetacean Care & Wellbeing.

1.5.7. Within the animal's habitat, there should be particular emphasis on species appropriate physical environments including weather, temperature, sound, vibration, light, and air and water quality.

Explanation: Animals should be protected or provided accommodation from inclement weather. Animals should be able to regulate cold and heat stress throughout the year, with special attention paid to climate-mismatches between the native environment of the animal and the zoo or aquarium environment. Animals should be protected from excessive or disturbing sensory inputs including excessive noise and vibration. Animals should receive lighting suitable to their biology throughout the 24-hour and annual periods, with consideration for providing dark periods at night and attention given to animals and environments where light needs to be provided artificially. Animals should be provided with suitable air quality and water quality. Animals participating in presentations or programs outside of their primary habitat must be provided protection from inappropriate physical environments as per above during programs and transport to and from programs.

1.5.8. The institution must develop and implement a clear and transparent process for identifying, communicating, and addressing animal wellbeing concerns from paid or unpaid staff within the institution in a timely manner, and without retribution.

Explanation: A committee or some other process must be identified and communicated to all paid and unpaid staff to address any concerns related to animal wellbeing within the institution. This committee or process is intended to supplement the normal chain-of-command to assure that any personal conflicts do not have undue influence over the process or its outcomes, or if the complainant believes that the wellbeing concern has not

been adequately addressed through normal channels.

The committee or process should include the following elements:

- Clear communication of the process to paid and unpaid staff.
- Ready access to the committee or process by all paid and unpaid staff.
- Paid staff with the experience and authority necessary to evaluate submitted observations and implement any necessary changes.
- Timely feedback to the person submitting the observation. Examples of institutional animal welfare reporting processes can be obtained at https://www.aza.org/accred-resource-center (you will be requested to log in using your individual membership user name and password).

1.5.9. The institution must have a regular program of monitoring water quality for fish, marine mammals, and other aquatic animals. A written record must be maintained to document long-term water quality results and chemical additions.

Explanation: Monitoring of selected water quality parameters will provide confirmation of the correct operation of filtration and disinfection of the water supply available for the animals. Additionally, high quality water enhances animal health programs instituted for aquatic animals. Appropriate water quality parameters must also be monitored for aquatic animals while participating in programs.

1.5.10. Temporary, seasonal and traveling live animal exhibits, programs, or presentations (regardless of ownership or contractual arrangements) must be presented and maintained at the same level of care as the institution's permanent resident animals, with foremost attention to animal wellbeing considerations, both onsite and at the location where the animals are permanently housed.

Explanation: Institutions must perform due diligence demonstrating that the contracted vendor has the expertise, resources, and facilities to provide for the animals' physical, psychological, behavioral, and social needs. Contracted vendors should be monitored periodically to assure that proper care of the animals is being maintained.

1.5.11. Animal transportation must be conducted in a manner that is safe, well-planned and coordinated, and minimizes risk to the animal(s), employees, and general public. All applicable laws and/or regulations must be adhered to.

Explanation: Planning and coordination for animal transport requires good communication among all involved parties, plans for a variety of emergencies and contingencies that may arise, and timely execution of the transport. Safe animal transport requires the use of appropriate conveyance and equipment that is in good working order. The equipment must provide for the adequate containment, life support, comfort, temperature control, food/water, and safety of the animal(s). Safe transport also requires the assignment of an adequate number of appropriately trained personnel (by institution or contractor) who are equipped and prepared to handle contingencies and/or emergencies that may occur in the course of transport. At no time should the animal(s) or people be subjected to unnecessary risk or danger.

1.5.12. Paid and/or unpaid staff assigned to handle animals during presentations or programs must be trained and in compliance with the institution's written animal handling protocols. Staff handling of animals during animal transport and programs must be evaluated regularly to assure continued adherence to the institution's protocols. Such training must take place before handling may occur.

1.5.13. Animals maintained where they will be in contact with guests must be carefully monitored, and treated humanely at all times. When in operation, animal contact areas (petting, feeding, touching of animals) must be supervised by trained, paid and/or unpaid staff. Contact area animals must have access to rest or escape areas where they can avoid contact with guests, if they choose.

1.5.14. [Removed]

1.5.15. All animal habitat and holding area air and water inflows and outflows must be securely protected to prevent animal injury or egress.

1.5.16. When sunlight or other lighting sources are likely to cause overheating of, or discomfort to, the animals (including Ambassador Animals before, during, or after programs and presentations), sufficient shade (in addition to adequate shelter structures) must be provided by natural or artificial means to allow all animals to protect themselves from direct light. [Formerly 10.3.4]

1.6. Enrichment and Husbandry Training

1.6.1. The institution must follow a formal written enrichment program that promotes species-appropriate behavioral opportunities.

Explanation: An enrichment program should be based on current science, and should include the following elements: goal-setting, planning and approval process, implementation, documentation/record-keeping (see standard 1.6.3), evaluation, and reassessment. The enrichment program should also apply to animals in quarantine, as appropriate and possible. In some cases, the features and complexity of the exhibit may provide sufficient enrichment. Animals acting as ambassadors who are removed from their primary enclosure for programs or presentations might be enriched by such activity; however, participation in programming should be evaluated to determine whether the animal shows an enrichment benefit. Enrichment items no longer in use, or no longer effective, should be removed from habitats and holding areas. Furthermore, participation in programs should be considered supplementary to the regular enrichment program and not be the only form of enrichment. Further information on the establishment of an enrichment program is available from AZA, and online at https://www.aza.org/accred-resource-center (you will be requested to log in using your individual membership user name and password).

1.6.2. The institution must have a specific paid staff member(s) or committee assigned for enrichment program oversight, implementation, assessment, and interdepartmental coordination of enrichment efforts.

1.6.3. Enrichment activities must be documented and evaluated, and program refinements should be made based on the results, if appropriate. Records must be kept current.

1.6.4. The institution should follow a formal written animal training program that facilitates husbandry, science, and veterinary procedures and enhances the overall wellbeing of the animals.

Explanation: An animal training program should be based on current animal training best practices in the zoological field and should include the following elements: • goal-setting (what behaviors to be trained, what species/individuals of priority), • planning (process for developing and approving training plans), and • documentation (record of success).

1.7. Commercial Collectors

1.7.1. Institutions that acquire aquatic animals from the wild must make a good faith effort to determine that collecting procedures are done in a sustainable manner.

1.7.2. Institutions dealing with commercial collectors must determine that the collectors are properly permitted to conduct legal collections of animals (including aquatic animals) from the wild.

Explanation: The institution must be proactive in ensuring that any commercial collectors utilized are properly permitted to conduct legal collections of animals from the wild.

1.8. Participation/Support

1.8.1. The institution must fully participate, as defined in the Facility Engagement in Animal Programs Policy, in every SSP that pertains to an animal within their collection, and must follow **agreed upon** SSP breeding and transfer recommendations. This includes acquiring animals from, and transferring to, non-AZA entities.

Explanation: Every "animal within their collection" refers to each animal that is on site, regardless of ownership, and to animals that are located at an alternate location, but still owned by the facility.

1.8.2. The institution must provide requested information regarding its animals in a timely fashion to AZA Animal Program Leaders, including Studbook Keepers, SSP Coordinators, and TAG Chairs.

1.8.3. The institution must support any Animal Program Leaders (i.e., TAG Chairs, SSP Coordinators, Studbook Keepers) who are employed at their facility in accordance with the Statement of Institutional Support in the Facility Handbook on Animal Program Engagement.

2. VETERINARY CARE

Wellbeing Considerations:

AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums must assure the health of all animals in their care. In addition to a strong foundation of professional animal care staff, the utilization of a highly qualified veterinarian and veterinary staff, and the access to modern veterinary facilities is required. All concerns regarding the health of animals must be assessed, treated, and corrected as a priority utilizing the expertise and resources of the veterinary team and as also available through AZA and AAZV.

2.0. Veterinary Care Program

2.0.1. Many of the standards below are based on the *Zoo and Aquarium Veterinary Medical Program and Hospital Guidelines,* and the policies developed or supported by the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians (AAZV). Institutions should consider these guidelines as overarching guidance for their veterinary care program. The most recent edition of the medical programs and hospitals booklet is available at the AAZV website, under "Publications", at https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.aazv.org/resource/resmgr/docs/resource_library/zoo_and_aquarium_veterinary_.pdf, and can also be obtained in PDF format by contacting AZA staff.

2.0.2. The veterinary medical program must emphasize disease prevention and promote positive animal wellbeing. [Formerly 2.4.1]

Explanation: Preventative medicine programs (vaccinations, TB testing, parasite exams, etc.) must be in force for all of the institution's animals and must be under the direction of a qualified veterinarian.

2.0.2.1. Preventative health programs should be based on species and taxa needs and should include quarantine as required, periodic, risk-based health assessments (visual and/or under anesthesia), parasite surveillance procedures and control, immunization, infectious disease screening, dental prophylaxis when applicable, and periodic reviews of diets, husbandry techniques, and vermin control.

2.0.2.2. The veterinarian will determine what vaccinations are appropriate for each species in the collection. Vaccinations administered should be based on the disease status of domestic animals, wild animals, and human populations in the area surrounding the facility, and known species susceptibilities.

2.0.3. Institutions must be aware of, and prepared for periodic disease outbreaks in wild or other domestic or exotic animal populations that might affect the institution's animals (ex – Avian Influenza, Eastern Equine Encephalitis Virus, etc.). Plans should be developed that outline steps to be taken to protect the institution's animals in these situations.

2.0.4. Complete medical records must be accessible on site for all animals in the collection that have received veterinary attention. [See 1.4.7 for animal records.]

Explanation: Medical records must be maintained under the direction of the veterinarian. Ideally, medical records should be computerized employing programs developed for use in zoos and aquariums. Veterinary staff should have access to an appropriate number of computers capable of handling the medical record software. Medical records should be kept separate from the inventory records and be easily accessible. Duplicate record sets should be stored electronically or in hard copy at another site, or in fireproof storage on site.

2.0.5. Diseased, injured, or stressed animals must be reported promptly so that the animal(s) can be assessed for the need for veterinary care. Provision of prompt and appropriate veterinary care which is based on professionally accepted methods of diagnosis and treatment must be the standard of care for the institution.

2.0.6. Paid and unpaid animal care staff should be trained to assess welfare and recognize abnormal behavior and clinical signs of illness and have knowledge of the diets, husbandry (including enrichment items and strategies), and restraint procedures required for the animals under their care. However, animal care staff (paid and unpaid) must not diagnose illnesses nor prescribe treatment. [Formerly 2.4.2.]

2.0.7. Trends in the overall health and mortality of the animals should be monitored and evaluated over time to strengthen the preventive medicine program.

2.0.8. Pre-shipment visual or physical examination must be performed by the consignor's responsible veterinarian to ensure that animals may be safely transported and are free of clinical symptoms of infectious diseases. Any tests required by regulations of the receiving state or country must be performed. The consignor and consignee share the responsibility for health care prior to, during, and after shipment of animals.

2.0.8.1. Complete medical records should be shared with the receiving institution in advance of shipment. If they are not, they must accompany the animal(s) when they are transferred to another facility.

2.1. Veterinary Coverage and Staff

2.1.1. A full-time staff veterinarian is recommended. In cases where such is not necessary because of the number and/or nature of the animals residing there, a consulting/part-time veterinarian must

be under written contract to make at least twice monthly inspections of the animals and to respond as soon as possible to any emergencies.

Explanation: Because of their size or nature, exceptions may be made to the twice monthly inspection requirement for certain institutions (e.g., insects only, etc.).

2.1.2. So that indications of disease, injury, or stress may be dealt with promptly, veterinary coverage must be available to the animals 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

2.1.3. The veterinarian is responsible for the medical and surgical care of the animals and must be fully acquainted with the entire animal collection care staff and animal facilities.

2.1.4. The institution's veterinarian is responsible for arranging for the availability of other suitably experienced veterinarian(s) to be on call when they themselves are unavailable.

2.1.5. The institution's regular and back-up veterinarian(s) must be familiar with the application of professionally accepted measures of therapy, methods of anesthesia and restraint, and prophylaxis appropriate for each species, or have access to sources of this information.

2.1.6. If a contract veterinary service is provided by a group veterinary practice, there should be one veterinarian who is responsible for the medical program at the institution and the other veterinarians in the group practice should be considered as back-up veterinarians.

2.1.7. Veterinarians should obtain continuing medical education relevant to the types of animals being cared for at the institution they serve.

Explanation: Many states and/or other government entities require a specific number of continuing medical education hours in order to maintain licensure. A veterinarian responsible for the medical program at a zoo, aquarium or similar facility should be able to demonstrate that a portion of their continuing education is relevant to the types of animals being treated and cared for at that facility.

2.2. Pharmaceutical

2.2.1. Written, formal procedures must be available to paid and unpaid animal care staff for the use of animal drugs for veterinary purposes, and appropriate security of the drugs must be provided.

Explanation: Such procedures should include at minimum the following: those persons authorized to administer animal drugs, situations in which they are to be utilized, location of animal drugs and those persons with access to them, and emergency procedures in the event of accidental human exposure. Outdated drugs must be marked as such and stored separately from all other drugs. All controlled substances must be stored in a securely locked container of substantial construction appropriate for the types of drugs in the inventory.

For the purposes of this standard, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) definition of a drug is applicable:

- A substance recognized by an official pharmacopoeia or formulary.
- A substance intended for use in the diagnosis, cure, mitigation, treatment, or prevention of disease.
- A substance (other than food) intended to affect the structure or any function of the body.
- A substance intended for use as a component of a medicine but not a device or a component, part or accessory of a device.
- Biological products are included within this definition and are generally covered by the

same laws and regulations, but differences exist regarding their manufacturing processes (chemical process versus biological process).

2.2.1.1. Analgesia, anesthesia or other pain management modalities should be provided during invasive procedures that cause more than momentary distress to an animal.

2.2.2. The use of drugs in zoos and aquariums must comply with the federal Animal Medicinal Drug Use Clarification Act of 1994 (AMDUCA) and associated regulations, as well as all other applicable federal, state, and local laws and/or regulations.

Explanation: AMDUCA provides zoo/aquarium veterinarians with prescribing and dispensing options important for the health of animals under their care; a critically important resource given the lack of drugs labeled for use in zoo/aquarium animals. Additional information concerning the requirements of extra-label drug use can be found at: https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/animal-health/amduca.

2.2.3. The institution should maintain an adequate supply of drugs for use in cases of medical emergency in its animal collection. Drugs should not be used beyond their expiration date without the approval of the attending veterinarian.

2.3. Facilities and Equipment

2.3.1. Capture equipment must be in good working order and available to authorized, trained personnel at all times.

2.3.2. The institution's veterinary facilities must have, or have access to, medical, surgical, and diagnostic equipment needed for the health management of the animals under their care.

2.3.3. All medical equipment must be properly maintained and calibrated as indicated by the manufacturer or best practices.

2.3.4. All facilities should have access to surgical facilities that are clean, free from excessive noise and unnecessary pedestrian traffic, have adequate lighting, ventilation, and temperature controls, and that can be easily cleaned and disinfected.

Explanation: Because of their size or nature, exceptions may be made to the surgical facility requirement for certain institutions (e.g., insectarium).

2.3.5. Diagnostic laboratory services must be available onsite or via contracted services to assist with the examination of biological samples and the diagnosis of disease. Diagnostic capabilities should include access to cytology, microbiology, parasitology, hematology, blood chemistry, urinalysis, serology, and other appropriate laboratory procedures.

2.4. Preventative Medicine

2.4.1. [See 2.0.2.]

2.4.2. [See 2.0.6.]

2.5. Necropsy

2.5.1. Deceased animals should be necropsied to determine the cause of death for tracking morbidity and mortality trends to strengthen the program of veterinary care and meet SSP-related requests.

Explanation: Necropsies provide information as to the cause of death as well as underlying pathology that may be related to nutritional status, other aspects of husbandry, or preventive medicine. Necropsy data, should be reviewed on a regular basis to identify any

group health implications or necessary changes in animal management. Trained staff under the direction of a veterinarian may perform necropsies. All deceased animals (or a sampling from a mass mortality) should be evaluated by gross necropsy supported by histopathology under veterinary discretion. SSP necropsy protocols should be followed.

While a good faith effort should be made to perform a gross necropsy on all deceased animals (or an appropriate sampling from a mass mortality), there are cases, such as advanced decomposition of fish or invertebrates, in which post mortem examination is neither possible nor practical. Resources, either internal or external for histopathology and other ancillary diagnostic testing should be available and utilized at the discretion of the veterinarian.

2.5.2. The institution should have an area dedicated to performing necropsies.

Explanation: To minimize transmission of potential contagion, necropsies should be performed in a dedicated room. Alternatives to a necropsy room (such as a lab bench, cart, biosafety cabinet, or outdoor area) should be assessed for health risk posed to other animals, staff, and guests.

2.5.3. Animal carcasses and tissues must be kept in a dedicated storage area before and after necropsy. Remains must be disposed of in a reasonable timeline using responsible methods to maintain sanitation and mitigate biohazard risks, an in accordance with local and federal laws.

2.5.4. A veterinary pathologist should be available as a consultant or as permanent staff to assist in diagnosis and interpretation of disease processes and trends.

2.6. Nutrition

2.6.1. Animal food preparation and storage must meet all applicable laws and/or regulations.

2.6.2. The institution must follow a written nutrition program that meets the behavioral and nutritional needs of all species, individuals, and colonies/groups in the institution. Animal diets must be of a quality and quantity suitable for each animal's nutritional and psychological needs.

Explanation: Nutrition programs should be developed using the recommendations of appropriate AZA TAGs or SAGs, and the AZA Nutrition Advisory Group http://nagonline.net/guidelines-aza-institutions/feeding-guidelines/. Diet formulation criteria should include each animal's individual history and natural history, feeding ecology and behavioral needs. For institutions located in the U.S., meat processed on site must be processed following all USDA (or federal) standards. For institutions located outside of the U.S., a process equal to or exceeding that of USDA standards must be followed.

2.6.3. If the institution uses browse plants as part of the diet or as enrichment items for its animals, the items must be identified and reviewed for safety prior to use.

Explanation: At minimum, the program should identify what plants are safe to feed and to which species, which parts of the plant are safe, whether the browse plants have been treated with any chemicals or if they are near any point sources of pollution.

2.6.3.1. The institution must assign at least one qualified paid or unpaid staff member to oversee appropriate browse material for the animals (including aquatic animals).

2.6.3.2. The institution's animal care program must address the potential risks of animals (including aquatic animals) being exposed to toxic plants growing in or near their exhibit space. Exhibits should be checked regularly during the growing season.

2.6.4. If not in separate buildings, animal food preparation areas must be physically separated from

other functions such as the animal hospital (including animal treatment, isolation, holding, deceased animal storage) and employee lounges and offices. Animal food must not be stored in the same area as animal drugs. Animal food and human food must not be stored in the same location (refrigerators, freezers, etc.).

2.7. Quarantine

2.7.1.0. In order to reduce the risk of disease introduction associated with the transfer of animals into an institution, practices of quarantine or risk assessment/mitigation, or a combination of the two should be utilized.

Explanation: Where risk assessment and mitigation cannot be performed prior to transfer, traditional "time-based" quarantine practices should be used.

2.7.1. The institution must have holding facilities or procedures for the quarantine of newly arrived animals and isolation facilities or procedures for the treatment of sick/injured animals.

2.7.2. Written, formal species or taxa-specific quarantine protocols and facility requirements should be followed when available and applicable. They must be available and familiar to all paid and unpaid staff working with quarantined animals.

Explanation: Examples of such species or taxa-specific requirements include, but may not be limited to:

- Quarantine facilities for newly imported primates must meet specialized requirements of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, WHO, or other similar international regulatory bodies.
- The quarantine or isolation of elephants should follow the *Recommendations for the diagnosis, treatment, and management of tuberculosis (Mycobacteria tuberculosis) in elephants in human care 2015*.
- Traditional "terrestrial animal" quarantine protocols are not necessarily directly applicable to fish and terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates, and a different paradigm should be used. Despite this, a risk analysis and quarantine protocol for fish and terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates should be developed with input from the facility's veterinarian and animal care staff.

2.7.3. [See 2.0.1.]

2.7.4. Sanitation and disinfection protocols within or in close proximity to animal areas should be developed in consultation with the veterinarian.

2.8. Pest Control

2.8.1. Pest control management programs must be administered in such a manner that the animals, paid and unpaid staff, the public, and wildlife are not threatened by the pests, contamination from pests, or the control methods used. Pest control programs must be regularly reviewed and approved by the veterinarian prior to implementation.

2.9. General Policy and Practice

2.9.1. The institution must follow a written euthanasia policy which adheres to the current AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals (search at AVMA.org), or the AAZV Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Nondomestic Animals (search at AAZV.org).

Explanation: The AZA Policy on Responsible Population Management: Acquisition, Transfer, Euthanasia and Reintroduction by Zoos & Aquariums, references an institutional euthanasia policy. This policy should be tailored to the needs of the institution, outlining

appropriate procedures and responsibilities for all taxa within the institution's collection. All paid and unpaid animal care staff should be familiar with this policy, and the institution should advise and involve related care-givers in the decision.

2.9.2. Euthanasia must be performed by personnel who are knowledgeable and skilled in performing the procedure.

3. CONSERVATION

General Considerations:

Impactful and sustainable conservation initiatives are a priority for AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums. These include contributing to and promoting the long-term survival of species in natural ecosystems, and full support of AZA *ex situ* programs such as Saving Animals From Extinction (SAFE). Green practices, education, conservation studies, advocacy, and engagement programs emphasizing the institution's and community's role in ecosystem conservation and stewardship of natural resources should inspire conservation action with measurable outcomes both at the institution and in the community/society-at-large to address the causes of species endangerment.

Wellbeing Considerations:

Conservation ethics, practices, messaging, and funding helps enhance the wellbeing of animals in the wild and their counterparts in human care. Animal wellbeing should be considered as a component of field conservation projects supported by AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums.

3.1. Mission

3.1.1. Conservation must be a key component of the institution's mission and messaging.

Explanation: For the purposes of AZA accreditation, conservation is understood to be active stewardship of the natural environment, including animals, plants, and other natural resources. Conservation actions supporting the mission should be proportional to the size and scope of the organization.

3.2. Conservation Program

3.2.1. The institution must follow a written conservation action plan/strategy with defined measurable outcomes with the goal of demonstrating continuous improvement in each area. The plan must include components outlining the institution's commitments to its conservation practices, including each of the following:

- Field conservation efforts (e.g., supporting local and/or global priorities including paid staff or volunteer involvement, financial support of field conservation, research, or advocacy programs, habitat clean-ups, etc.). Such programs are those that have a direct and measurable impact on animals and habitats in the wild.
- Natural resource conservation and sustainability/green practices such as water conservation initiatives; energy use reduction and alternative sources; waste management for recyclables, compostables, combustibles, and toxic and hazardous materials; sustainable purchasing and contracts; green construction, and other green practices.
- Connecting the animal collection with saving species in the wild (e.g., conservation

messaging, advocacy, supporting reintroduction programs, donating to and/or engaging in applied research, etc.)

- Conservation education, advocacy, and engagement programs measured against the written conservation goals of the institution.

Explanation: Each institution must participate in practices that implement its conservation action plan/strategy, which itself should include a variety of measurable and impactful outcomes. Metrics for monitoring and assessing impact may include, but are not limited to, measures of direct conservation impact (population sizes, area conserved, etc.), conservation spending (both gross amount and percentage of operational budget are instructive), number of staff dedicated to conservation, etc. Being the lead agency or partnering with other agencies/organizations on field conservation programs is one of the most significant ways AZA institutions can demonstrate their role in ecosystem conservation and wildlife preservation. AZA institutions have the responsibility to demonstrate responsible resource management, acting as leaders in their communities. Helping guests and paid and unpaid staff engage in the conservation commitments of the institution is core to our missions. Lists of programs and projects submitted to AZA's Annual Report on Conservation and Science (ARCS)-related surveys serves as evidence that the institution is following its conservation action plan/strategy.

3.2.2. Each institution must evaluate, measure, and monitor the impact of its written conservation action plan/strategy.

Explanation: Some form of regular evaluation of conservation efforts must occur. Measurement of impact can include assessment of achievement of programmatic goals, actual measure of impact on species and habitat conservation, and/or some other quantitative measure of success.

3.2.3. The institution must submit ARCS (Annual Report on Conservation and Science) surveys annually to AZA.

Explanation: AZA collects ARCS surveys annually from member facilities and compiles the data to illustrate the collective effort dedicated to field conservation, research, education, and green practices. Full participation is necessary to accurately measure and report the cumulative conservation activity of accredited institutions and related facilities to local, regional, national, and international stakeholders (e.g. community, government, funders, partners). Institutions and related facilities should maintain records of the past five years of ARCS survey submissions for review by accreditation inspectors during on-site inspection.

3.3. Participation/Support

3.3.0. The institution should participate in SAFE species programs. The institution may indicate at what level it desires to participate in each SAFE program.

4. EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

General Considerations:

This section includes all questions related to education and interpretation. Collectively, education and interpretation refer to: programming on-site and off-site for targeted audiences such as school groups, teachers and families, as well as all types of interpretive methods for guests, for example, graphics, exhibits, ambassador animal use, and paid or unpaid staff interpretive presentations. Institutions may differ

organizationally in how they accomplish these tasks (e.g., some institutions may have an Exhibits Department, or graphics may be coordinated by the Art Department).

Wellbeing Considerations:

AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums must be innovative and dynamic conveyors of their science-based mission and goals. Knowledge creates awareness that leads to change, and impacts animal wellbeing in both AZA-accredited institutions and in the wild. Educated populations are overwhelmingly more supportive of actions and practices that promote the care, wellbeing, and conservation of wildlife.

4.1. Mission

4.1.1. Education must be a key component of the institution's mission.

Explanation: Education is an important component in the conservation mission of each institution. Effective educational programming is a proven method of increasing awareness and participation in stewardship of the natural world.

4.2. Education Program

4.2.1. The institution must follow a written education plan that includes goals and objectives.

Explanation: The institution's education plan must include a copy of its education vision/mission, as well as strategic goals and objectives. The plan may include a copy of the organizational chart, and description of how the education department interacts with other departments on issues such as exhibit and graphics' development, paid and unpaid staff presentations, *in situ* conservation programs, etc. The plan should include the institution's conservation messages.

4.2.2. The education department must be under the direction of a paid staff person who is trained or has experience in educational programming. Education personnel should be involved in the development of exhibits, graphics, and interpretation, as well as all structured programs for the visiting public.

4.2.3. Institutions should participate in active, ongoing collaborative partnerships with organizations and individuals that can contribute to the expansion of their educational dimension. Such partnerships may include community groups, other informal education institutions (museums, science centers, nature centers, etc.), school districts, institutes of higher learning, other conservation organizations and government agencies.

4.2.4. Institutions should provide paid and unpaid staff access to informational resources with the goal of supporting excellence in programs, animal management, and exhibits. These resources may include a facility library, access to an offsite library or electronic access to internet resources.

4.3. Evaluation/Interpretation

4.3.1. Education programs should be evaluated on a regular basis for effectiveness, and must reflect current content.

Explanation: Evaluation of education programs, such as classes, camps, interpretive presentations and talks, should be evaluated for effectiveness in achieving established goals and objectives. Evaluations should assess impact on conservation-related outcomes (knowledge, attitudes/affect, and behavior), and must assess more than participant

satisfaction. Results from evaluations should be used to improve the existing programs and to create new programs. The content of educational programs must reflect current scientific information and be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Current, accurate conservation messages should be an integral part of the educational content.

4.3.2. The institution should have a thorough understanding of the needs of its audiences and as such provide programs to meet these needs.

Explanation: Zoo and aquarium education can be accomplished by programs offered to a wide variety of audiences and paid/unpaid staff through an assortment of programmatic methods: publications, exhibit interpretation, on-site presentations, tours, summer camps, speaker's bureau, outreach programs, teacher training, etc. The institution need not reach ALL audiences equally, but a thoughtful approach to audience selection should be evident – e.g., a clear understanding of their audience's needs, including the needs of under-represented groups and groups with special abilities. Similarly, not all types of programming must be used equally, but a thoughtful approach to program development must be evident. Programming should include local/global conservation issues and topics, the role of zoos and aquariums in conservation, information on AZA and other conservation-oriented organizations; as well as ways that the institution acts as a resource in its community for wildlife conservation education and related issues. Programming should clearly address cognitive, affective, and behavior outcomes (i.e., options for individual action that encourages stewardship in conserving the environment).

4.3.3. The exhibit graphics and other interpretive devices must be in good condition and functioning, and be based upon relevant scientific knowledge and reflect relevant interpretive methods.

Explanation: The interpretive program must be based on the thoughtful development of conservation messages for the institution. Exhibit interpretation may include information regarding the animal's natural history, conservation, care and wellbeing, ecology, relation to humans, correct taxonomic identification and current status (i.e., endangered or threatened), as well as botanical collections, and specific environmentally responsible behaviors guests are being encouraged to take. In particular, inclusion of interpretation on AZA's cooperative management programs (e.g., SSPs and TAGs) is encouraged.

5. SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENT

General Considerations:

Contemporary animal care and management, husbandry, veterinary care, and conservation practices should be based in science. A commitment to scientific advancement through research studies, both basic and applied, is a trademark of the modern zoological park and aquarium. Scientific studies should be justified in terms of the contribution to the understanding of biological principles, or to outcomes that are expected to benefit humans, animals, or the ecosystem.

Wellbeing Considerations:

Studies performed or supported by AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums advance knowledge and understanding of animals and the individual needs of each species. Through knowledge gained, AZA-accredited institutions help to improve the wellbeing of both animals in human care and their counterparts in the wild.

5.0. The institution must have a demonstrated commitment to scientific study that is in proportion to the size and scope of its facilities, staff (paid and unpaid), and animals.

5.1. Scientific studies must be under the direction of a paid or unpaid staff member or committee qualified to make informed decisions.

5.2. The institution must follow a formal written policy that includes a process for the evaluation and approval of scientific project proposals, and outlines the type of studies it conducts, methods, staff (paid and unpaid) involvement, evaluations, animals that may be involved, and guidelines for publication of findings.

5.3. The institution should maximize the generation and dissemination of scientific knowledge gained. This might be achieved by participating in AZA TAG/SSP sponsored studies when applicable, conducting and publishing original research projects, affiliating with local universities, and/or employing staff with scientific credentials.

5.4. The institution must have a process or policy to assure the wellbeing of animals being used for scientific research purposes.

6. GOVERNING AUTHORITY

General Considerations:

The governing authority should be fully informed of and willing to support (in theory and finance) the continued advancement of the institution's mission, goals, and objectives (including, but not limited to, animal wellbeing, conservation projects, education, scientific studies, advancement in exhibit design, and quality guest experience.)

Wellbeing Considerations:

It is critical that an AZA-accredited zoo or aquarium's governing authority provide the institution with attentive and consistent support to assure the institution's ability to continuously promote and enhance animal wellbeing. Consistent and strong leadership and support by a governing authority may help avoid or mitigate shortfalls and other conditions that could potentially affect the quality of animal wellbeing within the institution.

6.1. The governing authority must be supportive of the institution abiding by the AZA Accreditation Standards, Code of Professional Ethics, and Bylaws.

Explanation: The Commission must be assured that the institution's governing authority understands and is supportive of the institution abiding by the AZA Accreditation Standards, Code of Professional Ethics, and Bylaws.

6.2. The governing authority must recognize and support the institution's goals and objectives.

6.3. The governing authority has the responsibility for policy matters and oversight of the institution. The CEO/Director must be responsible for the day-to-day management of the institution, including animal acquisition, transfer, wellbeing, euthanasia, and reintroduction, paid and unpaid staff, and programs.

6.4. While the governing authority may have input, the decisions regarding the institution's animals must be made by the professionals who are specifically trained to handle the institution's animals, staff (paid and unpaid), and programs.

6.5. The lines of communication between the CEO/Director, the governing authority, and the support organization must be clearly defined. Additionally, the governing authority and support organization must be structured so that their relationship to the professional staff (paid and unpaid) is clearly understood and followed.

Explanation: If clear lines of communication do not exist, a breakdown in the operation of the institution and care of the animals could occur. It is essential to have a good working relationship between the governing authority, support organization, CEO/Director, and the paid and unpaid staff.

6.6. The CEO/Director must have the opportunity to attend meetings that would affect operations of the institution.

7. STAFF

General Considerations:

In applying for accreditation, AZA-accredited institutions, along with their paid and unpaid staff and their governing authority, agree to abide by AZA's: • Accreditation standards and policies, • Code of Professional Ethics, • Bylaws, • Acquisition, Transfer, Euthanasia and Reintroduction Policy, • all duly adopted resolutions and position statements, and • agree to support AZA's objectives. To fulfill this commitment, it is expected that an institution's professional staff and, at minimum, its senior executive (i.e., zoo or aquarium CEO/Director) should participate in AZA at the Professional Fellow level.

Wellbeing Considerations:

AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums must have a sufficient number of properly trained staff to care for the animals and promote animal wellbeing, maintain high quality operations, and work to continually evolve (modernize) the institution. Continuing professional development of staff is required to ascertain that staff is up-to-date with the latest information and best practices.

7.1. The institution must be under the direction of a compensated CEO/Director. The CEO/Director or a designee must be available to the institution on a full-time basis.

7.2. In the event a CEO/Director has several "jobs" (i.e., also directs other areas of a park system), clear priorities must be established, with each job having separate and distinct descriptions.

7.3. There must be an adequate number of trained paid and unpaid staff to care for the animals and to manage the institution's diverse programs.

Explanation: Although there is no set formula for prescribing the size of the staff (paid and unpaid), some of the criteria that may be used to define what is considered "adequate" include the number and type of species within the institution, the general condition of the animals and exhibits, and past staffing practices.

7.4. Compensation for paid staff should be competitive with other similar positions in the local/regional/national market, as appropriate.

Explanation: Institutions must be able to recruit and retain qualified paid staff. Competitive compensation is a key component in recruitment and retention of paid staff. Some positions can be successfully recruited for locally, while others are competitive on a more regional or national basis (e.g., animal care specialists).

7.5. Paid full-time staff members should receive opportunities for training and development.

Explanation: All paid full-time staff institution-wide should be provided opportunities for training and professional development. Funding should be provided for travel, meeting/conference participation, tuition, on-line training, and other professional opportunities when possible. Training and development opportunities may also be offered by qualified staff within the institution.

7.6. All paid and unpaid staff must maintain a professional attitude and behavior in all working relationships to support the activities of the organization.

Explanation: Institutions must follow best practices to support and maintain a healthy organizational work culture, and should have mechanisms in place to understand and address detrimental workforce dynamics.

7.6.1. The institution must have policies and procedures in place to address concerns regarding inappropriate workplace behavior, including but not limited to: harassment, discrimination, and retaliation, and must follow these policies and procedures.

Explanation: Institutions should be committed to providing a work environment free from unlawful behavior. Institutions should have in place and fully implement policies that prohibit unlawful conduct and provide a clear process for addressing any complaints about such conduct. Institutions should consult with their general counsel to develop these policies and procedures. The aim of this standard is to assure that the institution has in place policies and procedures and implements them when they are invoked. It is not the role of the Accreditation Commission to evaluate or be the final arbiter of the outcomes of those processes, but rather to assure that the facility has and uses their written policies and procedures.

7.7. The institution should encourage paid and unpaid staff to actively participate in AZA committees and programs, as well as programs developed by other conservation-oriented organizations, including through virtual means such as email, teleconference, etc.

7.8. Paid and unpaid staff must be provided access to the latest edition of the AZA accreditation standards and related policies (available at https://www.aza.org/accred-materials).

Explanation: It is important that paid and unpaid staff understand the significance of accreditation and what to expect during the accreditation process and Visiting Committee inspection.

7.8.1. The standards and related policies should be reviewed by institutional leadership annually to maintain continued compliance between accreditation visits.

7.9. The institution must follow a written diversity, equity, access, and inclusion program. Programs must be proactive and transparent, with measurable goals for assessing progress, and must have a paid staff member(s) or committee responsible for oversight.

Explanation: Programs must reflect recognition of the important connection between mission and community, and present an on-going effort to enhance diversity, equity, access, and inclusion. Programs should consider regional/national/international differences and be designed to be most relevant and impactful for the specific facility and the communities it serves. Efforts may address areas including training and onboarding of staff,

workforce (paid and unpaid staff) recruitment and retention, target audiences (such as current and future guests, members, participants in education programs), and supplier and vendor diversity. Programs must be reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis for effectiveness, impact and content. Refinements should be made as needed. Further information on the establishment of a DEAI program is available from AZA, and online at https://www.aza.org/accred-resource-center (you will be requested to log in using your individual membership user name and password).

7.10. Programs utilizing volunteers (unpaid staff) should also include provisions for recruitment, interviewing, retention, and training, and periodic evaluation. This process must be under the supervision of a paid staff member(s) charged with overseeing volunteer programs.

7.11. The institution's CEO/Director must hold individual membership in AZA at the Professional Fellow level.

Explanation: The CEO/Director of an institution that is not AZA-accredited at the time application is made must obtain individual membership as a Professional Fellow at such time as accreditation of the institution is granted.

7.12. Institutions should encourage paid staff to assume leadership roles in AZA animal programs. Institutions with paid staff in leadership roles in these programs must provide continuing support to the staff member assigned and take steps to assure that the staff member assigned manages the program efficiently, and communicates with participants in a timely manner.

8. SUPPORT ORGANIZATION

Wellbeing Considerations:

It is important for an AZA-accredited zoo or aquarium's support organization to recognize and understand the importance of animal wellbeing and the components of good animal welfare and to support the institution in areas that will enhance its ability to continuously promote enhanced wellbeing for the animals in its care (for example, funding staff training and development, etc.). Support organizations that are primarily focused on individual institution memberships should support animal wellbeing through communications with the membership about the care provided daily by the institution to assure that the animals in its care thrive.

8.1. The support organization must recognize the overall authority of the institution's CEO/Director, and the role of the governing authority, for the management of the institution and its programs.

Explanation: The institution's CEO/Director must have final authority over the support organization regarding the animals, exhibits, paid and unpaid staff, programs, long-range plan, and any matters affecting the institution.

8.2. A support organization must share the institution's goals and objectives and provide resources/support for same.

Explanation: A support organization must have a good working relationship with the institution and share its objectives.

8.3. A formal agreement must be in place that delineates the roles and responsibilities of the support organization. This agreement must be kept up to date, reflecting the most current relationship, and be adhered to in practice.

9. FINANCE

Wellbeing Considerations:

A healthy, stable financial condition is critical to assuring the institution's ability to continuously promote and enhance animal wellbeing. An inadequate financial position and/or contingency plan have a direct and negative affect on the quality of animal lives and continued modernization of the institution.

9.1. The institution, regardless of whether operating on a profit or nonprofit basis, must provide sufficient evidence of its financial stability by submitting adequate financial reports, including operating and capital budgets.

Explanation: Proof of adequate financial support includes the submission of operating and capital budgets that clearly show sources of income, as well as expenses and any debt. Budget submissions should include sufficient detail on expenditures for facilities maintenance, animal care, professional development, and depreciation. In the case of financial reports other than audited statements, the Primary Reviewer or the Commission shall determine what constitutes *sufficient evidence*.

9.2. The institution must be able to provide compensation sufficiently competitive to recruit and retain professional, qualified staff.

Explanation: The financial information must include a breakdown of salaries or salary ranges for all paid full-time staff. Institutions should participate in AZA's salary survey and other financial benchmarking efforts.

9.3. General liability insurance coverage, via independent carrier or internal means, must at minimum be provided for guests, paid and unpaid staff, and physical facilities.

Explanation: The amount and nature of insurance coverage should be sufficient to cover any reasonably anticipated incident.

9.4. The institution must indicate sources and amounts of funding for capital improvements and major maintenance, repairs, and replacements.

Explanation: Capital improvements, maintenance, and major repairs include renovations, maintenance of buildings/grounds/exhibits, new construction, and demolition of outdated structures.

9.5. The institution, regardless of whether operating on a profit or nonprofit basis, must have a written contingency plan in the event that significant decreases in operating income should occur.

Explanation: A financial contingency plan should contain sufficient detail to explain how the institution will provide for critical animal and operating needs over a three to six month period (i.e., a defensive interval period). [See "Definitions", page 5]

9.6. Institutions owned by individuals must have a written contingency and/or financial succession plan in place in the event of the death or incapacitation of the owner(s).

10. PHYSICAL FACILITIES

General Considerations:

While the Commission is interested in the institution's future plans, accreditation will be based upon operations and facilities existing at the time of the Visiting Committee inspection. Consideration will also be given to historical patterns and repetitive issues, if they exist.

All United States institutions must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Wellbeing Considerations:

The condition, size, appropriateness, and functionality of animal areas have a direct impact on animal wellbeing. AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums must consider these factors when assessing welfare inputs for each individual animal or group of animals in their care. Institutions should incorporate commonly accepted care and management guidelines and follow a documented process for assessing animal welfare, especially the spaces in which they live. All facilities within an institution reflect the organization's commitment to quality and modernization.

10.1. Housekeeping, Improvements, and Maintenance

10.1.0. The institution should be in good repair (buildings, exhibits, walkways, railings, structures, signage, etc.).

10.1.1. Good housekeeping must be regularly practiced.

Explanation: Pest control, proper drainage, clutter in work areas, excessive use of extension cords, "permanent" extension cords, and other housekeeping activities require continuous attention.

10.1.2. The institution should follow a written capital improvements, major repair and replacement program.

Explanation: The capital improvements, major repairs and replacement program should include a description of how facilities are assessed along with a written schedule of current and anticipated renovations, new construction, improvements to existing buildings, grounds, exhibits, and demolition of outdated structures.

10.1.3. The institution should follow a written maintenance plan that outlines the institution's strategy for identifying and addressing maintenance and major repairs in a timely manner. The plan should include a schedule of improvements, anticipated cost and timetable for completion, and a plan for funding maintenance needs.

10.2. Equipment

10.2.0. All mechanical equipment must be kept in working order.

10.2.1. Critical life-support systems for the animals, including but not limited to plumbing, heating, cooling, aeration, and filtration, must be equipped with a warning mechanism, and emergency backup systems must be available. Warning mechanisms and emergency backup systems must be tested at least annually.

Explanation: Facilities such as aquariums, tropical rainforest buildings, or other exhibits which rely on climate control for life-sustaining conditions must have emergency backup

systems and a mechanism for warning if those systems are malfunctioning. The life-support assessment and warning mechanisms may be automated systems or may be monitored by qualified paid or unpaid staff. If monitoring is intermittent, its frequency must be such that life support failures will be identified before deleterious effects occur.

10.2.1.1. Enclosures (tanks) used to exhibit or maintain fish and/or aquatic invertebrates must have a warning mechanism to alert staff about critical life support failures in a timely manner. A risk assessment should be performed for each enclosure (tank) in order to identify the critical parameters needing to be monitored. Automated systems are preferable, but not mandatory. In those cases, in which manual monitoring is relied upon, the interval for system evaluation must be less than the survival time for enclosure inhabitants in case of a life support failure.

Explanation: Aquatic systems with fish and/or aquatic invertebrates are particularly threatened by life support system failures. The inability of the system to maintain adequate water flow, oxygen, temperature, and gas saturation can result in catastrophic morbidity/mortality in tank occupants. Shallow, warm water, high biological loaded enclosures, such as stingray touch tanks, are especially vulnerable. Monitoring protocols, either automated or manual, must be developed in a manner capable of detecting system failures prior to the onset of untoward effects on the tank occupants.

10.2.1.2. Staff, paid or unpaid, responsible for monitoring life support function for aquatic animal enclosures must be trained to recognize and mitigate life support system anomalies.

Explanation: The effectiveness of a life support monitoring system reliant on manual evaluations is dependent on the training of the paid or unpaid staff doing the monitoring. These individuals must be trained to recognize life support system failure(s); potential impacts that such failures may have on system inhabitants; troubleshooting and mitigation of system failures; and the application of emergency measures taken to preserve animal health in the face of life support system failure(s).

10.2.2. Systems and methods for fire protection and security must be in place and functional to provide a reasonable level of safety on a 24-hour basis. Routine maintenance records that detail safety checks of the equipment should be kept current.

Explanation: Any appropriate combination of night security, patrols, fire and smoke detection systems and alarms, monitors, or building design features can be used. Compliance with local building codes is required, including fire extinguishers, sprinkler systems, etc.

10.3. Animal Enclosures

10.3.1. Lighting must be sufficient in all indoor facilities, including night houses, so that maintenance can be accomplished and animals can be observed. A means for emergency lighting must be available.

10.3.2. Ventilation must be sufficient in all indoor facilities, including animal holding.

10.3.3. [Removed]

10.3.4. [See 1.5.16]

10.4. Public Areas

10.4.1. Lighting in public areas must be sufficient for the safe maneuvering of the visiting public.

10.4.2. All walkways must be kept in good repair.

11. SAFETY/SECURITY

Wellbeing Considerations:

One of the three core principles upon which AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums operate is safety. Facilities must be properly maintained, infrastructure sound, proper practices in place, staff aware and trained, and a culture of safety inherent throughout the institution. All reasonable concerns regarding the wellbeing of individual animals or groups, guests, and staff must be thoroughly assessed and corrected.

11.1. General

11.1.1. The institution must be in compliance with all applicable laws and/or regulations regarding employee and volunteer training for safety in the workplace.

11.1.2. Training and procedures must be in place regarding zoonotic diseases.

Explanation: Diseases that can be transmitted between animals and humans (Zoonotic disease, zoonoses) present a potential risk for paid and unpaid staff and the visiting public. The institution should design facilities, develop animal care protocols and present animals for public contact in ways that minimize this risk (e.g., hand-washing or hand sanitizing stations and signage, where applicable, etc.). Institutions must train appropriate paid and unpaid staff in methods to prevent zoonotic disease. The National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV) has prepared a Compendium of Measures to Prevent Disease Associated with Animals in Public Settings which should be followed by institutions presenting animals for public contact (http://www.nasphv.org/documentsCompendiumAnimals.html).

11.1.2.1. The institution must have an occupational health and safety program.

Explanation: An effective occupational health and safety program is based on hazard identification and risk assessment. The nature of the program will depend upon animal species, potential hazards, facility design, and workplace activities. The extent and level of participation (e.g. vaccinations, TB testing, parasite exams, immunizations, personal protective equipment, etc.) will vary depending upon potential hazard exposure and risk management.

11.1.3. A tuberculin (TB) testing/surveillance program must be established for appropriate paid and unpaid staff in order to assure the health of both the paid and unpaid staff and the animals.

11.1.4. Paid and unpaid staff working with toxic/hazardous materials must be trained in the proper handling, labeling, and storage of those materials. The institution must follow a written policy on those procedures and it must be available to handlers.

11.1.4.1. Institutions using ozone, chlorine or other oxidizing agents as a means of water treatment must have facilities and protocols in place for the safe usage of these chemicals. Staff working in the vicinity of ozone, chlorine, or other oxidizing agents must be properly trained to handle emergency releases or spills.

Explanation: Ozone, chlorine, and other oxidizing agents are commonly used to maintain water quality in aquatic animal habitats. The production and application of these chemicals pose significant hazards to staff and animals. The equipment used to produce, store and apply these agents, along with the protocols for their use, should control their application and prevent exposure of animals and staff to hazardous levels. Areas where ozone is produced and applied should be monitored to assure that they are within any applicable

regulatory exposure limits for staff. Alarms must be used to detect high ozone levels in confined spaces regardless of generator output. Mechanisms and/or protocols must be in place to cease production and restore safe conditions when dangerous levels of ozone are detected both within and outside exhibits.

Standard 1.5.9 states, "Monitoring of selected water quality parameters will provide confirmation of the correct operation of filtration and disinfection of the water supply available for animals."

Standard 10.2.1.1 states, "Enclosures (tanks) used to exhibit or maintain fish and/or aquatic invertebrates must have a warning mechanism to alert staff about critical life support failures in a timely manner."

11.1.5. Whether paper or electronic, Safety Data Sheets (SDS) must be located in areas for easy access by paid and unpaid staff.

11.2. Emergency Procedures

11.2.0. A paid staff member or a committee must be designated as responsible for ensuring that all required emergency drills are conducted, recorded, and evaluated in accordance with AZA accreditation standards (*see 11.2.5, 11.5.2, and 11.7.4 for required drills*).

11.2.1. The institution should have an automated emergency defibrillator (AED) and must provide training to appropriate paid and unpaid staff.

11.2.2. The institution must have appropriate alarms and fire extinguishers readily available and provide training to appropriate paid and unpaid staff.

11.2.3. The institution must have a written plan available for first-aid and other various health emergencies and provide training to appropriate paid and unpaid staff.

11.2.4. All emergency procedures must be written and provided to appropriate paid and unpaid staff. Appropriate emergency procedures must be readily available for reference in the event of an actual emergency.

Explanation: An integrated emergency management and response system should combine zoo/aquarium personnel and appropriate local agencies in any incident management planning and response. An example is the US-based "Incident Command System" (ICS). ICS is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazards incident management system. ICS enables a coordinated response among various jurisdictions and agencies, and provides a clear chain of command and structure; this allows local zoo/aquarium paid and unpaid staff to fully participate with other agencies through a unified command structure. It establishes a shared understanding through common language and processes, and collaborative objectives for planning and managing resources that allow for the integration of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure. Interactive web-based training for ICS-100 is free, and can be found at the US FEMA webpage (https://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/icsresource/trainingmaterials.htm).

Drills Required: 4 annually (see 11.5.2 & 11.7.4 for other required drills)

11.2.5. Live-action emergency drills (functional exercises) must be conducted at least once annually for each of the four basic types of emergency (fire; weather or other environmental emergency appropriate to the region; injury to guest or paid/unpaid staff; and animal escape). Four separate drills are required. These drills must be recorded and results evaluated for compliance with emergency procedures, efficacy of paid/unpaid staff training, aspects of the emergency response that are deemed adequate are reinforced, and those requiring improvement are identified and modified. *(See 11.5.2 and 11.7.4 for other required drills).*

Explanation: Emergency drills determine if institution paid and unpaid staff are aware of emergency procedures, and understand their respective duties and responsibilities. Emergency drills enable the institution to identify potential areas that could cause problems in the case of an actual emergency. The institution must have in place appropriate emergency procedures to handle the four basic types of emergencies identified above, and procedures for additional types of emergencies to which the institution may be particularly vulnerable. Paid and unpaid staff must be trained in these procedures, and records of such training must be maintained.

For the purposes of AZA accreditation standards, a “drill” is a pre-planned, simulated interactive exercise that tests the capability of an organization to respond to an emergency event. It should be designed to physically re-create an emergency situation and subsequent response outside of an actual emergency or warning, such as a storm warning. Results stemming from an actual emergency are of interest, and must be appropriately analyzed, but cannot be counted as a drill for accreditation purposes. These live-action drills may be supplemented (not replaced) with table-top drills or other emergency preparedness scenarios.

11.2.6. The institution must have a communication system that can be quickly accessed in case of an emergency.

Explanation: There should be immediate access to designated persons in case of an emergency via walkie/talkie, pager, mobile telephone, intercom, telephone, alarm, or other electronic devices.

11.2.7. A written protocol should be developed involving local police or other emergency agencies and include response times to emergencies.

11.2.8. Active shooter training for paid and unpaid staff should occur and be reviewed on a regular basis. Training should be tailored to the institution.

11.2.9. The institution must submit a report to AZA within 30 days of an accident or incident that meets the criteria outlined on page 109 of these standards (see policy on “Accidents or Incidents Involving Potential Injury or Welfare”).

11.3. Facilities/Animal Exhibits

11.3.1. All animal exhibits and holding areas must be secured to prevent animal escape.

Explanation: Particular attention must be given to shift doors, gates, and animal care specialist access doors (as well as double-door safe entry systems), and exhibit barrier dimensions and construction, to provide for staff (paid and unpaid) and public safety. Locking or latching mechanisms are necessary to meet this standard for dangerous animals.

11.3.2. All service areas must be safely lighted, free of debris and other hazards, and provide space to allow for safe servicing. Also, service exit doors must be clearly marked and in good working order. All locks and shift doors must be in good working order.

11.3.3. [Removed]

11.3.4. Electrical service in all wet environments, aquatic exhibits, and associated service areas must be equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFI).

11.3.5. All public access areas must be equipped with exit signs. Exit doors must be unobstructed and comply with local building codes for emergency egress.

11.3.6. There must be barriers in place (for example, guardrails, fences, walls, etc.) of sufficient strength and/or design to deter public entry into animal exhibits and other sensitive areas that pose a risk to animal or human safety.

Explanation: Barriers between public pathways and exhibits and non-public spaces should be designed and maintained such that they are not prone to being breached by guests regardless of size or age. Vegetation only is not a sufficient barrier. Risk assessments should be done for all areas where potential breaches could occur. Security and safety measures should be in place to monitor guest behavior and respond immediately in the event of an incident.

11.4. Risk Management

11.4.1. A written risk management plan must be developed and implemented.

Explanation: Risk management is defined as identification and assessment of potential risk for injury/harm to the visiting public, and employees, and mitigating or preventing injury or harm via best-practice methods. Examples of risk to employees include potential contact with any of the institution's animals, wet floors and poor lighting and ventilation in work areas, poorly constructed/planned exhibit service areas, cluttered work space, inadequate training, animal shift mechanisms not in proper repair, and potential contact with narcotic drugs and used hypodermic needles.

Examples of risk to the visiting public include human-animal contact, wet floors, poor lighting, insufficient barrier fencing, cracks and/or holes in guest walkways, condition of handrails, steps and walkways, rotted wood, etc. Such potential hazards must be minimized whenever possible.

While recognizing potential benefits of human-animal contact, the institution's risk management plan should follow best practices to protect humans (paid and unpaid staff, guests, etc.) and animals from potential injury or disease resulting from physical contact with each other. The plan should include a written assessment and determination of those species and individual animals with which staff (paid and unpaid) and guests may, or must not, have direct or indirect contact.

11.5. Dangerous Animals

11.5.0. The institution must perform a risk analysis for all venomous animals under their care. The purpose of the risk assessment is to identify which species are considered to be dangerous venomous animals. *(See pages 5-7 for definitions of venomous animal and dangerous venomous animal.)*

11.5.1. Envenomation response protocols should be developed in alignment with current profession best practices and should reflect the input of local and/or regional medical healthcare professionals. If antivenin is determined to be a potential component of the post-exposure response protocol, the antivenin must be readily available and obtainable, and its location must be known by all paid and unpaid staff working in those areas. An individual must be responsible for inventory, disposal/replacement, and storage of antivenin.

Explanation: It is the responsibility of the institution to verify that appropriate antivenins are available locally for all venomous species maintained at their institution, and for which antivenin is produced. Institutions may rely on the antivenin supply of local hospitals and treatment facilities, but it is also the institution's responsibility to guarantee that these inventories are maintained adequately. Such arrangements must be documented.

Antivenin intended for use in humans should be managed and stored in accordance with local, regional and federal regulations. Suitable procedures should be developed and implemented in collaboration with appropriate human health professionals.

Drill Required:
1 annually
(see 11.2.5 & 11.7.4 for other required drills)

11.5.2. Institutions maintaining dangerous venomous animals must have emergency alarm and/or communication systems in place specifically addressing animal to human injury, attack, or escape from enclosure. All areas housing dangerous venomous animals must be equipped with appropriate alarm systems, and/or have protocols in place to notify paid and unpaid staff in the event of a venomous animal emergency. These systems and/or protocols must be routinely checked to assure proper functionality.

11.5.2.1. Institutions maintaining dangerous venomous animals must conduct live action envenomation drills at least annually to assess emergency alarm systems and/or protocols. The live action envenomation drill is in addition to the emergency drills required in 11.2.5 and 11.7.4, and the drill should be recorded and evaluated in the same manner as other emergency drills. *(See 11.2.5 and 11.7.4 for other required drills.)*

11.5.3. Institutions maintaining potentially dangerous animals must have appropriate safety procedures in place to prevent attacks and injuries by these animals. Appropriate response procedures must also be in place to deal with an attack resulting in an injury. These procedures must be practiced routinely per the emergency drill requirements contained in standards 11.2.5, 11.5.2, and 11.7.4. Whenever injuries result from these incidents, a written account outlining the cause of the incident, how the injury was handled, and a description of any resulting changes to either the safety procedures or the physical facility must be provided to AZA staff, and maintained on file at the institution for five years from the date of the incident.

11.5.4. Enclosures holding venomous animals must be labelled as such. When venomous animals are housed in a community setting (i.e., with multiple species), the venomous animal must be specifically identified.

11.6. Security/Firearms

11.6.1. Adequate security systems must be provided on a 24-hour, year-round basis.

Explanation: The Commission recognizes that all institutions may not be able to provide security personnel on a 24-hour basis; however, every attempt should be made to provide security when the institution is closed to the visiting public. Security responsibilities should include regular rounds of the entire institution to detect problems. If it is impractical to provide security personnel, the Commission may approve the use of electronic systems or other security measures.

11.6.2. Security personnel, whether employed by the institution, or a provided and/or contracted service, must be trained to handle all emergencies in full accordance with the policies and procedures of the institution. In some cases, it is recognized that Security personnel may be in charge of the respective emergency (i.e. shooting teams).

11.6.3. Stored firearms must be in a locked cabinet of sufficient construction and design to impede unauthorized entry, and located in a secure area and accessible only to authorized personnel trained in their use.

11.6.4. Personnel authorized to utilize firearms must have adequate training on safe operation, and must practice on a regular basis to safely operate the weapons during an emergency response.

11.7. Diving

General Considerations:

For the purposes of accreditation, the term "diving" includes the diving mode in which the diver uses self-contained (SCUBA) or surface supplied compressed air and/or "breath-hold diving" in which the diver uses no self-contained or surface-supplied compressed air (i.e., snorkeling or skin diving). "Diver" refers to an employee (paid or unpaid) working in water using an apparatus (including snorkels) which supplies breathing gas at ambient pressure.

Further information on how dive programs are evaluated is available from AZA, and online at https://www.aza.org/accred-resource-center (you will be requested to log in using your individual membership user name and password).

11.7.1. Institutions which utilize diving as a part of regular operations and/or maintenance shall meet minimal operational safety standards for such diving. Such institutions must comply with applicable laws and regulations for their location and follow standards mandated by the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) if located in the U.S. If the institution is located outside of the U.S. it must comply with that country's equivalent body.

Explanation: Diving programs range in complexity from intermittent exhibit maintenance to bona fide *in situ* scientific diving. Additionally, recreational diving in the form of "pay to dive with…" programs may be offered to zoo and aquarium guests. Institutions located in the U.S. must make an assessment of their individual underwater diving components in order to determine which OSHA standard (commercial diving, scientific diving, recreational diving) is most appropriate for that aspect of the institution's underwater diving program. Since federal OSHA regulations do not specifically address breath-hold diving, attention should be given to how the activity conforms to the OSHA general duty clause (employers are required to provide their employees with a place of employment that "is free from recognizable hazards that are causing or likely to cause death or serious harm to employees.") A risk assessment should be done that includes consideration of shallow water blackout (http://www.shallowwaterblackoutprevention.org/). A protocol that is designed to minimize these risks, provide training, and outlines an emergency plan should be in place, implemented, and documented. If the institution is located outside of the U.S., it must comply with that country's equivalent, and should also do a risk assessment that includes consideration of shallow water blackout (http://www.shallowwaterblackoutprevention.org/). A protocol that is designed to minimize these risks, provide training, and outlines an emergency plan should be in place, documented, and implemented.

11.7.2. Institutions which utilize diving as a part of regular operations and/or maintenance must appoint a dive safety officer with the credentials, responsibilities, and authority to fulfill that role. At minimum, a dive safety officer should be a certified dive instructor, or an equivalent, to meet the credentialing requirement. Dive safety officers whose institution engages solely in snorkeling or breath-hold diving may only be certified as a skin-diving instructor, or an equivalent.

Explanation: Diving programs vary in their complexity, work load, size, and function from institution to institution. While the qualifications of the dive safety officer must be commensurate with the nature of the institution's dive program, the individual in this role must be trained to evaluate and remediate dive skills in an in-water setting. The dive safety officer's responsibilities must be structured such that they are familiar with and capable of assessing dive safety.

11.7.3. Institutions which utilize diving as a part of regular operations and/or maintenance must follow a dive manual which has, as one of its components, a section on diving safety.

Drill Required: 1 annually (see 11.2.5 & 11.5.2 for other required drills)

11.7.4. Institutions which utilize diving as a part of regular operations and/or maintenance must conduct at least one live-action emergency dive safetydrill annually. These drills must be recorded and evaluated to assure that procedures are being followed, that training for paid and unpaid staff is effective, and that what is learned is used to correct and/or improve the emergency procedures. Records of these drills must be maintained and improvements in the procedures duly noted whenever such are identified. *(See 11.2.5 and 11.5.2 for other required drills.)*

Explanation: at least one live-action drill is required annually. Additional practice exercises may consist of a variety of activities, including discussions, tabletop simulations, or actual drills. A drill is defined as a training exercise that physically re-creates an emergency situation and response outside the circumstances of an actual emergency. Results stemming from an actual emergency are of interest, but may not be counted as a drill for accreditation purposes.

11.7.5. Institutions which utilize diving as a part of regular operations and/or maintenance must develop and implement a dive emergency plan for each tank into which divers enter. All divers must be trained in the procedures associated with emergency plans associated with tanks in which they dive, and must receive periodic training at the frequency necessary to maintain proficiency for each exhibit that they dive.

11.7.6. Institutions which utilize diving as a part of regular operations and/or maintenance should establish a mechanism to periodically evaluate medical fitness to engage in diving activities.

11.7.7. Institutions which utilize diving as a part of regular operations and/or maintenance must establish a mechanism to ensure life support diving equipment is maintained to regulatory or manufacturer standards.

11.8. Perimeter Fence

11.8.1. Perimeter fencing must be separate from all exhibit fencing or other enclosures, and be of good quality and construction. All facilities must be enclosed by a perimeter fence which is at least 8' in height (2.4 meters) or by a viable barrier approved by the Accreditation Commission. The fence must be constructed so that it protects the animals in the facility by restricting animals outside the facility and unauthorized persons from going through it or under it and having contact with the animals in the facility, and so that it can function as a secondary containment system for the animals in the facility.

Explanation: There are rare instances where the terrain surrounding the facility provides a viable barrier. The Accreditation Commission will determine what constitutes a "viable barrier" and the facility may request a waiver. However, most facilities must be enclosed by a perimeter fence. Facilities located in rural areas within the U.S. and which are PPEQ-approved (permanent post-entry quarantine) mustmeet special USDA standards for fencing. Institutions which are entirely enclosed within a building may be exempt from this requirement.

12. GUEST SERVICES

General Considerations:

All United States institutions must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Wellbeing Considerations:

Guest perception drives success. AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums must continually strive to provide diverse, high quality experiences for all guests. Leadership in animal care and management requires building and maintaining living environments that present well to the guest and support healthy animals engaged in natural behaviors. This is among the top things guests cite as leading to a positive impression of the institution and an overall inspiring experience.

12.1. The institution must provide accessibility and public amenities for all guests.

Explanation: Each institution must consider accessibility for all guests as improvements are made.

12.2. The institution must have certain basic facilities to accommodate guests, including restrooms, food and beverage services, and rest areas.

12.3. The institution should have common conveniences for guests, including gift facilities, institution trail maps (paper or electronic), unobstructed and visible directional signage, etc.

12.4. The institution must present to the visiting public a positive, professional, clean, and aesthetically pleasing environment.

12.5. The institution should have a guest services training program, especially for front-line paid and unpaid staff that have a potential for regular engagement with guests. A guest services training program should, among other options, include training in staff courtesy, how to handle guest complaints, knowledge about wayfinding and daily activities, the importance of communicating to guests about the meaning of AZA accreditation, and mission-based messaging.

12.6. The institution should have a process for proactively seeking, acquiring and evaluating guest feedback regarding their experiences.

Explanation: Guest feedback provides the institution with a better perspective on areas of strength, and opportunities for improvement as perceived by its target audiences. Common methods for acquiring guest feedback include in-person and/or self-guided kiosk surveys, comment cards, online feedback (e-mails), and “secret shopper” programs. Feedback should assess more than guest satisfaction, and results should be used to improve existing programs and adjust operations.

12.7. The institution’s website should be professional in appearance and content and should provide up-to-date information such as hours of operation, admission information, location, programs, and AZA affiliation.

13. CAMPUS & STRATEGIC PLANNING

Wellbeing Considerations:

As a science-based institution focused on excellence in animal care and management, animal wellbeing, conservation, and the continued advancement of guest and community engagement, a strong commitment to campus and strategic planning for continuous change and evaluation is the foundation of adhering to "modern zoological practices and philosophies". Strategically assessing all aspects of operations and routinely renovating and/or replacing old exhibits with new modern habitats that are designed with animal wellbeing in mind, is something that is expected of all AZA-accredited institutions. In addition, continuous and careful planning for new and innovative education programs and guest experiences reflects commitment to professionally recognized best practices and modern philosophies.

13.1. The institution should follow a written campus plan and strategic plan, or engage in a formal process for future planning, regarding facility innovation, planning, growth and community development, and should review or update the plans every five years at minimum. *(See pages 5 -7 for definitions of campus plan and strategic plan.)*

13.2. Maintaining and advancing "modern zoological practices and philosophies" should be incorporated into the institution's formal planning processes and/or documents. *(See page 6 for definition of modern zoological practices and philosophies," and see the Preamble for further clarification.)*

13.3. The institution's campus plan and strategic plan should incorporate its mission, and the organizational values, goals, and objectives used in the design and development of animal exhibits and guest experiences.

13.4. Animal wellbeing (including requirements under standard 1.5.0) must be considered during the design and development of all new and/or renovated animal facilities (including exhibit space *and* holding areas).

Rev: 11/2024

ADDITIONAL STANDARDS FOLLOW:

Standards for Elephant Management & Care	45
Standards for Cetacean Care & Wellbeing	72

SEE ALSO:

General Related Policies	80
General Administrative Policies	109

AZA STANDARDS FOR ELEPHANT MANAGEMENT & CARE

Approved March 2011, Revised April 2012, Revised May 2020

Introduction

This revision of the Standards includes updated information from AZA's policy on Maximizing Occupational Safety of Elephant Care Professionals at AZA-accredited facilities which was distributed on August 15, 2011 and updated on September 12, 2014, as well as updated science-based information about elephant welfare.

The Standards are written to focus on a results-based assessment. They serve as a guide for institutions to measure their success in enhancing occupational safety and welfare for elephants and for AZA accreditation inspectors to measure the success of AZA's elephant care programs. Thus, in addition to each Standard, there is a Measurement and an Explanation to assist with understanding and meeting or exceeding each Standard.

The ultimate goals of these Standards are to provide the safest work environment for elephant care professionals and to provide the highest quality of elephant management and care which will result in excellent overall elephant well-being in our institutions. Ultimately, the success of AZA's elephant care programs will allow AZA institutions to contribute to elephant conservation and ensure that elephants are in our future for generations to come.

AZA Accreditation Policies on Variances

(excerpted from General Administrative Policies of the AZA Accreditation Commission)

Elephant Management and Care – Requesting A Temporary Variance Under the AZA Standards. Institutions requesting a temporary variance under the AZA Standards For Elephant Management & Care should submit that request to the AZA Accreditation Commission at the time it becomes apparent that a temporary variance may be needed. The request should be in the form of a letter detailing the temporary variance being requested, and should include all necessary documentation. The Commission will consider the requested temporary variance and will thereafter notify the institution of its decision. Temporary variances must be re-applied for prior to the expiration date contained in the variance, or documentation must be provided that the reason for the temporary variance has been addressed. **NOTE**: institutions not currently AZA-accredited must be in full compliance with AZA standards at the time application is made.

Elephant Management and Care – Special Wellbeing Variance. In cases where an elephant's physical and/or psychological wellbeing is believed to be at risk by implementation of a standard, an institution may request a special wellbeing variance under the AZA Standards For Elephant Management & Care. To qualify for a special wellbeing variance, the elephant(s) in question must be considered geriatric, and the institution must provide evidence that the elephant's physical and/or psychological wellbeing will be at risk without the variance, or that moving the elephant could result in serious injury or death. Evidence must be in the form of documentation from the institution's veterinary and animal management professional staff. The request for a special wellbeing variance must be in the form of a letter detailing the variance being requested, and containing all necessary documentation. The AZA Accreditation Commission will consider the request and will thereafter notify the institution of its decision. If granted, the variance will be for three (3) years and must be re-applied for prior to the expiration date contained in the variance. If granted, institutions must submit an annual report documenting the status and health of the elephant(s), including veterinary records, assessments, behavioral profiles, and the written recommendations of the institution's veterinary and animal management professional staff. NOTE: for the purpose of this variance, wellbeing should be assessed with a focus on physical and psychological health and function.

Elephant Management and Care – Substantial Compliance Extension [to an existing variance]. In cases where a deadline is set in a standard, and an institution has an existing variance until that deadline but has not yet achieved full compliance by the deadline, a Substantial Compliance Extension of the existing variance may be considered by the AZA Accreditation Commission. Approval may be granted only if the institution can demonstrate clear and steady progress toward compliance with the standard, is actively engaged and working

towards full compliance, and has identified a realistic completion date. Regular updates will be required until compliance is achieved, and the Commission may require an inspection of the elephant program, at its discretion, as a condition of maintaining accreditation.

Standards

E.1. Abiotic Environmental Variables (address both exhibit and off-exhibit areas)

E.1.1 Temperature

Standard – Outdoor – Daytime: Sufficient sheltered areas must be provided to protect elephants from adverse weather. Water suitable for drinking or bathing must be available at all times to meet the elephant's cooling needs in the ambient environment.

Measurement: No instances of frostbite, heatstroke, sunburn, illnesses, or elephant deaths related to environmental temperature/weather exposure.

Explanation: Water, mud, dust, soil, or sand must be available for elephants to dust themselves to assist with thermoregulation. Sufficient sheltered areas must be provided to protect elephants from adverse weather. When exposure to prolonged sunlight is likely, sufficient shade by natural or artificial means shall be provided to allow all elephants the choice to seek protection from direct sunlight. A sufficient number of shaded areas must be provided to assure that all individuals can have access to shade when desired and that subordinate elephants are not excluded from the shade. Elephants exposed to temperatures below 40°F (5°C) for longer than 60 minutes, must be monitored hourly to determine when to provide access to supplemental heat, direct sunlight, or access to indoor barn stalls or other options for thermal management.

Standard – Outdoor – Nighttime: Elephants kept outdoors when temperatures are under 40°F (5°C) overnight, must be provided with supplementary heat and adequate shelter from adverse weather.

Measurement: No instances of frostbite, illnesses or elephant deaths related to environmental temperature/weather exposure.

Explanation: Institutions should consider designing facilities and habitats that allow elephants outdoor access as much as possible – weather, health, and safety permitting. Elephants can tolerate moderate temperature extremes if they have been acclimatized to the ambient conditions. Multiple sheltered areas must be provided to ensure that all elephants have sufficient access to shelter and protection from the elements. Institutions may install outdoor heat sources to extend the amount of time the elephants are able to remain outside. Radiant or forced air heating are examples of acceptable heat. There may be a need to provide supplemental heat for young, geriatric, or compromised elephants at temperatures above 40°F (5°C).

Standard – Indoor: Indoor areas must be heated to a minimum temperature of at least 55°F (13°C) during the colder months of the year. One room must be capable of maintaining a temperature of at least 70°F (21°C) and be free of drafts for accommodating sick or debilitated elephants. Care should be taken to control excessive heat indoors.

Measurement: No instances of illnesses or elephant deaths related to environmental temperature/weather exposure.

Explanation: At elevated indoor temperatures, the use of fans, cross-ventilation, access to water, cool substrate, allowing elephants access to an outside area, or other cooling measures should be employed as needed. Elephants should be provided with the opportunity to thermoregulate themselves as much as possible.

E.1.2 Humidity and Ventilation

Standard: Indoor ventilation systems for elephants should provide enough fresh air to meet the respiration needs of the elephants, control moisture build-up within the structure, and move enough air to dilute airborne disease organisms.

Measurement: Fresh air and good quality air flow are evident in the barn and are provided through passive and/or mechanical systems.

Explanation: At elevated indoor temperatures, the use of fans, cross-ventilation, access to water, cool substrate, allowing elephants access to an outside area, or other cooling measures should be employed as needed.

E.1.3 Illumination

Standard: Ample lighting must be provided for elephant care professionals and other employees to work safely around elephants, day or night.

Measurement: When elephant care professionals are working around or interacting with the elephants, the elephants should be able to be clearly seen and their movements/behavior observed at all times within their indoor areas. Adequate light must be provided to monitor the safe use of all equipment (ERD) and the movement of all doors and gates.

Explanation: Natural daylight cycles are adequate for elephants, even in temperate regions. When kept indoors for extended periods, fluorescent, or incandescent lights provide a sufficient spectrum of illumination. Skylights, in addition to interior lighting, are effective and recommended.

E.1.4 Facilities

E.1.4.1. Space guidelines

E.1.4.1.1. Indoor space

Standard: Indoor facilities must provide sufficient space and environmental complexity to both allow for and stimulate natural behavioral activities and social interactions resulting in healthy and socially well-adapted elephants. Indoor facilities must provide adequate room for elephants to move about and lie down without restriction (Holdgate et al., 2016b). Appropriate space should be available to allow elephants to be separated either through individual stalling or through the use of tethers (See 3.3.2.7 Restraint). Indoor housing for both males and females must be designed to accommodate an elephant that can reach up to 24 ft (7.3 m) vertically. All ceilings, wire, pipes, etc. must be out of reach or adequately protected.

Measurement: Elephants that are thriving exhibit a natural behavioral repertoire at a normal frequency when in any space at the facility. If there are elephant behavioral, social, or medical issues shown to be caused by insufficient space, there must be a program in place (from a programmatic and/or facility perspective) to address the issue.

Explanation: Space is one of the most difficult measures to standardize (Meehan, et al., 2016b). There is no scientific data which clearly indicates the amount of space needed for an elephant to be healthy and socially well-adapted. Meehan et al. (2016b) state that the facility size alone is not correlated with individual elephant welfare. It is the quality of the overall programmatic approach to good elephant management, the quality of its social life, and the quality of the space from an elephant's perspective that determines adequacy of the facility as it relates to elephant welfare, not simply the square footage of the environment (Greco et al., 2016b; Holdgate et al., 2016a). For facilities in climates that require elephants to be indoors for significant amounts of time, it is highly recommended

that larger interior common spaces be developed to enhance social interactions and allow for greater movement and diversity of space during inclement weather conditions as well as overnight. Minimum recommended stall space (i.e. temporary holding, overnight, etc.) is not less than 600 sq ft (56 sq m) for males or females with calves, and not less than 400 sq ft (37 sq m) for females.

E.1.4.1.2. Outdoor space

Standard: Outdoor habitats must provide sufficient space and environmental complexity to both allow for and stimulate natural behavioral activities and social interactions resulting in healthy and socially well-adapted elephants.

Measurement: Elephants that are thriving exhibit a natural behavioral repertoire at a normal frequency when in any space at the facility. If there are elephant behavioral, social, or medical issues shown to be caused by insufficient space, there must be a program in place (from a programmatic and/or facility perspective) to address the issue.

Explanation: Space is one of the most difficult measures to standardize (Meehan et al. 2016b). There is no scientific data which clearly indicates the amount of space needed for an elephant to be healthy and socially well-adapted. Meehan et al. (2016b) state that total exhibit size alone is not correlated with individual elephant welfare. It is the quality of the overall programmatic approach to good elephant management and the quality of the space from an elephant's perspective that determines adequacy of the facility as it relates to elephant welfare, not simply the square footage of the environment (Greco et al., 2016b; Holdgate et al., 2016a). Thus, if the elephants are healthy and socially adapted, then whatever is being provided meets the Standard. Recommended minimum size for outdoor habitats is not less than 5400 sq ft (500 sq m) per elephant.

E.1.4.1.3. Behavior

Standard: The facility and program provides a complex physical and social environment which stimulates natural behaviors, social interactions and activity levels resulting in healthy, socially well-adapted elephants.

Measurement: The elephants are physically healthy and socially well-adapted without aberrant behavior or excessive aggression within the social group. Elephant behavior fits a natural frequency and diversity of behaviors, and elephants are provided with opportunities for choice, cognitive challenges, and complex behavioral repertoires.

Explanation: There is no current data to indicate what amount of activity, or what daily walking distance is most appropriate for optimal elephant welfare. The basic needs may be different for each elephant. Since the goal is healthy, socially well-adapted elephants, how it is achieved is less important than that it is achieved. Studies of Asian and African elephants in zoos have shown that elephants walk an average of 5.3 km/day with no significant difference between species, also indicating that there are associations between distance walked and social, housing, management (such as diverse feeding strategies), and demographic factors (Greco et al., 2016; Holdgate et al., 2016a). No association between distance walked and health or behavioral outcomes were found.

E.1.4.1.4. Exhibits and renovations

Standard: All institutions planning new construction or modifying existing elephant facilities must include the following: adequate infrastructure to manage and care of elephants with barriers in place that provide employee safety space; facilities to safely accommodate adult males; and, adequate infrastructure to minimize the need for regular tethering. The design of indoor and outdoor areas must contain areas where elephants can exercise and socialize together, and avoid socializing if/when desired.

Measurement: Design plans for exhibits and renovations are reviewed and are consistent with the AZA Standards for Elephant Management and Care.

Explanation: AZA's commitment to elephants will only be successful if all facilities live up to their commitment to care for growing family herds and adult males, and to comply with SSP breeding recommendations. A key consideration in the design of elephant facilities is the promotion of species-appropriate behaviors. Elephants are a social species and herds often perform activities together, such as feeding, drinking, walking, resting, and wallowing. Enrichment opportunities should be integral parts of both indoor and outdoor areas (Greco et al., 2016a). Outdoor areas should encourage locomotion for exercise and natural footwear. Rocks, tree stumps, or large sturdy objects should be provided in the habitats so that the elephants may use them as visual barriers and/or for rubbing and scratching. The use of both wet and dry wallows is encouraged to assist with skin care and protection against the sun and biting insects. Barriers within and between habitats should allow some degree of auditory, olfactory, and tactile contact between separated herd members as appropriate at their choice.

E.1.4.2 Substrates

E.1.4.2.1. Outdoor

Standard: Outdoor habitat surfaces must consist primarily of natural substrates (e.g., soil, sand, grass). Elephant areas must have a variety of substrates, must be able to be cleaned easily, and must have good drainage to prevent unwanted standing water.

Measurement: Elephant feet are in good condition and need only periodic pad and nail trimming. Excessive buildup of dead skin is not apparent and dusting materials are available for the elephants and used at a normal frequency.

Explanation: Providing a combination of hard substrates to promote normal wear of footpads and soft substrates, such as earth and sand, to promote dust bathing is preferred. Recent studies have shown that decreased time spent on hard substrates may enhance foot and musculoskeletal health, and encourage recumbent rest, and thereby enhance elephant welfare (Holdgate et al., 2016b; Miller et al., 2018;). Providing a variety of soft substrates will promote behaviors, such as foraging, wallowing, bathing, digging, and resting. The use of both wet and dry wallows is encouraged to assist with skin care and protection against the sun and biting insects. Elephants may rest on mounds of earth (Holdgate et al., 2016b).

E.1.4.2.2 Indoor

Standard: Indoor substrate must be able to be cleaned daily and must be quick to dry. Hard floor surfaces must be relatively smooth to prevent excessive pad wear, but not so smooth that they become slippery when wet.

Measurement: Indoor floors are cleaned daily and dry within two hours of cleaning. Elephant feet are in good condition and show no excessive pad wear due to floor roughness and no elephant injuries due to slipping on the floors.

Explanation: Recent studies have shown that decreased time spent on hard substrates will enhance foot and musculoskeletal health, and encourage recumbent rest, and thereby enhance elephant welfare (Holdgate et al., 2016b; Miller et al., 2018;). Some institutions use sand, barn stall mats, straw, or shavings for insulation and/or to provide a softer surface for elephants to stand or lie on. In new construction and renovations, natural, changeable indoor substrate should be considered.

E.1.4.3. Change and variation in the environment

Standard: All institutions must have a written environmental enrichment plan for their elephants and show evidence of implementation (See 4.4 Enrichment).

Measurement: Enrichment plan and records of daily enrichment activities are reviewed. Elephants are provided with complex environmental and enrichment opportunities that elicit a normal frequency and diversity of behaviors.

Explanation: An effective enrichment program, including environmental, social, and cognitive enrichment, should promote species-appropriate behaviors (Greco et al., 2016a). Varied terrain and habitat furniture provide more complexity in the environment as well as exercise opportunities, such as walking, turning, reaching, stretching, climbing, bending, digging, pushing, pulling, and lifting. A good environmental enrichment program includes the rotation of exhibit furniture and enrichment items on a regular schedule.

E.1.4.4. Cleaning

Standard: Enclosures, both indoor and outdoor, must be cleaned of feces and urine daily.

Measurement: Daily cleaning is observed.

Explanation: Frequent daily manure removal is recommended and may be necessary for both sanitary and aesthetic reasons.

E.1.4.5 Safety and Containment

E.1.4.5.1 Containment

Standard: Elephant containment barriers must be sufficient to prevent elephant escapes.

Measurement: There must be no failure of containment barriers.

Explanation: A recommended minimum height of walls, cables and horizontal railings for adult elephants is 8 ft (2.4 m). The use of electric fences is not sufficient as a primary containment barrier. A wide variety of building materials can be used for elephant containment barriers. The barriers must be safe for the elephants, must be able to withstand an elephant's strength, must contain the elephant in a specific space, and must prohibit direct contact between elephants and the visitors. Recommended materials for barriers include solid concrete, rock walls or horizontal steel rails, pipe, or cable.

E.1.4.5.2 Elephant care barriers and restraints

Standard: All institutions must have adequate infrastructure to manage and care for elephants with barriers and/or tethers in place to increase occupational safety. All elephant care professionals at AZA facilities with elephants must not share the same unrestricted space with elephants, except for certain, limited exceptions. [NOTE: see E.4.2.1 for details]

Measurement: Adequate infrastructure exists and is used by elephant care professionals to care for elephants without sharing the same unrestricted space with the elephants, except in certain, well-defined circumstances.

Explanation: AZA is committed to maximizing the safety of elephant care professionals. In order to maximize safety while working in restricted contact, elephant care professionals must always monitor the position of themselves and their elephant(s) in relation to the barrier/tethers, the reach of the elephant(s) especially the reach of the trunk and the behavior of the elephant(s). The head and/or torso of a person must never cross the plane of the primary containment barrier unless the elephant is on tethers. Routine husbandry should not be performed exclusively while elephants are on tethers.

E.1.4.5.3 Dry moats

Standard: The use of dry moats with steep sides and hard bottoms as primary containment should be limited.

Measurement: A written elephant moat extraction protocol must be in place for facilities employing moats out of which an elephant cannot easily climb.

Explanation: Dry moats may pose a substantial threat to elephants, especially those out of which an elephant cannot easily climb. Where present, moats should be wide enough for an elephant to turn around, have a soft, dry bottom, and should include a gradually sloped ramp so that the elephant can easily climb out of the moat or ditch.

E.1.4.5.4 Doors and gates

Standard: Doors and gates must be in good condition and must be engineered to withstand an elephant's strength.

Measurement: All doors and gates are observed operating properly and containing elephants. No elephant or personnel injuries because of hydraulic or electrically-powered door operation have occurred.

Explanation: Door and gate design is extremely important to ensure the safety of both elephants and elephant care professionals. If hydraulic or electrically powered drives are used to operate doors or gates, there must be a manual back-up system or a back-up generator in place in case of failure or electrical outage. Door operation must be continually monitored with a direct line of sight or with video the entire time the door is in motion to prevent elephant or human injury.

E.1.4.5.5 General exhibit considerations

Standard: Ceiling and fixture heights (e.g., lights, heating units, plumbing, etc.) must be built so that elephants do not harm themselves or damage the facility.

Measurement: There should be no elephant injuries due to poor design or insufficient heights of ceilings and fixtures.

Explanation: Areas for both males and females must be designed to accommodate an elephant that can reach up to 24 ft (7.3 m) vertically. All ceilings, wire, pipes, etc. must be out of reach or adequately protected.

E.1.4.5.6 Safety assessment program

Standard: Each institution must have an established method of regularly evaluating its elephant facility and program safety. The institution must document and be able to demonstrate how safety is assessed on a regular and consistent basis and how safety issues are resolved. Facilities shall conduct safety evaluations at least semi-annually. Each institution must specifically address its elephant program in the risk management policy required by AZA Accreditation Standard 11.4.1.

Measurement: Program and facility safety evaluations and safety issue resolutions are documented. All identified safety issues are resolved or are in the process of resolution.

Explanation: Each institution should establish a safety assessment program based on its own needs and resources. A safety assessment program may include a safety assessment team, including elephant care team and management, animal health care team and experts in risk management and safety.

E.1.4.6 Transport

Standard: All applicable Federal regulations and/or IATA Live Animal Regulations must be met and AZA Recommended Elephant Preshipment Guidelines and AZA Transport Guidelines for Elephants should be followed.

Measurement: Elephant transports have been accomplished safely and in an appropriate manner.

Explanation: Elephants are typically transported in trailers or crates specifically designed for moving elephants. The trailer compartment or crate used for transport should be sized so that the elephant can stand up comfortably, but not turn around. The elephant should not be compressed by the containment front or back. The trailer or crate should be equipped with tethering options as needed. Elephants should be monitored and provided with food and water at regular intervals during the transport. The IATA Live Animal Regulations are available for purchase at https://www.iata.org/publications/store/Pages/live-animals-regulations.aspx Guidelines for transport and pre-shipment testing are available from the AZA Elephant TAG/SSP Veterinary Advisor (Miller, 2018c-d).

E.1.5 Water

E.1.5.1 Water quality

Standard: Water suitable for drinking must be made available at all times. Frequent drinking opportunities throughout the day may be necessary to meet the elephant's needs in the ambient environment.

Measurement: Water sources for all elephant indoor and outdoor areas are identified and method of delivery determined is appropriate.

Explanation: Most facilities provide either continually running or automatic watering devices in outdoor habitats and barns. If these are not present, the method of providing potable water at all times must be identified and written protocols in place to ensure appropriate water availability to the elephants.

E.1.5.2 Presentation of water, and water sources

Standard: While outdoors and weather permitting, elephants must have regular access to water sources, such as a pools, waterfalls, misters/sprinklers, or wallows that provide enrichment and allow the elephants to cool and/or bathe themselves.

Measurement: Outdoor water sources are present in sufficient quantity to accommodate all elephants at one time.

Explanation: It is recommended that pools be constructed with rounded edges, and without corners. Artificial pools should have multiple and/or lengthy gently sloping exit and entrance areas, with non-slip surfaces, and at an angle no greater than 30°. Vertical sides on pools should be avoided in areas where elephants have direct access to the pool side. Steps should be wide enough for elephants to place more than one foot on at a time and small enough for baby elephants to step up or down. There should be more than one entry/exit point to the pool in order to prevent one elephant from inhibiting the exit or entrance of other elephants into or out of the pool. It is recommended that one body of water or pool be deep enough to allow for buoyancy, as this can allow for non weight-bearing exercise and that it be deep enough to allow an adult to be fully immersed when laying on its side, or at least six feet deep. However, shallow wading and splashing pools are also excellent activity areas for elephants and are to be encouraged.

E.2. Biotic Variables

E.2.1 Food and Water

E.2.1.1 Provision of food and water

E.2.1.1.1 Water

Standard: When water containers are used, drinking water must be cleaned and refreshed daily. Containers must also be cleaned daily. (See E.1.5.1 Water quality).

Measurement: Water sources are clean and water is fresh.

Explanation: The ability to monitor water consumption by the elephants may be important in sick or compromised elephants.

E.2.1.1.2 Food (See 3.1 Diet for all life stages)

E.2.1.1.3 Food item – variability

Standard: Elephants must be offered a balanced diet composed of an appropriate variety of food items provided in quantities that are sufficient for each elephant to maintain weight and appropriate body condition. Diets must be developed under the direction of the institution's nutritionist, veterinarian, and/or consultant.

Measurement: Diet sheets and written feeding protocols are reviewed and determined to be aligned with the recommendations. Elephant weights and/or body condition scores are reviewed.

Explanation: Nutritional content is a critical tool for assessing overall nutritional well-being. Daily intake records may also be valuable to maintain. Recommended food items include hay, supplemented with fruits, vegetables, a pelleted supplement (Williams et al., 2014). Fresh browse should be made available daily, if possible. Overall energy content of the diet must be assessed in relation to the body condition scores for each elephant and diet composition adapted as needed. AZA Nutritional Guidelines for Elephants are available upon request from AZA Elephant TAG/SSP Nutrition Advisor.

E.2.1.1.4 Feeding schedules and variability food presentation

Standard: Varied feeding schedules dispersed both spatially and temporally throughout the day and night are required.

Measurement: Written feeding protocols and schedules are reviewed.

Explanation: Mechanisms to deliver food to elephants during the day and night should be implemented (e.g., changing animal care team schedules, automated feeders, hanging feeder nets, etc.). Highly unpredictable feeding schedules can be associated with decreased risk of obesity and other positive welfare outcomes (Greco et al., 2016a; Morfeld et al., 2016). Feeders should be located in multiple locations to discourage undue competition or aggression over feed items.

E.2.1.1.5 Opportunities to forage for food

Standard: Opportunities must be provided for elephants to acquire food using multiple foraging behaviors. Food must be provided in areas where it is less likely to be soiled. Excess or waste food must be removed daily.

Measurement: Written feeding and enrichment protocols are reviewed.

Explanation: Opportunities for searching, browsing, grazing, reaching, opening, etc. can

be provided by scatter-feeding, hiding foods in crevices and substrates around the exhibit, or by using elevated feeders such as hanging hay nets that encourage an elephant to reach for and manipulate its trunk to gain access to the food. Mechanisms that promote physically active feeding behaviors can be incorporated into a comprehensive enrichment plan for the elephants (Greco et al., 2016a).

E.2.2 Social Considerations

E.2.2.1 Group Composition

E.2.2.1.1 Age and sex structure of social group

Standard: Each zoo with elephants must have a minimum of three females (or the space to have three females), two males or three elephants of mixed gender.

Measurement: The institutional commitment to elephants must be reviewed. If the institution is not in compliance with the Standard, plans for meeting the Standard and a timeline must be submitted to the AZA Accreditation Commission.

Explanation: Good welfare is supported by spending more time in larger, stable social groupings (Meehan et al., 2016a) If a zoo cannot meet this Standard in terms of space, they must apply for a variance. If a zoo does not meet the social requirements, they must apply for a variance. In the case of social requirements, before the variance can be issued by the AZA Accreditation Commission, the zoo (a) must describe their plan to obtain additional elephants or describe their plan for de-acquisitioning their elephants, and (b) must describe what will occur if they experience the loss of one elephant. [NOTE: see Accreditation Policies on Variances in the Introduction section of these standards on page 45 for further details on variances.]

E.2.2.1.2 Adaptable management

Standard: All facilities must include the ability to flexibly manage their elephants, allowing the separation of groups or individuals as required.

Measurement: Each institution must be able to demonstrate and/or describe how they would successfully isolate individuals or groups as needed for elephant management or care.

Explanation: The ability to adapt to changing conditions and situations is critical to the success of any elephant program.

E.2.2.1.3 Male elephant socialization

Standard: If an institution cares for one or more males, separate facilities for isolation must be available, and a program of social contact in place.

Measurement: Each institution must be able to demonstrate and/or describe how they would successfully isolate and socialize males, if needed.

Explanation: Males may be housed alone, but not in complete isolation; opportunities for tactile, olfactory, visual, and auditory interaction with other elephants must be provided (Rasmussen et al. 1982). In the wild adult males are primarily solitary. However, they do have regular contact with other elephants. Guidelines for the development and long-term management of all-male elephant herds are needed as this may become increasingly important with increased breeding success in the future and the production of more male calves.

E.2.2.1.4 Birth and postpartum management

Standard: Facilities for birth and postpartum management must be available.

Measurement: Each institution with current and future breeding females must be able to demonstrate and/or describe how they would successfully manage and care for elephant mothers and calves during birth and postpartum period. Written protocols must be in place for births and reintroductions of mothers/calves to herd.

Explanation: First time mothers in particular may require significant management. Initial protection of the calf and management of the mother are critical to a successful birth. Introduction of the new calves and mothers to the herd must be accomplished both cautiously and expeditiously. Reintroduction of the calves and mothers to the herd should be accomplished when appropriate and safe for the mother/calf.

E.2.2.1.5 “Emigration” of adolescents

Standard: Offspring should remain with their mothers until they are naturally weaned and mother and calf are acclimated to separation.

Measurement: Offspring are remaining with their mothers until they are at least three years old.

Explanation: Natural, gradual weaning of offspring is preferred when possible (Prado-Oviedo et al., 2016). Some flexibility is necessary in cases of health challenges, maternal rejection and/or when infants cannot be re-established in their social group. In cases of maternal rejection, calves should be introduced to other conspecifics as soon as possible. Males are generally managed with the herd during adolescence until natural age-related behavioral changes may indicate separation. There is no specific age when this may occur. Indicators that males may need to be separated include aggression, play-fighting, or reproductive behavior that causes disruption within the herd or risk of injury to individuals in the herd. Guidelines for the development and long-term management of all-male elephant herds are needed as this may become increasingly important with increased breeding success in the future and the production of more male calves.

E.2.2.1.6 Multigenerational herds

Standard: When possible, multigenerational herds should be maintained.

Measurement: Multigenerational herds are being maintained when possible.

Explanation: Both elephant SSPs prioritize the maintenance of stable, social multi-generational groupings that include both juvenile and adult elephants (Meehan et al., 2016a; Prado-Oviedo et al., 2016). Much of the behavioral repertoire of elephants is learned, rather than innate. A multi-generational herd allows the transfer of species-appropriate behaviors within a herd through experience and observational learning.

E.2.2.1.7 All male herds

Standard: There are no standards for all male herds at this time, though standards may be developed in the future.

Measurement: Not applicable at this time.

Explanation: Guidelines for the development and long-term management of all-male elephant herds are needed as this may become increasingly more important with increased breeding success in the future and the production of more male calves.

E.2.2.1.8 Variations in social affiliation

Standard: A behavioral profile must be maintained for each individual elephant and updated annually.

Measurement: Profiles are reviewed.

Explanation: The elephant care team must be aware of each elephant's social compatibility and the dominance hierarchies of the herd. Institutions must have the ability to manage social compatibility as well as dominance and aggression among an elephant herd. Institutions must have the ability to manage introductions and separations of elephants, including; a new female to an existing herd, females to males for breeding, calves to their mothers, and calves and mothers to the herd. Elephant areas must be designed to allow for separate and group housing during periods of social incompatibilities, without interfering with the normal movement of elephants in and out their living space.

E.2.2.1.9 Inter-individual distances

Standard: Facility must be designed and resources must be provided to allow for ample feeding, shade, water, and wallowing locations.

Measurement: Facility must have sufficient structures for all elephants to participate in natural behaviors.

Explanation: Elephants are a social species and herds often perform activities together, such as feeding, drinking, walking, resting, and wallowing.

E.3. Health and Nutrition

E.3.1 Diet for all life stages

Standard: Elephants should be fed according to the recommendations of the AZA Nutritional Guidelines for Elephants (Williams et al., 2014). Diet and exercise programs must be in place for elephants.

Measurement: Diet and exercise programs are reviewed and show evidence of being modified, as needed, to maintain elephant physical well-being.

Explanation: A nutritionally complete and well-balanced diet is essential for elephants to thrive. Obesity is a health concern for all animals, including elephants, and excessive weight gain should be avoided due to its negative effect on health, reproduction, and welfare (Morfeld et al., 2016). For infants, a normal growth rate should be 1 to 2 lbs per day over the first three years. Excess weight early and too rapid growth may cause long-term harm to the elephant's physical well-being. Significant exercise and limiting the high-energy supplements will help control weight gain in calves and elephants of all ages. If changes are made to diets as a result of seasonal availability of items, then care should be taken to implement changes gradually (over 1-2 weeks) to avoid digestive upsets (Ullrey et al., 1997). AZA Nutritional Guidelines for Elephants are available upon request from AZA Elephant TAG/SSP Nutrition Advisor.

E.3.2 Influence of the following variables on dietary requirements

E.3.2.1 Body size

Standard: Elephant weights and/or body condition scores must be recorded, at minimum, three times a year. Diet and exercise programs must be in place for elephants.

Measurement: Weight records and/or body condition scores are reviewed. Diet and exercise programs are reviewed and show evidence of being modified, as needed, to

maintain elephant physical well-being.

Explanation: Several models exist for assessing elephant body condition (Morfeld et al., 2016; Sreekumar and Nirmalan, 1990; Wemmer, 2006).

E.3.2.2 Reproductive status

Standard: Elephants' diets should be carefully monitored during pregnancy, and elephants should engage in a prenatal exercise program to control excessive weight gain during pregnancy.

Measurement: Weight records and/or body condition scores should be reviewed.

Explanation: Elephants should be prevented from significant weight gain during pregnancy.

E.3.2.3 Activity levels

Standard: Activity levels should be sufficient to maintain the physical and psychological well-being of the elephant.

Measurement: Exercise protocols are reviewed.

Explanation: In the absence of scientific data to indicate the precise amount of activity needed to maintain good physical and psychological well-being of an elephant, activity levels, weight, body condition, and diet composition and consumption should be holistically reviewed regularly to maintain appropriate overall health parameters.

E.3.2.4 Browse program

Standard: Every institution must have a browse program/protocol as a part of their elephant management program.

Measurement: Browse protocol and elephant health/dental records are reviewed.

Explanation: Elephants must be provided with browse material large enough to avoid molar impaction and rotation. Since elephant teeth migrate forward (not vertically), it is important that the right type of food is offered to promote dental health and allow for the natural progression of each molar.

E.3.3 Medical management

Standard: A veterinarian with experience in large mammal medicine must be on call at all times to deal with routine elephant health evaluation and treatment and medical emergencies.

Measurement: Records of annual medical exams and other treatments are reviewed. Copies of AZA Elephant TAG/SSP medical protocols should be on file and are utilized at the institution.

Explanation: The elephant care team must work closely with the veterinary and nutrition teams to balance medical and nutritional requirements with behavioral components and activity levels for each elephant. Guidelines for routine health exams, transport, quarantine, preshipment testing, and necropsy are available from the AZA Elephant TAG/SSP Veterinary Advisor (Miller, 2018a-d).

E.3.3.1 Quarantine and hospitalization

Standard: Quarantine protocols, periods and parameters for elephants must be in place.

Measurement: AZA Elephant TAG/SSP medical protocols and institutional written protocols are on file and are utilized at the institution.

Explanation: Due to the size, strength, and social nature of elephants, it may be logistically difficult to maintain isolation from other animals during arrival and quarantine. The AZA

Recommended Elephant Preshipment Guidelines (Miller, 2018c) provide a comprehensive list of tests to detect disease prior to shipment. It is important that the receiving institution work closely with the sending institution to ensure that all recommended tests are conducted and results reviewed. Following the preshipment protocol may help compensate for some of the quarantine compromises that may be required. Regardless of preshipment test results, every attempt should be made to maintain some degree of physical separation from the resident elephants after arrival. Current quarantine practices recommend a minimum quarantine period for most species found in zoos and aquaria. Quarantine protocols at each institution should be made by the veterinary team in consultation with the elephant care team. Social concerns, veterinary requirements, physical facility design, and availability of trained elephant care professionals will dictate the quarantine length and protocol. For additional information, refer to the AZA Quarantine Guidelines for Elephants (Miller, 2018b).

E.3.3.1.1 Management of social taxa

Standard: Every institution must have the ability to introduce, manage and maintain social groups of elephants.

Measurement: Daily records of social groups are reviewed. Introduction protocols/records are reviewed. Elephant social behavior is observed and deemed to be occurring at a normal frequency and diversity for the species.

Explanation: As a highly social species, elephants must be introduced or returned to a social group as soon as appropriate. Although interaction between an elephant care team and elephants can be beneficial, they are not a sufficient substitute for species-appropriate elephant-to-elephant interactions.

E.3.3.2 Preventive medicine

Standard: Each elephant must be given a thorough annual physical examination (Mikota et al. 1994).

Measurement: Written documentation of the annual exams and their results, the weights and the body condition scores are reviewed. Written protocols are in place for all preventative elephant medicine and the AZA Guidelines for Comprehensive Elephant Health Monitoring (Miller, 2018a) are available and utilized.

Explanation: Institutions should adhere to the 2017 Recommendations for the Diagnosis, Treatment and Management of Tuberculosis (Mycobacterium tuberculosis) in Elephants in Human Care (Backues & Wiedner, eds., 2017). A veterinarian or trained veterinary technician must perform fecal examinations to look for parasites and other problems on a regular basis (Samuel et al., 2001). Results must be recorded. These results must be reviewed after each measurement is taken. Regular vaccinations, as determined by the veterinary team and in concert with the AZA Guidelines for Comprehensive Elephant Health Monitoring (Miller, 2018) should be considered. Annual vaccinations may include rabies and tetanus.

E.3.3.2.1 Daily care

Standard: All elephants must be visually inspected and behaviorally assessed on a daily basis

Measurement: Daily records and reports are reviewed, with special attention devoted to determining that normal behaviors are occurring at a normal frequency, including affiliation and aggression.

Explanation: An assessment must be made and any unusual behavior (including

instances of aggression), physical characteristics or activities should be immediately reported to the supervisor, and recorded. Specifically, reports should include observations such as condition of urine and feces, eating and drinking patterns, administration of medications (if any), and general condition and behavior.

E.3.3.2.2 Foot care

Standard: The elephants should be free of foot injuries or foot disease. The elephant care team must be trained to provide foot care and the elephants must be trained to accept that care. Each elephant institution must have a written protocol for foot care. If foot injuries or foot disease are present, a current treatment regimen must be in place.

Measurement: Elephant feet are inspected and in good condition, needing only periodic pad and nail trimming. Records and protocols on file and foot care/treatment protocols are reviewed. Implementation of the protocols/treatment is evident in condition of the elephant's feet.

Explanation: An institution's foot care protocol should include daily cleaning and inspection of all elephants' feet (Csuti et al., 2001). If foot injury or disease is present, evidence should be documented of the institution's review of the potential cause or causes of the foot injury or foot disease. Where causes are identified, changes made to address these causes must be documented.

Taking baseline foot radiographs or thermographs of all adult elephants and keeping them on file is suggested. In some cases, it may be appropriate to annually monitor selected elephants (i.e., those that have a history of chronic foot problems). Recent studies have shown that decreased time spent on hard substrates will enhance foot and musculoskeletal health, and thereby enhance elephant welfare (Miller et al., 2018).

E.3.3.2.3 Skin care

Standard: Elephants must be trained to accept regular skin care and the elephant care team must be trained to provide that care.

Measurement: Elephant skin is inspected and in good condition. Each elephant facility must have a written protocol for routine skin care and show evidence of its implementation. These records and protocols are reviewed.

Explanation: An elephant's skin must be thoroughly inspected on a daily basis and cared for as needed through bathing, removal of dead skin, and treatment of dry skin or other skin problems. The elephant's skin should be supple, free of dead skin buildup, not cracked or dry and free of folliculitis.

E.3.3.2.4 Daily exercise

Standard: An exercise program must be in place for the herd as a whole or for each individual elephant. Each elephant institution must have a written protocol for routine exercise and show evidence of its implementation.

Measurement: Exercise protocols are reviewed, with special attention given to both the amount and need for elephant care professional directed exercise and the normal daily non-elephant care professional directed activity patterns of the elephants.

Explanation: There is no current data to indicate what amount of activity, or what daily walking distance is most appropriate for optimal elephant welfare. The basic needs may be different for each elephant. Since the goal is healthy, socially well-adapted elephants, how it is achieved is less important than that it is achieved.

The weight and/or the body condition score, combined with the absence of disease, foot

and leg problems are the indicators that the amount of exercise is sufficient for the elephant on their specific diet in their specific situation. As with humans or any other species, overall health is a combination of factors, including exercise, diet and psychological factors.

E.3.3.2.5 Husbandry

Standard: All elephants must be trained to reliably present the behaviors listed on the AZA Standard Elephant Program Behavioral Components checklist. All elephants must be trained to permit a complete body exam daily and to allow successful completion of all necessary care and husbandry procedures.

Measurement: The AZA Standard Elephant Program Behavioral Components checklist should be completed by the institution annually, and maintained for review during accreditation inspection.

Explanation: The key to keeping elephants healthy and treating them when they are sick relies on the ability to monitor, test and administer health care and treatment. Proactive training makes monitoring elephant health possible and makes diagnostic testing and therapeutic treatment in times of compromised health less stressful for the elephant and the elephant care team.

Checklist of AZA Standard Elephant Program Behavioral Components

If individual elephants vary, please note the number of elephants that fall into each category.

BEHAVIOR	NOT TRAINED	IN TRAINING	DATA COMPLETE & RELIABLE
Eye exam			
Ear exam			
Mouth exam			
Tooth exam			
Tusk/Tush exam			
Vaginal exam			
Bathe/scrub skin			
Treat skin			
Trim all feet			
Tusk/Tush trim			
Blood collection (note frequency of collections)			
Urine collection			
Rectal palpation			
Rectal fluids			
Enema			
Transrectal ultrasound			
Accepts injections			
Accepts oral medications			
Trunk wash for TB testing			
Foot x-ray			
Separation			
Leg restraint			
Allows husbandry procedures to be performed by staff			
Allows veterinary procedures to be performed by vet			
Enters chute (remains inside with doors closed)			
Allows chute walls to move			

E.3.3.2.6 Elephant Restraint Devices (ERD)

Standard: All elephant facilities should have an ERD. If a facility does not have an ERD, the elephant care team must demonstrate a method of restraint that allows necessary husbandry, veterinary, and reproductive procedures to occur in a safe and efficient manner for all elephants in their collection. Use of the ERD must not be weather dependent.

Measurement: ERD in place and functional. All elephants are acclimated to enter the ERD and remain inside confidently with doors closed, or the institution demonstrates its protocols and ability to do ERD functions without the ERD.

Explanation: ERDs must effectively restrict the movement of an elephant while simultaneously allowing elephant care team access to the elephant for veterinary procedures. ERDs must be able to comfortably contain an elephant for prolonged veterinary or husbandry procedures

E.3.3.2.7 Restraint

Standard: All elephants must be trained to allow restraint using ERDs, rope, chain, or other materials of sufficient strength. Elephants must not be subjected to unnecessary prolonged restraint. Any planned restraint over two hours must be approved by the institution's administration, elephant management team, and veterinarian. The institution's safety committee and/or the institutional animal welfare committee should be included in the decision-making process. All new construction and major renovations must be designed in a manner that minimizes the regular need for tethering.

Measurement: Protocols for tethering are reviewed.

Explanation: Tethering is an acceptable method of temporary restraint for elephants. Prolonged tethering may be necessary for transport and for veterinary treatment. Elephants can be easily trained to accept tethering. For additional information, refer to the AZA Transport Guidelines for Elephants (Miller, 2018d).

E.3.3.2.8 Immobilization

Standard: Veterinary protocols must be established for potential immobilization of an elephant, either for standing or full sedation.

Measurement: Veterinary immobilization protocols are reviewed.

Explanation: The Elephant TAG/SSP Veterinary Advisor can be consulted for the most current and effective sedation and immobilization techniques.

E.3.3.2.9 Management of neonates and geriatric animals

Standard: Neonatal exam and hand-rearing protocols must be part of the written birth protocol, even though a neonatal exam and hand-rearing may not be necessary. Management and treatment plans for each geriatric elephant should be developed by the elephant care team and veterinarian and revised regularly as the elephant ages.

Measurement: Birth protocol is reviewed, including plans for neonatal exam and hand-rearing. Geriatric management and treatment plan is reviewed. Annual reports of births and mortalities are reviewed.

Explanation: There are hand-rearing protocols available from successful breeding institutions. Specific treatment for geriatric elephants will be developed with coordination of the veterinary and management teams.

E.3.3.2.10 Management during pregnancy

Standard: Pregnant elephants must have a written diet and exercise program to prevent excessive weight gain during pregnancy.

Measurement: Birth protocol is reviewed, including plan for exercise and diet management during pregnancy.

Explanation: An elephant that is overweight at time of parturition significantly increases the risk of dystocia and other parturition complications. Elephants in good body condition should gain no more than 5% of their body weight during pregnancy. Nulliparous females over age 24 years have had limited success delivering calves and have experienced dystocias and retained fetuses. Institutions should take all factors into account and research the potential challenges and options available when considering breeding elephants in this reproductive class.

E.3.4 Reproduction

E.3.4.1 Reproductive assessments and monitoring

Standard: Each male and female elephant of potential reproductive age must have an initial reproductive assessment and follow-up assessments on a regular basis by transrectal ultrasound (Hermes et al., 2000; Hildebrandt et al., 2000a; Hildebrandt et al., 2000b), and all female elephants of potential reproductive age must have their progesterone cycle monitored to verify current reproductive status and assess overall reproductive health (Brown, 1998; Brown 2000; Brown et al., 2016).

Measurement: There should be evidence that samples for reproductive assessment for females are taken and analyzed at least annually. Semen samples collected from bulls regularly (annually where practical) should exist to document current viability. AZA Elephant SSP Breeding and Transfer recommendations are followed.

Explanation: Exceptions for reproductive assessment include elephants with known reproductive problems, actively breeding elephants, or those with documented medical/behavioral conditions that preclude them from breeding.

E.3.4.2 Birth protocols

Standard: Breeding facilities must have a birth protocol in place, which provides for care of the mother during pregnancy and parturition and safety of the calf immediately after birth.

Measurement: Birth protocol is reviewed.

Explanation: In order to avoid incidents of calf injury or unsuccessful births due to lack of a plan or lack of preparedness, a detailed birth protocol must be written for all pregnant elephants. For first time mothers, this protocol must include the ability to restrain the mother and retrieve the calf at parturition if necessary. The protocol must include methods of care of the mother in case of birth complications requiring veterinary intervention. There are several excellent birth protocols available from successful breeding institutions.

E.3.4.3 Hand-rearing and reintroduction protocols

Standard: Written hand-rearing and reintroduction management plans should be included as a part of the birth protocol.

Measurement: Birth protocol is reviewed, including plans for hand-rearing and reintroduction management.

Explanation: Protocols must be in place and supplies on hand well in advance (at least 30 days) of earliest expected parturition date in case hand-rearing is necessary. Every attempt should be made to reunite an elephant calf with its mother as soon as safely possible following birth.

E.4. Behavior management

Standard: All institutions must have an elephant training program in place which allows elephant care professionals and veterinarians to accomplish all necessary elephant care and management procedures. A training program must lead to reliable accomplishment of Checklist of AZA Standard Elephant Program Behavioral Components (See E.3.3.2.5 Husbandry).

Measurement: Review training and health records and observe elephant/staff interactions to determine if elephant training program is successful and that elephant care needs are being successfully met.

Explanation: Elephant training terminology and descriptions of specific trained behaviors are outlined in the Checklist of AZA Standard Elephant Program Behavioral Components (See 3.3.2.5 Husbandry). This checklist includes behaviors that every elephant and elephant care professional must know so that basic husbandry and veterinary practices can be accomplished.

E.4.1 Daily behavioral assessment

Standard: A daily behavioral assessment will be conducted for each elephant and all unusual behavior or any instances of aggression should be documented.

Measurement: Daily records and incident reports are reviewed, with special attention given to the presence of normal behaviors occurring at a normal frequency, including affiliation and aggression.

Explanation: A daily assessment should be made and any unusual behavior (including instances of aggression) should be immediately reported to the supervisor, and recorded in a daily log, and/or on an AZA Elephant Incident Report Form, if appropriate. A standardized AZA Elephant Behavior List has been developed to provide elephant care professionals with a consistent, systematic set of labels for describing behavior in the daily records or report, in elephant profiles, during conversations with coworkers, during regular elephant team meetings, and when making elephant management decisions about individual elephants in their care. All AZA institutions are encouraged to use this terminology to improve accuracy and consistency in behavioral observations within institutions and across institutions. Assessing elephant behavior, identifying the precursors to aggression and the proper use of the AZA Elephant Behavior List is included in the course curriculum of PEM I and II.

E.4.2 Successful methodologies for managing elephants

E.4.2.1 Elephant management in AZA facilities

Standard: All elephant care professionals at AZA facilities with elephants must not share the same unrestricted space with elephants, except for certain, limited exceptions.

Measurement: Elephant care is provided without sharing space, except for certain, limited exceptions as defined by AZA.

Explanation: Restricted contact is defined as managing elephants with a primary containment barrier between human and elephant and/or with tethers in place. Tethers may be used and if used must be placed on at least two (2) legs of the elephant (one front and one back). Tethers must be placed on the elephant from outside of the primary containment barrier prior to entry into the shared space. Routine husbandry should not be performed exclusively while elephants are on tethers.

In order to maximize safety while working in restricted contact, elephant care professionals must always monitor the position of themselves and their elephants(s) in relation to the

barrier/tethers, the reach of the elephant(s) especially the reach of the trunk, and the behavior of the elephant(s). The head and/or torso of a person must never cross the plane of the primary containment barrier unless the elephant is on tethers.

When there are crises or medical emergencies or for birth management, written shared space protocols used with dangerous animals apply. Examples include critically ill elephants, elephant down, hand rearing and/or training of elephant calves (up to 24 months of age) and in rare cases geriatric cows that require special care as prescribed by the veterinarian. The following are not considered to be crises or medical emergencies and therefore are not exceptions: trunk washes, foot care, blood draw, research, exercise, bathing, donor/guest interaction, routine husbandry, calf training (after 24 months of age), transportation, and routine care and facilities maintenance (e.g. feeding and cleaning of the barn and/or habitat).

E.4.2.1.1 Elephant Guide

Standard: The elephant guide specifically known as a “bull-hook” or “ankus” (herein referred to as “elephant guide”) must not be used in the care and management of elephants, or in routine training.

Measurement: Daily elephant care and management and routine training are provided by elephant care professionals without the use of an elephant guide.

Explanation: Modern elephant programs are constantly evolving and improving as research advances the scientific knowledge of elephant management and care. The “bull-hook” or “ankus” is considered to be an antiquated tool no longer used for training in professional elephant care programs. Elephant care professionals have a wide range of other tools and training methods, including targets, clickers, and whistles. Elephant care professionals should be instructed and knowledgeable in the proper use of the tools used by their institutions. The PEM I and II course curricula include information about all of the training tools used in AZA-accredited institutions, and will introduce new training tools as they are developed.

In general, the elephant guide consists of a handle with a tapered curved metal guide tip attached on one end. Handle length may be 200 cm (79”) or shorter and the diameter may vary between 1.25-3 cm (0.5-1.2”). Fiberglass, wood, lexon, delrin, and nylon are preferred materials for the handle. The length of the guide tip is between 1.9-3.8 cm (0.75-1.5”). The width of the guide tip is 0.95 cm (0.375”) or wider. Stainless steel and titanium are preferred materials for the guide tip. This information is for illustrative purposes only and is not meant to provide explicit parameters for what qualifies as an elephant guide.

E.4.2.2 Training methods

Standard: All institutions must have an elephant training program in place which allows elephant care professionals and veterinarians the ability to accomplish all necessary elephant care and management procedures. Each institution will adopt and implement an institutional training methodology that promotes the safest environment for elephant care professionals and ensures high quality care and management of the elephants for routine husbandry, medical management, physical well-being, and overall elephant welfare. All institutions must train their elephant care professionals to manage and care for elephants with barriers and/or tethers in place that provide occupational safety. A training program must be consistent with the PEM I course curriculum and must lead to reliable accomplishment of Checklist of AZA Standard Elephant Program Behavioral Components (See E.3.3.2.5 Husbandry).

Measurement: Institutions must be able to demonstrate that all AZA Standards for Elephant Management & Care are met and all behaviors on the Checklist of AZA Standard

Elephant Program Behavioral Components (See E.3.3.2.5 Husbandry) can be accomplished. Institutions must demonstrate that elephant care professionals are trained to manage and care for elephants with barriers and/or tethers in place.

Explanation: Appropriate elephant training may employ a wide range of training aids or tools, such as targets, acceptable guides, clickers, whistles, and elephant care professionals should be instructed and knowledgeable in the proper use of the tools used by their institutions. The PEM I and II course curricula include information about all of the training tools used in AZA. (Also see E.4.2.1.1, Elephant Guide, above).

E.4.2.3 Elephant management policy

Standard: All institutions must have a written Elephant Management Policy. This policy must be consistent with AZA Standards for Elephant Management and Care.

An institution's Elephant Management Policy must include a description of the following key components.

a) Elephant program's missions and goals.

b) Elephant care and management policies, including guidelines and protocols for care and welfare, training, and transport.

c) Plan to separate elephants from each other, safely manage elephants that are aggressive towards other elephants, safely move elephants from one location to another, and safely manage elephants that are aggressive toward humans.

d) Clear protocols for frequency and duration when elephant care professionals and elephants may share the same unrestricted space.

e) Personnel management policies, including guidelines for elephant care professional safety.

f) Individual elephant profiles and incident reports for all cases in which elephants show aggression toward humans, regardless if any injury actually resulted.

g) Emergency response protocols. Institutions must be able to demonstrate readiness to respond to an emergency, such as a human injury, an elephant escape, or to natural disasters.

h) Written protocol for routine foot care and evidence of its implementation

i) Written enrichment plan and evidence of its implementation

j) Written exercise plan and evidence of its implementation

Measurement: An updated institutional Elephant Management Policy exists and all records and annual reports pertaining to elephant care and or management are reviewed.

Explanation: This policy should be developed with input from many parties, including elephant care professionals, managers, curators, veterinarians, safety experts and directors. It should follow a thoughtful process taking into account the animals, personnel, and facility.

E.4.3 Introductions

Standard: Institutions must have the ability to manage elephant introductions and separations. Protocols must be in place for safe and effective introductions and control of potential social issues.

Measurement: There must be appropriate facilities and protocols in place for all phases of elephant introductions. Institution must be able to demonstrate their ability to introduce and separate elephants.

Explanation: All institutions must have the expertise and the appropriate facilities to be able to manage both elephant introductions and separations, including introductions/separations of a new female to a herd and, if the institution is a breeding facility, females to males for breeding, newborn calf to its mother, and calf and mother to the herd. When doing full introductions, it is important to proceed gradually and maintain the ability to intervene in any aggressive escalation. Institutions should be able to provide sufficient open or barrier enhanced space for one elephant to avoid another and multiple gates to facilitate safe separation of the elephants. Some elephants are able to very rapidly move through the introductory stages and may become frustrated or increasingly aggressive if the introduction moves too slowly. Hence, continual behavioral assessment of the introduction is important.

E.4.4 Enrichment programs

Standard: All institutions must have a written environmental enrichment plan for their elephants and show evidence of implementation.

Measurement: Enrichment plan and records of daily enrichment activities are reviewed. Enrichment programs are behavior based and a cogent and effective method for recording, evaluating, and assessing the behavioral impact of enrichment is in place.

Explanation: An effective enrichment program, including environmental, social, and cognitive enrichment, should promote species-appropriate behaviors (Greco et al., 2016a). A useful resource on enrichment programs for elephants can be found at www.animalenrichment.org.

E.5. Management Structure, Safety and Program Assessment

E.5.1 Management structure, technical skills and competencies

Standard: Each institution must demonstrate a management structure which provides (1) elephant care professional training; (2) program development and maintenance; and (3) communication with others about the elephant program. The elephant program's manager(s) and elephant care professionals must demonstrate knowledge about all emergency protocols and continually improve elephant management techniques as the industry standards evolve. Overall responsibility for the program must be clearly defined.

All elephant care professionals, managers, and directors must complete PEM I within three (3) calendar years from the date they begin working in that capacity. Veterinarians are encouraged but not required to take PEM I. All elephant managers must complete PEM II within three (3) calendar years from the date they begin working in that capacity.

Measurement: Institutional elephant management responsibility is clearly defined and understood by elephant manager(s) and elephant care professionals.

Explanation: Most institutions typically assign one person to be the Elephant Manager, however, some institutions have more than one person sharing the duties described above.

E.5.1.1 Elephant care professional safety proficiency

Standard: Each institution must implement standardized methods and protocols to evaluate and maintain records of each elephant care professional's safety-proficiency, in a manner that integrates his/her experience level with the specific behavior profiles of the elephants in his/her care.

Measurement: Standardized elephant care professional training program materials are reviewed. Written evaluations of each elephant care professional's safety-proficiency exist and are up to date.

Explanation: An elephant care professional training and safety proficiency program should

include regular check-ins with the elephant manager(s) and should assess the progress of all elephant care professionals in safely handling the elephants at his or her institution.

E.5.2 Animal and elephant care professional safety

Standard: A minimum of two qualified elephant care professionals must be present within visual and auditory contact during any contact with elephants and any time an elephant care professional is within trunk's reach of an elephant.

Measurement: Review incidents of elephant care professional injury during interaction with elephants. Expectation of two-person minimum is clearly defined and understood by elephant care professionals.

Explanation: A qualified elephant care professional is a person the institution acknowledges as a trained, responsible individual, capable of and specifically experienced in the training and care of elephants. The two qualified elephant keepers should be in close enough proximity to one another to allow the second person to intervene if required. Each institution must use their standardized methods and protocols to evaluate the performance of each elephant care professional and deem when his/her experience level is sufficient to care for the institution's elephants.

E.5.2.1 Elephant aggression

Standard: Any elephant that displays aggression towards an elephant care provider(s) must be immediately documented.

Measurement: Daily reports, elephant profiles, and incident reports should be reviewed.

Explanation: AZA is committed to maximizing the safety of elephant care professionals while continuing to advance the care and welfare of the elephants. Individual elephants occasionally display aggression towards elephant care professionals which may warrant incident reports.

E.5.3 Visitor safety

Standard: Elephant areas must be designed to ensure that unsupervised physical contact is not possible between the visitors and the elephants. Any physical contact between visitors and the elephants must be directly supervised and under the control of qualified elephant care professionals.

Measurement: No incidents of visitor injury or inappropriate contact with elephants.

Explanation: All elephant/human interaction must be supervised by qualified elephant care professionals.

E.5.4 Program assessment

Standard: Using the AZA Elephant Program Annual Report Form, each institution must perform an annual review of its overall elephant management program.

Measurement: Annual reports are submitted by 15 January each year and, if feedback is provided by the AZA Accreditation Commission, the institution is addressing the feedback appropriately.

Explanation: Elephant management continues to evolve as new information, knowledge and technologies become available. An annual review of the entire program will assist in identifying areas of unwanted change, assessing programs strengths and needs, and developing action plans to meet the goals of the program. The AZA Accreditation Commission and/or an AZA team member will follow up where institutional reports indicate challenges in meeting the elephant safety standards.

E.6. Conservation, Education, and Research

E.6.1 Conservation and research activities

Standard: All institutions should contribute to in situ and ex situ conservation and research efforts.

Measurement: Records of participation in situ and ex situ conservation and research efforts should be reviewed.

Explanation: Institutions should contribute to elephant conservation through public education, scientific research, and the support of field conservation. Elephants are an important flagship species and the cornerstone of many members' African and Asian areas. Every institution should contribute in some way to in situ conservation of elephants and their habitats (Hutchins and Smith, 2000). AZA members are strongly encouraged to provide financial, personnel, logistical, and other support for priority research and conservation initiatives, such as AZA SAFE and International Elephant Foundation. Every institution should contribute in some way to elephant research activities (Hutchins and Smith, 2000). Involvement in one or more of the following disciplines is strongly recommended: behavior, cognition, reproduction, communication, enrichment, health (disease/pathology, nutrition), and education.

E.6.2 Education programs

Standard: Every institution should institute a program to educate zoo visitors about elephant and elephant conservation issues (Hutchins and Smith, 2000).

Measurement: Records of elephant education program should be reviewed.

Explanation: Assistance is available from the Elephant TAG/SSP Education Advisor. Every institution should have up-to-date educational graphics and information about elephants on display to the public.

E.7. Cooperative management

Standard: All acquisition, disposition, transfer, or breeding of elephants in AZA institutions is subject to approval of the AZA Elephant TAG/SSP. All breeding, management and transfer recommendations of the AZA Elephant TAG/SSP should be followed.

Measurement: Records of participation and cooperation with the Elephant TAG/SSP should be reviewed.

Explanation: The goals and mission of the AZA Elephant TAG/SSP will only be met if each AZA institution with elephants honors its commitment as either a holding or breeding facility (Smith and Hutchins, 2000; Wiese, 2000; Weise and Hutchins, 1994; Weise and Olson, 2000; Faust & Marti, 2011a; Faust & Marti 2011b). Each institution must make every effort to abide by the TAG's Regional Collection Plan (Fischer, 2017) and SSP breeding and transfer recommendations (Fischer et al., 2017; Hagan et al., 2017). The success of cooperative breeding programs depends on all institutions supporting these recommendations.

References

Backues, K. and Wiedner, E. (2017). 2017 Recommendations for the Diagnosis, Management, and Treatment of Tuberculosis in Elephants in Human Care. 2017 Stakeholders Task Force on Management & Research Priorities of Tuberculosis in Elephants. International Elephant Foundation.

Brown, J. (1998) The need for routine elephant blood draws. *Animal Keeper's Forum* 25: 357-359.

Brown, J. (2000). Reproductive endocrine monitoring of elephants: An essential tool for assisting captive management. *Zoo Biology* 19: 347-367.

Brown, J.L., Paris, S., Prado-Oviedo, N.A., Meehan, C.L., Hogan, J.N., Morfeld, K.A., and Carlstead, K. (2016). Reproductive health assessment of female elephants in North American Zoos and association of husbandry practices with reproductive dysfunction in African elephants (*Loxodonta africana*). PLoS ONE 11(7): e0145673. Doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0145673.

Csuti, B., Sargent, E.L., and Bechert, U.S., eds. 2001. *The Elephant's Foot: Prevention and Care of Foot Conditions in Captive Asian and African Elephants*. Iowa State University Press, Ames, IA.

Faust, L. and Marti, K. (2011a). Technical report on Zoo Risk modeling of the North American African elephant population. Association of Zoos and Aquariums, Taxon Advisory Group and Species Survival Plan. Lincoln Park Zoo, Chicago; 2011.

Faust, L. and Marti, K. (2011b). Technical report on Zoo Risk modeling of the North American Asian elephant population. Association of Zoos and Aquariums, Taxon Advisory Group, and Species Survival Plan. Lincoln Park Zoo, Chicago; 2011

Fischer, M. (Ed..) (2017). AZA Elephant TAG Regional Collection Plan.

Fischer, M., Gray, C., and Ray, J. (2017). Population analysis & breeding and transfer plan for the Asian Elephant Species Survival Plan. Silver Spring, MD: Association of Zoos and Aquariums

Greco, B., Meehan, C.L., Miller, L.J., Shepherdson, D.J., Morfeld, K.A., Andrews, J., Baker, A.M., Carlstead, K., and Mench, J. (2016a). Elephant management in North American zoos: Environmental enrichment, feeding, exercise, and training. PLoS ONE 11(7): e0152490. Doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0152490.

Greco, B.J., Meehan, C.L., Hogan, J.N., Leighty, K.A., Mellen, J., Mason, G.J., and Mech, J.A. (2016b). The days and nights of zoo elephants: Using epidemiology to better understand stereotypic behavior of African elephants (*Loxodonta africana*) and Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) in North American Zoos. PLoS ONE 11(7): e0144276. Doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0144276.

Hagan, D., Misek, S., and Andrews, J. (2017). Population analysis & breeding and transfer plan for the African Elephant Species Survival Plan. Silver Spring, MD: Association of Zoos and Aquariums

Hermes, R., Olson, D., Goritz, F., Brown, J.L., Schmitt, D.L., Hagan, D., Peterson, J.S., Fritsch, G., and Hildebrandt, T.B. (2000). Ultrasonography of the estrous cycle in female African elephants *(Loxotana africana*). Zoo Biology 19: 369-382.

Hildebrandt, T.B., Goritz, F., Pratt, N., Brown, J.L., Montali, R., Schmidt, D.L., Fritsch, G. and Hermes, R. (2000a). Ultrasonography of the urogential tract in elephants (*Loxotana africana* and *Elaphas maximus*): An important tool for assessing female reproductive function. Zoo Biology 19: 321-332.

Hildebrandt, T.B., Hermes, R., Pratt, N.C., Fritsch, G., Blottner, S., Schmidt, D.L., Ratanakorn, P., Brown, J.L., Reitschel, W. and Goritz, F. (2000b). Ultrasonography of the urogential tract in elephants (*Loxotana africana* and *Elephas maximus*): An important tool for assessing male reproductive function. Zoo Biology 19: 333-345.

Holdgate, M.R., Meehan, C.L., Hogan, J.N., Miller, L.J., Soltis, J., Andrews, J. and Shepherdson, D.J. (2016a). Walking behavior of zoo elephants: Associations between GPS-measured daily walking distances and environmental factors, social factors, and welfare indicators. PLoS ONE 11(7): e0150331. Doi:10.1371/journal. pone.0150331.

Holdgate, M.R., Meehan, C.L., Hogan, J.N., Miller, L.J., Rushen, J., de Passille, A.M., Soltis, J., Andrews, J., and Shepherdson, D.J. (2016b). Recumbence behavior in zoo elephants: Determination of patterns and frequency of recumbent rest and associated environmental and social factors. PLoS ONE 11(7): e0153301. Doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0153301.

Hutchins, M. and B.R. Smith. (1999). *AZA Elephant Planning Initiative: On the Future of Elephants in North American Zoos*. American Zoo and Aquarium Association, Silver Spring, MD.

Landolfi, J. (2019a). Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpesvirus (EEHV) research and necropsy protocol supplement. Available from the AZA Elephant TAG/SSP Pathology Advisor.

Landolfi, J. (2019b). Elephant TAG/SSP research and necropsy protocol. Available from the AZA Elephant TAG/SSP Pathology Advisor.

Meehan, C.L., Mench, J.A., Carlstead, K., and Hogan, J.N. (2016a). Determining connections between the daily lives of zoo elephants and their welfare: An epidemiological approach. PLoS ONE 11(7):e0158124. Doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0158124.

Meehan, C.L., Hogan, J.N., Bonaparte-Saller, M.K., Mench, J.A. (2016b). Housing and Social Environments of African (*Loxodonta africana*) and Asian (*Elephas maximus*) elephants in North American zoos. PLoS ONE 11(7): e0146703. Doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0146703.

Mikota, S.K., Sargent, E., and Ramglack, G.S. (1994). *Medical Management of the Elephant*. Indria Publishing House, West Bloomfield, MI.

Miller, M.A. (2018a). Guidelines for comprehensive elephant health monitoring program. Available from the AZA Elephant TAG/SSP Veterinary Advisor.

Miller, M.A. (2018b). Quarantine guidelines for elephants. Available from the AZA Elephant TAG/SSP Veterinary Advisor.

Miller, M.A. (2018c). Recommended elephant preshipment guidelines. Available from the AZA Elephant TAG/SSP Veterinary Advisor.

Miller, M.A. (2018d). Transport guidelines for elephants. Available from the AZA Elephant TAG/SSP Veterinary Advisor.

Miller, M.A., Hogan, J.N., and Meehan, C.L. (2016). Housing and demographic risk factors impacting foot and musculoskeletal health in African elephants (*Loxodonta africana*) and Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) in North American zoos. PLoS ONE 11(7):e0155223. Doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0155223.

Morfeld, K.A., Meehan, C.L., Hogan, J.N., and Brown, J.L. (2016). Assessment of body condition in African (*Loxodonta africana*) and Asian (*Elephas maximus*) elephants in North American zoos and management practices associated with high body condition scores. PLoS ONE 11(7): e0155146. Doi:10.1371/journal. pone.0155146.

Prado-Oviedo, N.A., Bonaparte-Saller, M.K., Malloy, E.J., Meehan, C.L., Mench, J.A., Carlstead, K., and Brown, J.L. (2016). Comparison of demographic and social life events of Asian (*Elephas maximus*) and African (*Loxodonta africana*) elephants in North American Zoos. PLoS ONE 11(7): e0154750. Doi:10.1371/journal. pone.0154750.

Rassmussen, L.E.L., Schmidt, M.J., Henneous, R., Groves, D., Daves, G.D. Jr. (1982). Asian bull elephants: Flehman-like responses to extractable components in female elephant estrus urine. *Science* 217: 159-162.

Samuel, W.M., Pybus, M.J., and Kocan, A.A. (2001). *Parasitic Diseases of Wild Mammals*. Second Edition. Iowa State University Press, Ames, IA.

Smith, B. and Hutchins, M. (2000). The value of captive breeding programmes to field conservation: Elephants as an example. Pachyderm 28: 101-109.

Sreekumar, K.P. and Nirmalan, G. (1990). Estimation of body weight in Indian elephants (*Elaphus maximus indicus*). *Veterinary Research Communication* 14: 5-17.

Ullrey, D.E., Crissey, S.D., and Hintz, H.F. (1997). Elephants: Nutrition and dietary husbandry. Fact sheet #004. *AZA Nutrition Advisory Group Handbook*. American Zoo and Aquarium Association, Bethesda, MD.

Wemmer, C., Krishnamurthy, V., Shrestha, S., Hayek, L.A., Thant, M, and Nanjappa K.A. 2006. Assessment of body condition in Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*). Zoo Biology 25(3):187-200.

Wiese, R.J. (2000). Asian elephants are not self-sustaining in North America. *Zoo Biology* 19: 299-309.

Wiese, R.J. and Hutchins, M. (1994). *Species Survival Plans: Strategies for Wildlife Conservation*. American Zoo and Aquarium Association, Bethesda, MD.

Wiese, R.J. and Olson, D. (2000). State of the North American African elephant population and projections for the future. *Zoo Biology* 19: 311-320.

Williams, J, Tollefson, T. and Valdes, E. (2014). Elephant nutrition: Current concepts and recommendations. Available upon request from AZA Elephant TAG/SSP Nutrition Advisor.

AZA STANDARDS FOR CETACEAN CARE & WELLBEING

Approved July 2017

Introduction

These standards are in addition to AZA general *Accreditation Standards and Related Policies,* all of which remain applicable. Institutions that include cetaceans in their care (whales, dolphins, porpoises) must follow these AZA Standards for Cetacean Care & Wellbeing. For reference, general standards that relate to individual cetacean standards are included in brackets at the end of the cetacean standard. There may be other general standards that apply in addition to those that are bracketed. All general standards can be found on pages 11 – 44 of this booklet.

C.1. Responsible Population Management

General Considerations:

In addition to this section, the institution must meet, at minimum, all requirements contained in AZA's Policy on Responsible Population Management (RPM Policy) [pages 95 – 103]. Documentation records for the acquisition of all cetaceans must be provided as evidence that no animals were originally obtained from a drive fishery.

C.1.1. Acquisition

C.1.1.1. The institution must provide for each animal's proper care and management in accordance with AZA standards.

C.1.1.2. Any cetacean may only be added to an AZA-accredited institution's care by means of current best practices. Institutions should not acquire animals collected from any drive fishery post 2004. However, AZA-accredited institutions must consider providing housing and care to cetaceans in critical need regardless of collection origin. [See also General Standard 1.3.2]

C.1.1.3. The institution's responsible population management plan must prohibit the collection of cetaceans from the wild except on a case by case basis where it is essential to maintain healthy and diverse managed cetacean populations, or for rescues, or as part of a threatened or endangered species conservation program. [See also General Standard 1.3.2]

Explanation: AZA-accredited institutions must comply with applicable laws, and should also consider introducing and caring for non-releasable cetaceans from rescue programs.

C.1.1.4. Institutions acquiring cetaceans from the wild must prove that the population in the wild remains sustainable. [See also General Standards 1.3.2, 1.7.1]

Explanation: AZA supports environmentally sustainable and beneficial acquisition from the wild when conservation is a positive outcome.

C.1.1.5. The institution must maintain detailed and complete acquisition and chain of custody records through disposition, consistent with the AZA Policy on Responsible Population Management ("RPM Policy"). [See also General Standards 1.3.2, 1.4.5, 1.4.7]

C.1.2. Transfer

C.1.2.1. Cetaceans must only be transferred or loaned pursuant to compliance with the AZA Policy on Responsible Population Management ("RPM Policy"). [See also General Standard 1.3.2]

C.1.2.2. In making the decision to transfer any cetacean to a non-AZA accredited facility, the institution

must comply strictly with the specific procedures and requirements of the AZA RPM Policy, including documentation that the receiving non-AZA institution can provide proper care and has a record of promoting animal wellbeing. [See also General Standard 1.3.2]

C.1.2.3. Unless a cetacean is rescued, rehabilitated, and then released back into its natural habitat under the direction of the national or local authority, cetaceans cannot be released to the wild. This does not apply to cetaceans that are part of a permitted and scientifically-based reintroduction program with the ultimate goal of sustaining a threatened or endangered population. [See also General Standard 1.3.2]

Explanation: All relevant local, state/provincial, and federal laws and/orregulations for release into the wild must be followed. In cases where an AZA standard is more stringent than existing law, the AZA standard must be met.

C.2. Conservation, Research, and Education

General Considerations:

Conservation efforts are a priority for AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums. AZA institutions that house cetaceans have a unique opportunity to educate and connect guests with these animals and their ecosystems. Cetacean holding members also have the professional skills and resources to facilitate both *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation research and initiatives that support marine mammals in their ecosystems. Participation in these types of activities should be demonstrated and should be in proportion to the size and scope of the institution. [See also General Standards 3.1.1, 3.2.1, 3.3.4]

C.2.1. Conservation and Research

C.2.1.1. AZA-accredited institutions should participate in or support *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation and research efforts for cetaceans. [See also General Standards3.2.1, 3.3.4]

Explanation: AZA institutions are strongly encouraged to provide financial, personnel, logistical, and other support for priority research and conservation initiatives.

C.2.2. Education

C.2.2.1. The institution must have education programs about cetaceans to improve public understanding and appreciation for these animals and their ecosystems. [See also General Standards 4.2.1, 4.3.1]

C.2.2.2. Education programs about cetaceans must be based on current scientific knowledge. [See also General Standard 4.3.1]

C.2.2.3. Education programs about cetaceans must be under the direction of a paid staff person who is knowledgeable about cetaceans and has a working rapport with the facility's zoological experts in cetacean care and wellbeing. [See also General Standard 4.2.2]

C.3. Care for Cetaceans

General Considerations:

Animal care and management, welfare assessment, and sustainable population management are among the most critical and complex tasks performed by AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums. Administration and management of husbandry programs must be guided by modern professional principles establishing plans and procedures to execute those functions. Cetaceans have both general care requirements similar to all other mammals and some that are specific to their species. All AZA-accredited institutions must uphold a commitment to provide for the wellbeing of the animals, and must invest in the resources necessary to properly care for the species they foster.

C.3.1. Food/Nutrition

C.3.1.1. Cetaceans must be provided with appropriate nutrition. A consistent review of food intake vs. body weight (body condition/score) is recommended. [See also General Standard 2.6.2]

C.3.2. Veterinary Program

C.3.2.1. A veterinarian with experience in cetacean medicine must be on call at all times. Physical examinations must be performed regularly, as prescribed by the veterinarian (at least annually) on each cetacean residing at the institution, and regular visual examinations (at least quarterly) must be performed by the veterinarian. Medical imaging equipment in the form of ultrasound and radiography should be readily available. [See also General Standards 2.0.2, 2.1.2, 2.3.2]

Explanation: As with all other preventative care programs, at minimum, exams must include food intake vs. body weight and general body condition, blood sampling for hematology and chemistry, and all other lab tests deemed appropriate by the attending veterinarian in collaboration with curatorial staff.

C.3.2.2. Physiological values and serum banks should be established for each cetacean residing at the institution. [See also General Standard 1.4.8]

C.3.2.3. Health, medical and husbandry records are covered under the general AZA accreditation standards, section 1.4 [see page 12].

C.3.2.4. AZA-accredited institutions must disinfect and maintain cetacean handling equipment and all related areas. [See also General Standards 10.1.0, 10.1.1, 10.2.0]

C.3.2.5. The institution must comply with the applicable sections on quarantine of the most recent edition of the *Guidelines for Zoo and Aquarium Veterinary Medical Programs and Veterinary Hospitals*, published by the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians (AAZV) http://www.aazv.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=839. [See also General Standard 2.0.1]

C.4. Cetacean and Guest Interactive Programs

General Considerations:

The AZA recognizes the value and positive impact of interactive and ambassador animal programs. Cetacean interactive programs provide a unique opportunity for guests to engage and connect with whales and dolphins, and to appreciate the behaviors and characteristics of these animals. Program development

and management must be conducted in a way that prioritizes animal and guest safety, as well as maximizes opportunities for guest education and experience. The following standards apply to an in-water interactive program where one or more guests are entering the water with the animals.

C.4.1. Interactive programs must be managed in areas that include open spaces where the animals can swim away from program participants if they choose. [See also General Standards 1.5.2.2, 1.5.4]

C.4.2. The amount of time each cetacean participates in interactive program activities must be determined by the managing curator or paid supervisory staff member based on a number of factors, including the behavioral observation of the animal. Cetaceans undergoing medical treatment may only participate in interactive programs with the approval of the attending veterinarian. [See also General Standard 1.5.4]

C.4.3. Proper training of cetaceans that participate in guest interactive programs must take place at all AZA-accredited institutions and be under the supervision of qualified paid staff with appropriate training and experience. Paid staff must manage the interaction between animals and guests, and must be prepared to stop the interaction should the situation warrant. [See also General Standards 1.5.4, 1.5.12, 1.6.4]

C.4.4. The ratio of guests to animals should be determined by the type of interactive program being offered, and must be approved by the managing curator or paid supervisory staff. [See also General Standard 1.5.4]

C.4.5. The ratio of paid staff to cetaceans during interactive programs should be 1:1. [See also General Standards 1.5.4, 1.5.13, 11.4.1, 11.5.3]

Explanation: The behavior of each individual animal and guest may vary at any given time, requiring supervisory staff to focus on many different factors simultaneously.

C.4.6. In addition to a 1:1 ratio of paid staff to cetaceans (see 4.5. above) there should be at least one additional paid staff member assigned to provide safety oversight of all interactions during each session. The number of safety observers should be based on the number of guests and animals participating. Safety observers, dedicated solely to the task, must have an unobstructed view of the interactions at all times. [See also General Standards 1.5.4, 1.5.13, 11.4.1, 11.5.3]

Explanation: The safety observer(s) must provide oversight throughout the interaction to assure that encounters are conducted in a safe manner for all involved.

C.4.7. Interactive programming must include an educational component. Guests should also receive instructions about appropriate behavior, and broader warnings that feeding, approaching, or swimming with cetaceans in the wild can harm both the cetaceans and humans, and is illegal in waters of some countries including the United States. [See also General Standards 1.5.3]

C.5. Reproduction and Perinatal Care

General Considerations:

The success of cooperative breeding programs is a fundamental AZA priority. Genetic diversity and demographic stability are vital to the population sustainability of species under human care. In many instances, they are also vital to the survival of a species worldwide. To focus on these twin goals, AZA has long required members to participate fully and cooperatively in the scientifically managed breeding of

hundreds of species. These basic principles apply to cetacean-holding institutions.

A small number of jurisdictions prohibit breeding of certain cetaceans. AZA opposes government breeding bans on AZA-accredited institutions. Government bans are contrary to modern science, hinder vital reproductive, behavioral, and other scientific research that can be essential to the survival of a species, and are inconsistent with the long-term wellbeing of the animals in human care and in the wild. Members in these jurisdictions cannot legally comply with the standards in this section 5 but must comply with all other AZA standards.

C.5.1. The institution must follow a written breeding plan to optimize the population sustainability of the species in collaboration with other cetacean-holding institutions. [See also General Standard 3.3.2]

C.5.2. Institutions engaged in cetacean reproduction should have paid staff with expertise in cetacean breeding.

C.5.3. Institutions engaged in cetacean reproduction must have facilities appropriately sized and designed to facilitate nursing, calf rearing, and separation from other animals if necessary. [See also General Standards 1.5.2]

Explanation: Habitats housing females with calves must have sufficient straight-line glide paths for nursing, based on the professional judgment of the managing curator or paid supervisory staff and the attending veterinarian.

C.5.4. The institution must follow a detailed birth protocol and contingency plan which provides for the care of the mother during pregnancy and parturition and safety and care for the calf.

C.6. Behavioral Management and Training

General Considerations:

AZA considers behavioral management and applied animal training through the use of positive reinforcement to be critical and integral to maximizing the wellbeing of cetaceans.

C.6.1. The institution must engage all cetaceans in a behavior management program that enhances their care and wellbeing. [See also General Standard 1.6.4]

Explanation: Proper management programs should be individually as well as group based. Animal training techniques must be accomplished through positive reinforcement and operant conditioning that are designed to improve the animal's psychological and physical wellbeing.

C.7. Environment

General Considerations:

The management of water and environmental quality in cetacean habitats should meet the basic physiological needs of the species. Consideration should be given to contemporary and emerging scientific understanding of best practices in cetacean husbandry.

While zoos and aquariums may be required to meet minimum space government standards such as those of the U.S. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), AZA seeks to enhance cetacean wellbeing by focusing on output based welfare standards. AZA strongly supports scientifically based research that aims to optimize animal wellbeing.

There is considerable variation in the design of water treatment systems, and the establishment of optimum water parameters should be based on the physiological needs of the animals and the effectiveness of the water processing techniques involved.

Water systems of cetacean habitats can be open (flow-through), closed or semi-closed.

In open systems, water enters from a natural source or municipal line, passes through the habitat and exits as waste water into a natural source or municipal sewage system. Open systems typically do not require mechanical filtration, but filters or screens may be added to improve water clarity and reduce intake of fouling organisms or organic material.

Semi-closed systems rely on a lower replacement of habitat water which necessitates both filtration and water treatment to maintain a healthy environment for the animals.

Closed systems require the most intensive water treatment since virtually all of the water is reused or recirculated. Processes may include disinfection, temperature control, removal of solids, and color reduction.

C.7.1. Space

C.7.1.1. Habitats must provide consideration of the 3-dimensional space use, and provide sufficient space and environmental complexity to stimulate and promote natural behavioral activities and social interactions, resulting in healthy and socially-adapted cetaceans. [See also General Standards 1.5.1, 1.5.2, 10.3.3]

Explanation: Habitats must provide sufficient space so that the animal can make normal postural and social adjustments with adequate freedom of movement to be able to demonstrate species appropriate behaviors that promote enhanced wellbeing.

Space is one of the most difficult measures to standardize. There are no definitive scientific data which clearly define the amount of space needed for a cetacean to be healthy. Species-specific needs should dictate the size and architecture of the habitat required to enhance the animal's physical, psychological, and behavioral well-being. In-house experience and the experiences of other institutions, field biologists, or other experts should be considered in determining the best designs to meet these needs.

It is the quality of both the space and overall programmatic approach to good cetacean management that determines adequacy of the facility, not simply the square footage/volume of the habitat. Thus, if the cetaceans are healthy and socially adapted, then what is being provided meets the standard. It is inaccurate to say that because a facility has a certain amount of space it has good cetacean management.

C.7.1.2. Cetacean habitats must be designed to maintain cetaceans in appropriate social groups based on current scientific knowledge. [See also General Standards 1.5.2.1, 1.5.2.2]

Explanation: Each cetacean requires an environment that allows for social contacts and positive interactions with other cetaceans. The institution must be able to mitigate situations involving incompatible animals. This may be accomplished through a number of methodologies including training, transferring animals from one habitat into another, allowing animals to separate themselves from each other, or by other means.

C.7.2. Environmental Quality

C.7.2.1. Environmental conditions for animals must be designed, constructed, and managed to promote enhanced wellbeing; animals must be protected from environmental conditions which could be detrimental to their wellbeing. [See also General Standards 1.5.7, 1.5.9, 1.5.15, 1.5.16]

Explanation: Environmental conditions to be considered include, but are not limited to, sunlight/UV exposure, temperature, air quality, water quality, and sound. Natural or anthropogenic environmental factors must be mitigated or eliminated when there is the possibility and/or evidence of potential negative impacts on the animals.

C.7.2.2. Water temperatures must be maintained within appropriate thermal tolerances for the species. [See also General Standard 1.5.2]

C.7.2.3. Indoor facilities should provide sufficient air exchanges with filtration technology appropriate to the location's outside air quality to effectively minimize exposure to particulates, chemical compounds, contaminants or pathogens that could be detrimental to the wellbeing of the animal. Institutions must implement an airborne environmental monitoring plan and mitigate concerns as deemed necessary by appropriate experts/professionals/scientific standards. [See also General Standards 1.5.2, 10.3.2]

C.7.2.4. The institution must minimize exposure of cetaceans to noises that have the potential to cause auditory discomfort or distress due to high amplitude or other characteristics. Both in-air and underwater noise must be considered in facility design for cetaceans, including the type and location of mechanical equipment, choice of habitat materials, and the sound profile of in-water equipment and activities. Noise exposure should be monitored with a system that is sensitive to the full frequency range of the species' hearing range and with systematic behavioral observations that would detect startle or avoidance behavior. [See also General Standard 1.5.2]

C.7.3. Water Quality

C.7.3.1. Cetacean habitats must be designed and constructed to minimize the unsanitary accumulation of materials that may be detrimental to the health and well-being of the animals. This should include management to reduce and eliminate debris, and the growth of opportunistic or fouling organisms that could present a physical hazard to the animals (such as mussels, barnacles, etc.). [See also General Standards 1.5.1, 1.5.2, 1.5.9]

C.7.3.2. Baseline water quality parameters for cetacean habitats with acceptable range variances appropriate to the facility and species must be established by qualified senior curatorial and veterinary staff. These parameters must meet all regulatory requirements and be sufficient to maintain the health of the animals. Routine surveillance should monitor baseline parameters and track variances and trends in deviation from baseline parameters. In addition, known and predictable habitat extremes which may be beyond established variances should be monitored (such as seasonal high and low water temperature in outdoor habitats). [See also General Standard 1.5.9]

C.7.3.3. Source water for cetacean habitats should be adjusted as needed to meet the physiological needs specific to the species, and to optimize animal wellbeing. [See also General Standards 1.5.2, 1.5.9]

C.7.3.4. Water filtration, disinfection, turnover of replacement water, and water chemistry management must be monitored and sufficient to meet the needs of the species, and must comply with acceptable parameters and ranges established by qualified senior curatorial and veterinary staff. [See also General Standard 1.5.9]

C.8. Transportation

General Considerations:

The transport of cetaceans is executed through a detailed planning process managed by curatorial staff experienced in cetacean transport and approved by a qualified veterinarian. Careful attention is placed on assuring cetacean transports are executed safely and efficiently, and consider the animals' unique physiologies and their environmental requirements. In addition to adhering to AZA's general standard on transport (see general standard 1.5.11, page 17), AZA-accredited institutions must also follow the cetacean-specific standards listed below. These standards apply to movement of cetaceans requiring more than two hours for transport from the time of removal from the habitat to the destination habitat.

AZA strongly supports the continued evolution of science to ensure continual enhancement of animal wellbeing.

C.8.1. A pre-transport examination must be conducted by a qualified veterinarian to determine if the cetacean is fit for transport. [See also General Standards 1.5.11, 2.4.2]

C.8.2. A thorough written transport plan is required prior to transport and should include, at a minimum, mode of transport, roster of transport personnel and designated responsibilities, time line, equipment list, contingency plan, and emergency contact information. [See also General Standards 1.5.11, 11.2.4]

C.8.3. Cetaceans should be monitored continuously during transport. One attending qualified paid or unpaid staff member per cetacean should be used on transports of four or less animals, with a minimum of two attending paid staff per transport, one of which includes a veterinarian. If more than four cetaceans are transported, additional qualified paid and/or unpaid staff should be added (the number to be determined by the managing curator or paid supervisory staff and the attending veterinarian). [See also General Standard 1.5.11]

C.8.4. Cetaceans should be properly secured, in open-top containers with the appropriate amount of water for proper health conditions. In the event of emergency and/or rescue situations alternate methods may be considered as approved by the attending veterinarian. [See also General Standards 1.5.11, 10.3.3]

C.8.5. Water parameters, air temperature, and cabin pressure should be dictated by the approving veterinarian and managed appropriately by the transport supervisor. [See also General Standard 1.5.11]

END

Related Policies

AMBASSADOR ANIMAL POLICY

Revised and approved by the AZA Board of Directors – July 2022
Modified from "Program Animal" to "Ambassador Animal" to avoid confusion with "Animal Programs"; approved by the CEC; no change to meaning of these terms – January 2015
Updated and approved by the Board – July 2008 & June 2011
Originally approved by the AZA Board of Directors – 2003

The Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) recognizes many benefits of ambassador animal presentations, including elements of public education that inspire our visitors and community members to take action to better care for animals and conserve the natural world. An explanation of the value and impact of ambassador animal presentations can be found in the AZA Conservation Education Committee's "Ambassador Animal Position Statement."

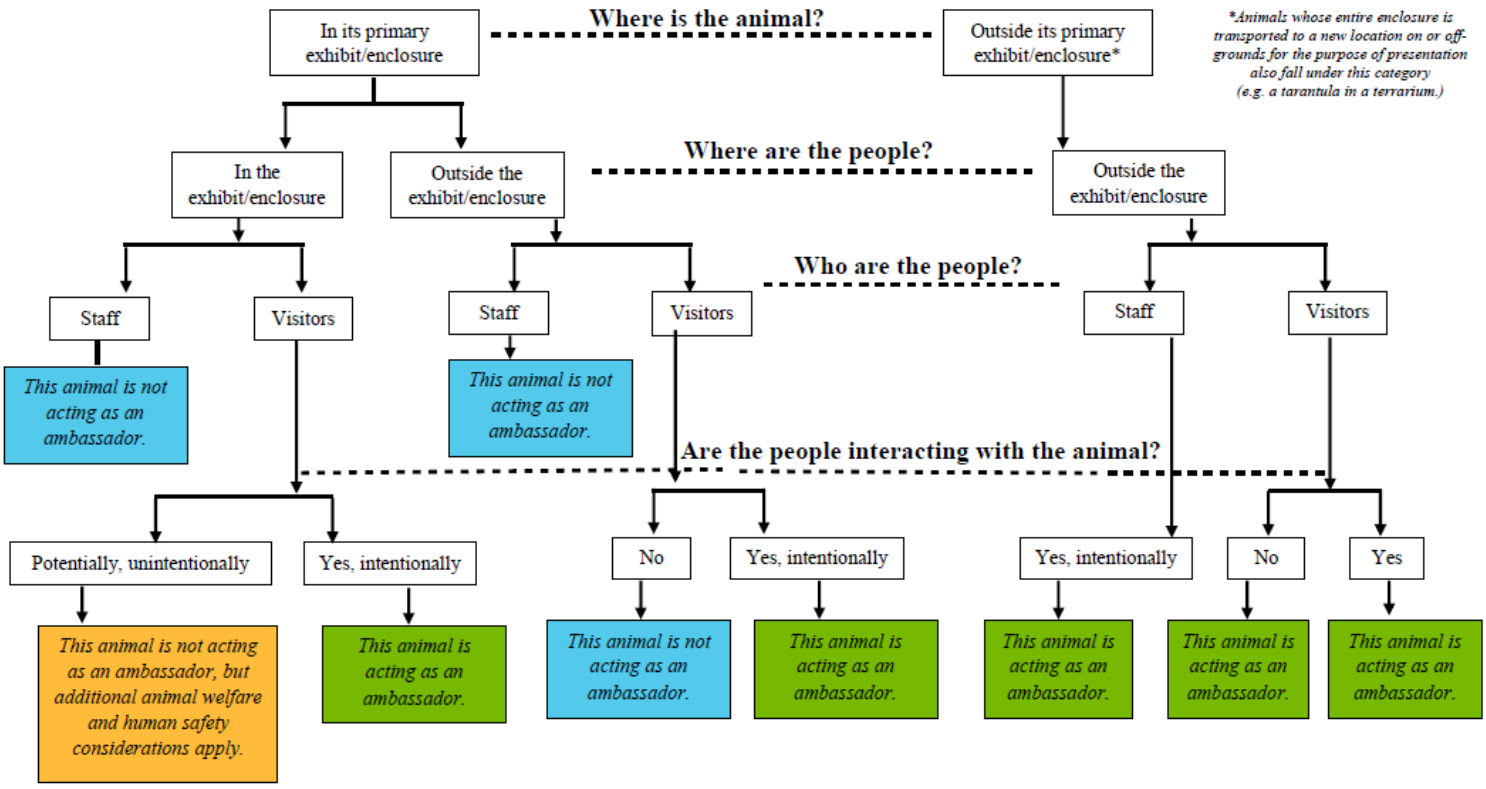
Ambassador animal presentations also bring a host of responsibilities, including the safety and welfare of the animals involved, the safety of the staff and public, and accountability for the take-home, educational messages received by the audience. Therefore, AZA requires all accredited facilities that house animals that act as ambassadors to develop a Facility Ambassador Animal Policy that clearly identifies and justifies those species and individuals acting as ambassador animals and details their long-term management plan and educational program objectives. For the purpose of this policy, the AZA accreditation standards, and a facility's ambassador animal policy, the definition of when an animal is acting as an ambassador animal is as follows:
While some animals may be designated specifically as "Ambassador Animals" within a facility's collection, accreditation standards and policies for ambassador animals apply to any animal in the collection when it is acting as an ambassador animal. An animal is acting as an ambassador when:

> *it is being presented to visitors AND the animal leaves its primary enclosure*
> ***OR***
> *it is being presented to visitors (inside or outside of its enclosure) AND visitors are intended to have direct contact (i.e. feeding, touching, swim with, etc.)*

This definition is designed to assist staff, accreditation inspectors, and the Accreditation Commission in determining when animals are designated as ambassador animals and the periods during which the ambassador animal related Accreditation Standards are applicable. In addition, the ambassador animal definition establishes a framework for understanding the various dimensions of an animal's involvement and visitor interaction during ambassador animal activities. The flow chart at the end of this document further clarifies circumstances under which an animal would be considered to be acting as an ambassador.

Additional information on what should be included in a Facility Ambassador Animal Policy can be found in "AZA's Recommendations for Developing a Facility Ambassador Policy."

Guide to Assessing When an Animal is Acting as an Ambassador



DEFINITION

While some animals may be designated specifically as "Ambassador Animals" within an institution's collection, accreditation standards and policies for ambassador animals apply to any animal in the collection when it is acting as an ambassador animal. An animal is acting as an ambassador when:

- it is being presented to visitors AND the animal leaves its primary enclosure

  OR
- it is being presented to visitors (inside or outside of its enclosure) AND visitors are intended to have direct contact (i.e. feeding, touching,

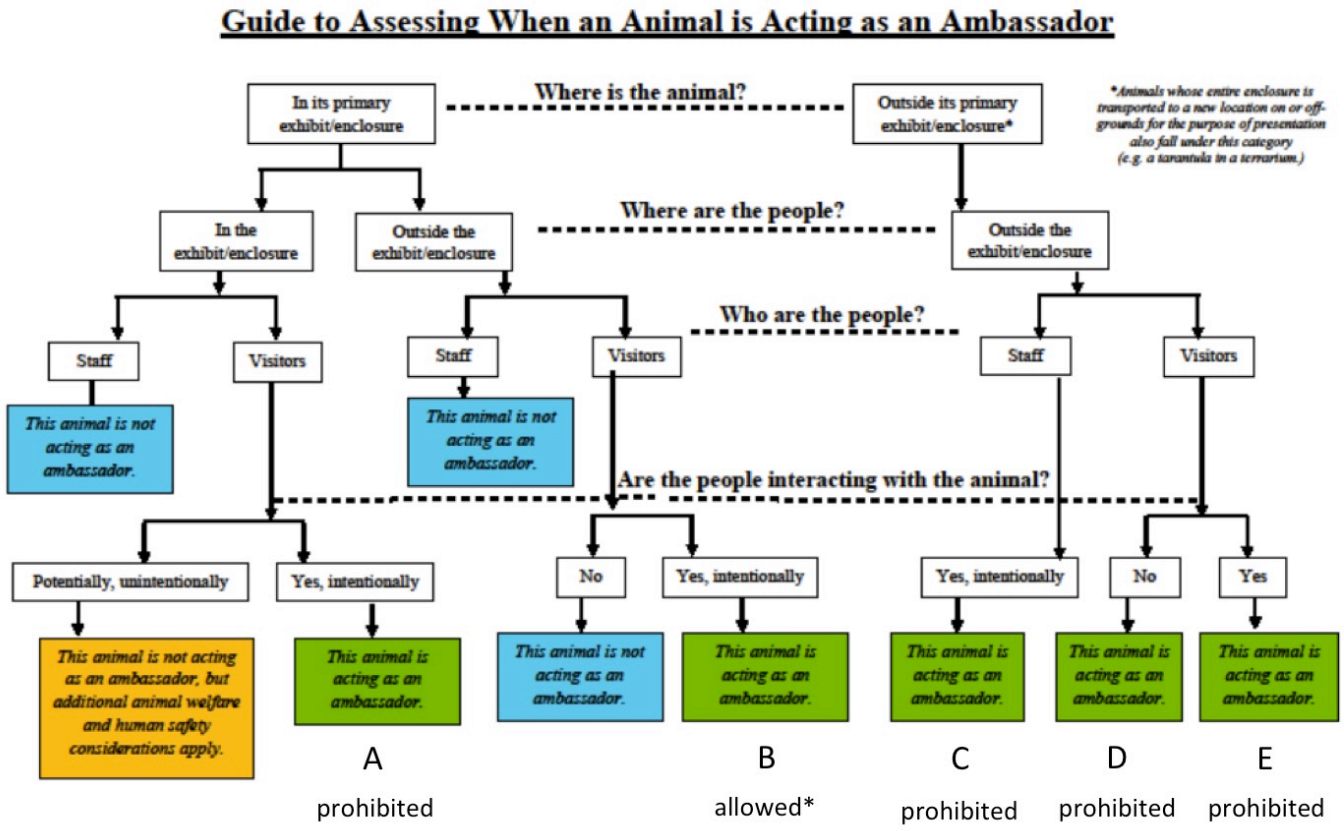
POLICY RESTRICTING THE USE OF NON-HUMAN PRIMATES AS AMBASSADOR ANIMALS

Approved by the AZA Board of Directors
September 2024

The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) defines an animal to be acting as an ambassador when “it is being presented to visitors AND the animal leaves its primary enclosure OR it is being presented to visitors (inside or outside of its enclosure) AND visitors are intended to have direct contact (i.e., feeding, touching, swim with, etc.)”. For certain species, use in ambassador animal programs may not be in alignment with AZA’s Board-approved Ambassador Animal Policy or with the more recent Recommendations for Developing a Facility Ambassador Animal Policy.

AZA does not support the use of non-human primates as ambassador animals when the animal remains in its primary exhibit/enclosure and visitors within the enclosure are intended to have direct contact (Fig 1, A) or the animal is being presented to visitors outside of its primary exhibit/enclosure (Fig 1, C-E). AZA requires AZA-accredited organizations to exclude all non-human primates from these programs.

Figure 1, below, which is adapted from the AZA Ambassador Animal Policy (pages 80-81), is a visual guide to determine when an animal is acting as an ambassador. This policy prohibits the use of non-human primates acting as ambassadors in program types A, C, D & E. An example of program type A is a walk-through exhibit with direct visitor contact intended. An example of program type B is a small-group behind-the-scenes tour with feeding. Program types C-D include any program where the animal comes out of its primary exhibit/enclosure and is presented to the public on or off grounds, with or without direct contact. Walk-through exhibits without direct visitor contact and scenarios in which non-human primates are presented to visitors from inside their enclosure such as public-viewed training or research demonstrations are not considered ambassador animal programs and therefore are not affected by this policy.



* recommend organizations minimize zoonotic risks by utilizing PPE and adhering to best practices outlined in the AAZV Occupational Primate Disease Safety Guidelines for Zoological Institutions & minimize harmful portrayal risks by adhering to the guidelines of the IUCN Primate Specialist Group Section for Human-Primate Interactions Best Practice Guidelines for Responsible Images of Non-Human Primates.

Figure 1.

CONSERVATION EDUCATION COMMITTEE POSITION STATEMENT REGARDING ANIMALS ACTING AS AMBASSADORS

June, 2023

The AZA Conservation Education Committee (CEC) endorses the appropriate inclusion of animals acting as ambassadors by zoo and aquarium professionals seeking to create conservation education experiences that are engaging and effective in conveying cognitive and affective (emotional) messages about the conservation of wildlife and wild places. These experiences must take into consideration the wellbeing of the animal, the specific education/conservation messaging related to the species and visitor perceptions of the experience. For the purpose of this statement, an animal is acting as an ambassador when it is being presented to visitors and the animal leaves its primary enclosure or it is being presented to visitors (inside or outside of its enclosure) and visitors are intended to have direct contact (e,g, feeding, touching, swim with, etc.). Ambassador Animal-related Accreditation Standards are applicable to all animals during the times that they are designated as an ambassador. The purpose of this document is to address the conservation educational value of ambassador animals. For policies, practices, and standards regarding animal wellbeing, refer to the AZA Ambassador Animal Standards.

Audience Engagement

Zoos and aquariums are ideal venues for developing emotional connections to wildlife and fostering an appreciation for the natural world. Research on Why Zoos & Aquariums Matter (WZAM) has shown that “visitors arrive at zoos and aquariums with specific identity-related motivations and these motivations directly impact how they conduct their visit and what meaning they derive from the experience” (Falk et al. 2007). Knowing this about our visitors, Zoo and Aquarium educators need to create and deliver effective conservation education messaging through a variety of strategies. Zoo and aquarium visitors expect a high standard of care for the animals in Zoos and Aquariums (Rank et al. 2018). Because visitors are often unaware of the high standards for care and animal wellbeing in AZA organizations, experiences with Ambassador Animals are an important opportunity to share these standards to ensure that the public has a better understanding of the care that our animals require as well as the excellent care that they receive (Rank et al. 2018).

Conservation education in zoos and aquariums connects our visitors and audiences with the animals in our care. As we learn more about our visitors' prior knowledge as well as what motivates them through the WZAM research as well as others, educators have adapted their craft in order to develop highly engaging programs that increase knowledge, foster empathy, and inspire behavior change (Falk et al. 2007). Experiences that include the presentation of animals as ambassadors can be a powerful approach for meeting these educational goals. Recent studies have demonstrated their positive effects on visitor engagement and learning. Ogle (2016) found that the inclusion of ambassador animals in learning experiences has proven to be an effective technique to increase visitor knowledge and their awareness of conservation. Research by Miller and Wünschmann also found that after an animal encounter, both conservation attitudes and guest knowledge increased (Miller 2013, Wünschmann et al. 2017).

Outcomes of Experiences with Ambassador Animals

There is a growing body of research demonstrating the cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes of experiences with Ambassador Animals. While continued research will contribute to a deeper understanding of these outcomes and contributing factors, including taxon, program type, and facilitation style, the value of Ambassador Animal experiences to furthering our collective mission is clear. In order to further this mission, we must be intentional about crafting experiences that create positive outcome for wildlife, including conservation action and increased empathy, while avoiding delivering unintentional messages, including those that could lead to increased demand for wildlife as pets.

A few representative studies are listed below. The Ambassador Animal Scientific Advisory Group maintains an active research bibliography. We encourage any interested parties to refer to that database for additional information.

- Ogle (2016) demonstrated that visitors reported feeling more knowledgeable and more likely to take action to protect aquatic wildlife after visiting an interactive exhibit that allowed visitors to touch aquatic invertebrates.
- Miller, et al. (2013) found a short-term increase in conservation-related knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral intentions following an interactive experience with dolphins. Additionally, this study demonstrated a sustained retention of conservation-related knowledge and reported conservation behaviors for people who attended a dolphin show as well as long-term retention of conservation-related knowledge, attitudes, behavioral intentions, and reported conservation-related behavior for participants in a dolphin interaction program.
- In a phenomenological study at the Bronx Zoo, Rank, et al. (2021) found that participants frequently emphasized connections with the animal through personal experiences, an outcome related to empathy development.
- Povey (2002) recorded a marked difference in learning between visitors observing animals on exhibit versus being handled during informal presentations. Visitors to demonstrations utilizing a raven and radiated tortoises were able to answer questions correctly at a rate as much as eleven times higher than visitors to the exhibits.
- Cronin, et al. (2022) demonstrated the importance of considering unintentional messages regarding non-domesticated animals as pets in Ambassador Animal experiences, indicating a segment of the public who have an interest in having non-domesticated animals as pets. Zoos have a responsibility to integrate messaging in experiences to ensure that is not the outcome of any ambassador experience. Unintentional outcomes must be considered in these experiences.

Elements of Effective Ambassador Animal Experiences

The observation of animals has been shown to promote affective responses in visitors. Integrating best practices in conservation education and interpretation such as framing, modeling, etc. increases the impact (Minarchek et al. 2021).

Experiences that feature animals acting as ambassadors are facilitated by many different teams in AZA facilities, so consistent professional development for those teams is necessary to be best prepared to craft and facilitate an effective experience. Key elements to an effective experience include interpretation techniques, intentional messaging, and experience assessment (Ogle & Nelson 2022).

- Training in Interpretive Techniques: Team members who are presenting animals in an ambassador role should be trained in best practices, including informal science education, environmental education, interpretive techniques, and empathy building. This will increase the chance that these experiences will not only entertain, but effectively engage and educate guests, as the team members are seen as reputable sources of information and are more effective at sharing that information in meaningful ways (Nekolný & Fialová 2018).
- Intentional Messaging: It is imperative for us to be mindful and deliberate about the intended outcomes and messaging we provide to our guests to promote learning and encourage conservation action (Ogle & Nelson 2022). Experiences that include animals acting as ambassadors should have pre-determined learning outcomes along with an aligned messaging for maximum guest impact.
- Assessment: Experiences in which animals act as ambassadors should be assessed for effectiveness in generating intended guest impact. These assessments will not only serve as a means of improving their guest outcome but also validate their merit (de Mori et al. 2019). In addition, Spooner points out that “zoos should also seek and evaluate more complex outcomes than simply increasing knowledge” (Spooner 2021). These outcomes could include assessing how interpretive messaging, animal handling/presentation, and animal behaviors impact visitor perceptions of animal wellbeing and education/conservation messages.

Summary

Providing educational experiences that connect our visitors with wildlife and inspire conservation action is crucial to the fundamental mission of zoological facilities. We are increasingly finding that animals acting as ambassadors in various, diverse learning experiences is an effective way for AZA organizations to fulfill this

mission. The Conservation Education Committee supports the inclusion of animals as ambassadors in educational experiences, provided that there is an intentional learning goal that is related to the facility's or AZA's mission of engaging people to conserve wildlife and the experience is delivered in a way that supports participant learning and maintains a high degree of animal wellbeing.

Acknowledgements

This paper was developed by members of the Conservation Education Committee, with feedback from the Ambassador Animal Scientific Advisory Group (AASAG).

References

de Mori, B., Ferrante, L., Florio, D., Macchi, E., Pollastri, I., & Normando, S. (2019). A Protocol for the Ethical Assessment of Wild Animal-Visitor Interactions (AVIP) Evaluating Animal Welfare, Education, and Conservation Outcomes. animals. https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/9/8/487

Cronin, K. A., Leahy, M., Ross, S. R., Wilder Schook, M., Ferrie, G. M., & Alba, A. C. (2022). Younger generations are more interested than older generations in having non-domesticated animals as pets. PLOS ONE, 17(1). https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0262208

Falk, J.H.; Reinhard, E.M.; Vernon, C.L.; Bronnenkant, K.; Deans, N.L.; Heimlich, J.E., (2007). Why Zoos & Aquariums Matter: Assessing the Impact of a Visit. Association of Zoos & Aquariums. Silver Spring, MD. http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.574.3479&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Miller, L., Zeigler-Hill, V., Mellen, J., Koeppel, J., Greer, T., & Kuczaj, S. (2013). Dolphin shows and interaction programs: benefits for conservation education? Zoo Biology. https://doi.org/10.1002/zoo.21016

Minarchek, M. J., Skibins, J. C., & Luebke, J. F. (2021). The Impact of Interpretive Messaging and Animal Handline on Visitors' Perceptions of animal Welfare and Empathetic Reactions. Journal of Interpretation Reserach. https://doi.org/10.1177/10925872211042936

Nekolný , L., & Fialová, D. (2018). Zoo Tourism: What Actually Is a Zoo? Sciendo. https://doi.org/10.1515/cjot-2018-0008

Ogle, B. (2016). Value of Guest Interaction in Touch Pools at Public Aquariums. The Universal Journal of Management. https://doi.org/10.13189/ujm.2016.040202

Ogle, B., & Nelson, N. (2022). Examining a general audience's perception of cheetahs Acinonyx jubatus in education programming: A pilot study. Journal of Zoo and Aquarium Research. https://doi.org/10.19227/jzar.v10i1.624

Povey, K.D. (2002). Close encounters: the benefits of using education program animals. Annual Proceedings of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, 117-121.

Spooner, S. L., Farnsworth, M. J., Ward, S. J., & Whitehouse-Tedd, K. M. (2021). Conservation Education: Are Zoo Animals Effective Ambassadors and Is There Any Cost to Their Welfare. Journal of Zoological and Botanical Gardens. https://doi.org/10.3390/jzbg2010004

Rank, S. J., Roberts, S-J., & Manion, K. (2021). The impact of ambassador animal facilitated programs on visitor curiosity and connections: A mixed-methods study. Animal Behavior and Cognition, 8(4), 558-575. https://doi.org/10.26451/abc.08.04.08.2021

Rank, S. J., Voiklis, J., Gupta, R., Fraser, J. R., & Flinner, K. (2018). Understanding Organizational Trust of Zoos and aquariums. Iowa State Summer Symposium on Science Communication. https://doi.org/10.31274/sciencecommunication-181114-16

Wünschmann, S., Wüst-Ackermann, P., Randler, C., Vollmer, C., & Itzek-Greulich, H. (2017). Learning Achievement and Motivation in an Out-of-School Setting--Visiting Amphibians and Reptiles in a Zoo Is More Effective than a Lesson at School. Research in Science Education. https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11165-016-9513-2

Kolar/Manion 2023

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING A FACILITY AMBASSADOR ANIMAL POLICY

Revised and approved by the AZA Board of Directors – July 2022
Modified from "Program Animal" to "Ambassador Animal" to avoid confusion with "Animal Programs"; approved by the CEC; no change to meaning of these terms – January 2015
Updated and approved by the Board – July 2008 & June 2011
Originally approved by the AZA Board of Directors – 2003

RATIONALE

Membership in AZA requires that a facility meet the AZA Accreditation Standards collectively developed by our professional colleagues. Standards guide all aspects of a facility's operations; however, the accreditation commission has asserted that ensuring member facilities demonstrate the highest standards of animal care is a top priority. Another fundamental AZA criterion for membership is that education be affirmed as core to a facility's mission. All accredited public facilities are expected to develop a written education plan and to regularly evaluate program effectiveness.

The inclusion of animals in educational presentations, when done correctly, is a powerful tool. AZA's Conservation Education Committee's Ambassador Animal Position Statement describes the research underpinning the appropriate use of ambassador animals as an important and powerful educational opportunity to convey cognitive, behavioral, and effective messages about conservation and wildlife.

Ongoing research, such as efforts coordinated through AZA's Ambassador Animal Scientific Advisory Group (AASAG) and research conducted by individual AZA facilities, helps zoo educators to continually assess the impact of ambassador animals on visitor experience and learning, as well as how participation in programs impacts the animals. Consistent evaluation of programs should assess how interpretive messaging, animal handling/presentation, and animal behaviors impact visitor perceptions of animal welfare and take-home messages (e.g. an animal's suitability as a pet, conservation status, etc.)

When utilizing ambassador animals our responsibility is to meet both our high standards of animal care and our educational goals. Additionally, as animal care professionals we must-address both the species' husbandry needs and the welfare of the individual animal. AZA, through its Animal Welfare Committee, has given the responsibility to develop taxon- and species-specific animal care standards and guidelines to the Taxon Advisory Groups (TAG) and Species Survival Plan® Programs (SSPs). Experts within each TAG or SSP, along with their education and ambassador animal advisors, are charged with assessing all aspects of the taxon's and/or species' biological and social needs and developing Animal Care Manuals (ACMs) or Ambassador Animal Guidelines (AAGs) that include specifications for when animals are acting as ambassadors in education programs.

However, even the most exacting standards cannot address the specific circumstances of individual animals and programs at each AZA facility. Therefore, each facility is required to develop and follow an ambassador animal policy that articulates program benefits, and provides clear guidance for use when animals are acting as ambassadors, including clear plans for on-going evaluation of visitor impacts and animal welfare. The following recommendations are offered to assist each facility in formulating its own Facility Ambassador Animal Policy, which incorporates the AZA Ambassador Animal Policy and addresses the following matters:

THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Within each facility, key stakeholders should be included in the development of that facility's policy, including, but not limited to representatives from:

- Education Department
- Animal Husbandry Department
- Veterinary and Animal Health Department
- Conservation & Science Department

- Behavioral Husbandry Department/Committee
- Animal Welfare Department/Committee
- Ambassador Animal staff (if in a separate department)
- Volunteer Management Department
- Departments that regularly request ambassador animal programming (e.g. special events, development, marketing, zoo or aquarium society, administration)
- Staff from all levels of the organization (e.g., curators, keepers, education managers, interpreters, volunteer coordinators).

The following components are recommended for inclusion in this policy:

I. PHILOSOPHY

Facility ambassador animal programs must include a philosophical statement that outlines the facility's position on how animals are presented to the public and highlights the commitment to animal wellbeing, public education, and conservation. AZA's position is that the presentation of animals in up close and personal settings, including animal contact, can be extremely positive and powerful, as long as:

1. The programs and locations in which ambassador animals are used are specifically defined.
2. Animal and human welfare and safety remain top priorities.
3. Animals are presented in a way that showcases and respects their individual and species traits and characteristics, and represents their natural behaviors and abilities. Consideration should be given to how animals will be presented (e.g. on leashes, held in the hand, training walls, etc.) and appropriate handler behavior and actions should be specified in the facility's ambassador animal policy. Animals should be presented in a way that conveys appropriate conservation/education messages and ensures the comfort of the animal and safety of the animal and guests.
4. A meaningful education and/or actionable conservation message is an integral component. Examples include threats and/or conservation successes to the species or habitats in the wild, important adaptations or characteristics unique to the species, human/wildlife interactions, conservation actions visitors could take on behalf of the species, animal care and welfare considerations, and training and enrichment programs.
5. Suitable species and individual animals are used.

II. PROGRAMS & LOCATIONS

The Facility Ambassador Animal Policy should include a comprehensive list of all types of programs, exhibits, and events, both on and off site, where animals may act as ambassadors. Some facilities may have different rules or guidance for different locations or types of programs; others may apply the same rules to all circumstances. Examples include:

1. On-site programming

    A. General visitor experiences (no registration required):

        i. On-grounds programming with animals being presented outside their exhibit or primary enclosure (presentations, lectures, parties, special events, and media)

        ii. Children's zoos and contact yards*

        iii. Behind the scenes open houses/tours that involve participants interacting with animals

        iv. Shows/presentations

        v. Touch pools/tanks*

        **could be structured if ticketed or controlled entry*

    B. Structured Programming (registration involved) and controlled settings that include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. School group programs
b. Summer Camps
c. Overnights
d. Birthday Parties/Private events
e. Animal rides
f. Public animal feeding programs

2. Offsite and Outreach
   A. Media (TV, Radio, Podcast; may be live or pre-recorded)
   B. Fundraising events
   C. Field programs involving the public interacting with animals in nature
   D. School visits
   E. Library visits
   F. Nursing Home or hospital visits (therapy)
   G. Senior Centers
   H. Civic Group events
   I. Community Centers
   J. Festivals or outdoor community events

While policies may differ from setting to setting, each setting should be addressed separately. In all settings, the most important consideration should be the maintenance of positive animal welfare and health. Evidence of these considerations includes methods to assess stress and distress during the presentation and transport, and limitations and restrictions on who/when/how physical interactions with the animals will take place.

III. Compliance with Regulations

It is expected that the Facility Ambassador Animal Policy addresses compliance with appropriate local, national, and international regulations, as well as AZA Accreditation Standards.

IV. Collection Planning

All AZA accredited facilities must follow a Facility Institutional Collection Plan (ICP). Ambassador animals are part of a facility's overall collection and must be included in the collection planning process. The AZA Guide to Accreditation contains specific requirements for the institutional collection plan. For more information about collection planning in general, please see the Accreditation Resource Center in the Members Only section of www.aza.org.

The following recommendations apply to animals acting as ambassadors:

1. Listing of approved animals to act as ambassadors (to be periodically amended as the collection changes). Justification of each species should be based upon criteria such as:
   - Temperament and suitability for program use
   - Husbandry requirements
   - Husbandry expertise
   - Veterinary issues and concerns
   - Ease and means of acquisition/disposition according to the AZA Code of Professional Ethics
   - Educational value and intended conservation message
   - Conservation Status
   - Compliance with TAG and SSP guidelines and policies
   - Support of TAG and SSP needs for additional space, messaging goals, and breeding recommendations

2. Evaluation of individual animal behavior, demeanor, and welfare throughout the animal's lifetime to assess appropriateness to serve in an ambassador animal role and to ensure that participation in programs continues to educate and inspire visitors.
3. General guidelines as to how each species (and, where necessary, for each individual) will be presented to the public, and in what settings.
4. The collection planning section should reference the facility's population management policies.

V. Conservation and Education Messages

As noted in the AZA Accreditation Standards, if animal presentations are part of a facility's programs, an educational and conservation message must be an integral component. This is a critical component of presentations that utilize ambassador animals.

The Ambassador Animal Policy should address the specific messages related to the use of ambassador animals, as well as the need to be cautious about hidden or conflicting messages that may be conveyed by the way the animal is handled or behaviors presented (e.g., "petting" an animal while stating verbally that it makes a poor pet).

It is highly recommended to encourage the use of biofacts in addition to the presentation of live animals. Whenever possible, ambassador animal programs should include evaluation of the effectiveness of education messaging.

VI. Human Health and Safety

The safety of our staff and the public is one of the greatest concerns in working with ambassador animals. Although extremely valuable as educational and affective experiences, contact with animals poses certain risks to the handler and the public. Therefore, the human health and safety section of the policy should address:

1. Minimization of the possibility of disease transfer from animals to humans, and vice-versa (e.g., handwashing stations, no touch policies, use of hand sanitizer, additional guidelines for presentation of animals at events with food).
2. Safety issues related to handlers' personal attire and behavior (e.g., discourage or prohibit use of long earrings, perfume and cologne, not eating or drinking around animals, smoking, etc.)
3. Procedures and protocols to ensure protection of the public and animal handlers from injury.

AZA's Animal Contact Policy provides guidelines in this area. These guidelines were incorporated into accreditation standards in 1998.

VII. Animal Health and Wellbeing

Along with human and animal safety, animal health and animal wellbeing are of the highest priorities to AZA-accredited facilities. As a result, the Facility Ambassador Animal Policy should make a strong statement on the importance of animal welfare. The policy should address:

1. General housing, husbandry, and animal health concerns (e.g. that the housing and husbandry for animals when acting as ambassadors meets or exceeds general AZA standards and that the physical, social, and psychological needs of the individual animal, such as adequate rest periods, provision of enrichment, visual cover, contact with conspecifics as appropriate, etc., are met).
2. Wherever possible provide a choice for animal program participation and train handlers to recognize signs of comfort, stress, and distress of animals in presentations (e.g., methods in place to allow animals to retreat to refuge areas for touch tanks or contact yards, voluntary crating, evaluation of willingness/readiness to participate by handler, animals trained to signal a choice to end presentations, etc.).
3. The empowerment of handlers to make decisions related to animal health and welfare, such as withdrawing animals from a situation if safety, health, or welfare is in danger of being compromised.
4. Requirements for supervision of contact areas and touch tanks by trained staff and volunteers.
5. Frequent evaluation of human/animal interactions to assess safety, health, welfare, etc.

6. Ensuring that the level of health care for the animals is consistent with that of other animals in the collection.
7. Include a lifelong plan for each animal to ensure that animal care and welfare are maintained to meet AZA standards if/when an animal is no longer part of the facility's ambassador animal collection.
8. Lengthy "down" times in ambassador animal use occur and staff should ensure that animals accustomed to regular human interactions can still maintain such contact and receive the same level of care.
9. Ensuring that housing and enrichment programs provide sufficient choice and complexity and that these are equal to those for animals living on exhibit.
10. Policies in place that adapt to evolving public and animal health situations, with specific species and taxa considerations (e.g. COVID-19, Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, zoonoses, etc.).

VIII. Taxon Specific Protocols

Facilities are encouraged to provide taxonomically specific protocols, either at the genus or species level, or the individual level. Some taxon-specific guidelines may affect the use of ambassador animals. To develop these, facilities should refer to the Animal Care Manual on the AZA website.

Taxon and species-specific protocols should address:

1. How to remove the individual animal from and return it to its permanent enclosure, including suggestions for operant conditioning training.
2. How to crate and transport animals.
3. Signs of stress, stress factors, distress, and discomfort behaviors.
4. Situation-specific handling protocols (e.g., whether or not animal is allowed to be touched by the public, and how to handle in such situations).
5. Guidelines for disinfecting surfaces, transport carriers, enclosures, etc. using environmentally safe chemicals and cleaners where possible.
6. Animal facts and conservation information.
7. Limitations and restrictions regarding ambient temperatures and weather conditions.
8. Time limitations (including animal rotation and rest periods as appropriate, duration of time each animal can participate, and restrictions on travel times and distances).
9. The numbers of trained personnel required to ensure the health and welfare of the animals, handlers, and public.
10. The level of training and experience required for handling this species.
11. Taxon/species-specific guidelines on animal health.
12. The use of hand lotions or other chemicals by program participants that might touch the animals.

IX. Logistics: Managing the Program

The Facility Ambassador Animal Policy should address a number of logistical issues related to ambassador animals, including:

1. Where and how the ambassador animal collection will be housed, including any quarantine and separation for animals used off-site, when applicable.
2. Procedures for requesting animals, including the approval process and decision making process, and determination of whether or not an individual animal is appropriate in an ambassador role.
3. Accurate documentation and availability of records, including procedures for documenting animal usage, animal behavior, and any other concerns that arise.

X. Staff Training

Thorough training for all animal handling staff (keepers, educators, and volunteers) is imperative to ensure proper handling and assessment of animal behavior, comfort, and welfare, including knowledge of the conditions under which an animal should be removed from a program.

Facilities may have separate training protocols and procedures for staff who work with ambassador animals. Specific training protocols can be included in the Facility Ambassador Animal Policy or reference can be made to a separate training protocol.

It is recommended that the staff training section of the policy address:

1. Personnel authorized to handle and present animals.
2. Handling protocol during quarantine.
3. The process for training, qualifying and assessing handlers, including the training of those authorized to train other handlers.
4. The frequency of required training sessions and consistent handling for handlers to remain qualified to handle animals.
5. Animal training protocols and personnel authorized to train animals.
6. The process for addressing substandard performance and noncompliance with established procedures.
7. Medical testing and vaccinations required for handlers (e.g., TB testing, tetanus shots, rabies vaccinations, routine fecal cultures, physical exams, etc.).
8. Training content (e.g., taxonomically specific protocols, natural history, relevant conservation education messages, presentation techniques, interpretive techniques, etc.).
9. Protocols to reduce disease transmission (e.g., zoonotic disease transmission, proper hygiene and hand washing requirements, as noted in AZA's Animal Contact Policy).
10. Procedures for reporting injuries to the animals, handling personnel, or public.
11. Visitor management (e.g., ensuring visitors interact appropriately with animals, do not eat or drink around the animal, etc.).
12. Any additional training requirements or limitations on staff that may take animals off-site and on overnight travel.

XI. Review of Facility Policies

All policies should be reviewed regularly with particular focus on maintaining compliance with AZA standards and example practices. Accountability and ramifications of policy violations should be addressed as well (e.g., retraining, revocation of handling privileges, etc.). Facility policies should address the frequency of which the Facility Ambassador Animal Policy will be reviewed and revised, and how accountability will be maintained.

XII. TAG and SSP Recommendations

Following development of taxon-specific recommendations from each TAG and SSP related to ambassador animal use, the facility's policy should include a statement regarding compliance with these recommendations. If the facility chooses not to follow these specific recommendations, a brief statement providing rationale is recommended.

APES IN MEDIA AND COMMERCIAL PERFORMANCES

Apes, including chimpanzees, gorillas, bonobos, orangutans, and gibbons, are intelligent, sensitive, long-lived and highly social animals. As humans' closest living relatives, they are fascinating, and ape infants are magnetically appealing. These attributes have made apes popular as performers in commercial entertainment and advertising programs. But this popularity and attractiveness masks the often cruel and dangerous practices commonly required to make apes compliant in such appearances.

This White Paper presents a brief summary of the justification for:

- Eliminating the use of apes as performers in commercial entertainment.
- Establishing standards to ensure that public presentations and interpretive programs portray apes respectfully and accurately represent the biology and conservation status of apes.

Rationale

1. An ape infant normally remains with its mother for several years in a group environment, learning social skills essential for development of normal adult behaviors. But apes destined to be performers or photographic props are typically removed from their mother shortly after birth and, thus, are denied opportunities for normal social and psychological development. This has several commercial advantages to an owner. Infants removed in this manner will be appealing and remain submissive for handling by humans for several years. Mothers whose infants are removed will resume sexual cycling and produce another profitable infant quickly.

   But apes raised by humans in the absence of other members of their species will not normally acquire the skills to be socially and sexually competent as juveniles and adults. They may never readjust to life in a normal social group, and thus they are usually relegated to social and sexual isolation, which often leads to abnormal behaviors such as self-mutilation. For these reasons, it typically is not feasible to involve these individuals in conservation-based breeding programs.

2. Although endearing as infants, apes generally become physically powerful and unpredictable as they near adulthood. Their continued use as performers or props is potentially very dangerous to their handlers and audiences. Thus, handlers of ape performers often must use food deprivation, physical abuse, continuous tranquilization, or even electric shock to maintain control. Additionally, the animals may be modified to reduce their ability to cause harm, for example by removing their teeth. It should be noted that the apparent "smile" of a performing chimpanzee is actually a well-documented expression of fear. Such physical and psychological effects are difficult to alleviate even if the ape is rescued and placed in a caring environment. More often however, when ape performers become too difficult to handle, they lose their commercial value and are sold to roadside menageries with inexpert handlers and often inhumane conditions.

3. Dressing apes in human clothing, or training them to engage in unnatural (usually human) behaviors, while entertaining to some, inaccurately portrays their biology and conservation status. Since conservation efforts rely on informed public opinion, these practices serve to undermine communications vital to achieving conservation. The use of apes in advertisements and other commercial performances can lead people to conclude falsely that apes make good pets.

4. Because apes and humans are genetically so similar, both are susceptible to many of the same communicable diseases. Close and unprotected contact between performing apes, their handlers, and audiences can threaten all with viral, bacterial, and parasite infection.

In summary, the use of apes in media and commercial performances should be eliminated.

POLICY ON ANIMAL PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT

Adopted by the AZA Board of Directors
July, 2023

AZA members are committed to managing robust animal populations in zoos and aquariums to assure that animals are available to meet individual program goals and fulfill our collective mission. Successful population management relies on highly collaborative, communicative, and engaged relationships among AZA members and Animal Programs (i.e., Taxon Advisory Groups (TAGs), Species Survival Plans® (SSPs), and AZA Studbooks). Therefore, all AZA member facilities must fully engage with and participate in each SSP that pertains to an animal that the facility own or is part of their collection. Further, each Animal Program Leader (i.e., TAG Chair, SSP Coordinator, and Studbook Keeper) must fully engage with each facility that is part of their Animal Program. Animal Program engagement is defined and explained in the Facility Handbook on Animal Program Engagement and within the Animal Program Handbooks.

AZA POLICY ON RESPONSIBLE POPULATION MANAGEMENT

Approved by the AZA Board of Directors
January 12, 2016
Currently Under Revision 6-2022

PREAMBLE

The stringent requirements for AZA accreditation, and high ethical standards of professional conduct, are unmatched by similar organizations and far surpass the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's requirements for licensed animal exhibitors. Every AZA member must abide by a Code of Professional Ethics (https://www.aza.org/code-of-ethics) [NOTE: also found on pages 104 – 108 of this booklet]. In order to continue these high standards, AZA-accredited institutions and related facilities should make it a priority, when possible, to acquire animals from and transfer them to other AZA member institutions, or members of other regional zoo associations that have professionally recognized accreditation programs.

AZA-accredited institutions and related facilities cannot fulfill their important missions of conservation, education, and science without live animals. Responsible management and the long-term sustainability of living animal populations necessitates that some individuals be acquired and transferred, reintroduced or even humanely euthanized at certain times. The acquisition and transfer of animals should be prioritized by the long-term sustainability needs of the species and AZA-managed populations among AZA-accredited institutions and related facilities, and between AZA member institutions and non-AZA entities with animal care and welfare standards aligned with AZA. AZA member institutions that acquire animals from the wild, directly or through commercial vendors, should perform due diligence to ensure that such activities do not have a negative impact on species in the wild. Animals should only be acquired from non-AZA entities that are known to operate legally and conduct their business in a manner that reflects and/or supports the spirit and intent of the AZA Code of Professional Ethics as well as this Policy.

I. Introduction

This AZA Policy on Responsible Population Management provides guidance to AZA members to:

1. Assure that animals from AZA member institutions and related facilities are not transferred to individuals or organizations that lack the appropriate expertise or facilities to care for them [*see taxa specific appendices (in development)*],
2. Assure that the health and conservation of wild populations and ecosystems are carefully considered as appropriate,
3. Maintain a proper standard of conduct for AZA members during acquisition and transfer/reintroduction activities, including adherence to all applicable laws and regulations,
4. Assure that the health and welfare of individual animals is a priority during acquisition and transfer/reintroduction activities, and
5. Support the goals of AZA's cooperatively managed populations and associated Animal Programs [Species Survival Plans® (SSPs), Studbooks, and Taxon Advisory Groups (TAGs)].

This AZA Policy on Responsible Population Management will serve as the default policy for AZA member institutions. Institutions should develop their own AZA Policy on Responsible Population Management in order to address specific local concerns. Any institutional policy must incorporate and not conflict with the AZA acquisition and transfer/transition standards.

II. Laws, Authority, Record-Keeping, Identification and Documentation

The following must be considered with regard to the acquisition or transfer/management of all living animals and specimens (their living and non-living parts, materials, and/or products):

1. Any acquisitions, transfers, euthanasia and reintroductions must meet the requirements of all applicable local, state, federal and international laws and regulations. Humane euthanasia must be performed in accordance with the established euthanasia policy of the institution and follow the recommendations of current AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals (https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/avma-policies/avma-guidelines-euthanasia-animals). Ownership and any applicable chain-of-custody must be documented. If such information does not exist, an explanation must be provided regarding such animals and specimens. Any acquisition of free-ranging animals must be done in accordance with all local, state, federal, and international laws and regulations and must not be detrimental to the long-term viability of the species in the wild.
2. The Director/Chief Executive Officer of the institution must have final authority for all acquisitions, transfers, and euthanasia.
3. Acquisitions or transfers/euthanasia/reintroductions must be documented through institutional record keeping systems. The ability to identify which animal is being transferred is very important and the method of identifying each individual animal should be documented. Any existing documentation must accompany all transfers. Institutional animal records data, records guidelines have been developed for certain species to standardize the process (https://www.aza.org/idmag-documents-and-guidelines).
4. For some colonial, group-living, or prolific species, it may be impossible or highly impractical to identify individual animals when these individuals are maintained in a group. These species can be maintained, acquisitioned, transferred, and managed as a group or colony, or as part of a group or colony.
5. If the intended use of specimens from animals either living or non-living is to create live animal(s), their acquisition and transfer should follow the same guidelines. If germplasm is acquired or transferred with the intention of creating live animal(s), ownership of the offspring must be clearly defined in transaction documents (e.g., breeding loan agreements).

   Institutions acquiring, transferring or otherwise managing specimens should consider current and possible future uses as new technologies become available. All specimens from which nuclear DNA could be recovered should be carefully considered for preservation as these basic DNA extraction technologies already exist.
6. AZA member institutions must maintain transaction documents (e.g., confirmation forms, breeding agreements) which provide the terms and conditions of animal acquisitions, transfers and loans, including documentation for animal parts, products and materials. These documents should require the potential recipient or provider to adhere to the AZA Policy on Responsible Population Management, and the AZA Code of Professional Ethics, and must require compliance with the applicable laws and regulations of local, state, federal, and international authorities.
7. In the case of animals (living or non-living) and their parts, materials, or products (living or non-living) held on loan, the owner's written permission should be obtained prior to any transfer and documented in the institutional records.
8. AZA SSP and TAG necropsy and sampling protocols should be accommodated.
9. Some governments maintain ownership of the species naturally found within their borders. It is therefore incumbent on institutions to determine whether animals they are acquiring or transferring are owned by a government entity, foreign or domestic, and act accordingly by reviewing the government ownership policies available on the AZA website. In the case of government owned animals, proposals for and/or notifications of transfers must be sent to the species manager for the government owned species.

III. Acquisition Requirements

A. General Acquisitions

1. Acquisitions must be consistent with the mission of the institution, as reflected in its Institutional Collection Plan, by addressing its exhibition/education, conservation, and/or scientific goals regarding the individual or species.
2. Animals (wild, feral, and domestic) may be held temporarily for reasons such as assisting governmental agencies or other institutions, rescue and/or rehabilitation, research, propagation or headstarting for reintroduction, or special exhibits.

3. Any receiving institution must have the necessary expertise and resources to support and provide for the professional care and management of the species, so that the physical, psychological, and social needs of individual animals and species are met.
4. If the acquisition involves a species managed by an AZA Animal Program, the institution should communicate with the Animal Program Leader and must adhere to the AZA Facility Engagement in Animal Programs Policy (see page 94).
5. AZA member institutions should consult AZA Animal Population Management (APM) Committee approved TAG Regional Collection Plans (RCPs), Animal Program Leaders, and AZA Animal Care Manuals (ACMs) when making acquisition decisions.
6. AZA member institutions that work with commercial vendors that acquire animals from the wild, must perform due diligence to assure the vendors' collection of animals is legal and using ethical practices. Commercial vendors should have conservation and animal welfare goals similar to those of AZA institutions.
7. AZA member institutions may acquire animals through public donations and other non-AZA entities when it is in the best interest of the animal and/or species.

B. Acquisitions from the Wild

Maintaining wild animal populations for exhibition, education and wildlife conservation purposes is a core function of AZA-member institutions. AZA zoos and aquariums have saving species and conservation of wildlife and wildlands as a basic part of their public mission. As such, the AZA recognizes that there are circumstances where acquisitions from the wild are needed in order to maintain healthy, diverse animal populations. Healthy, sustainable populations support the objectives of managed species programs and the core mission of AZA members. In some cases, acquiring individuals from the wild may be a viable option in addition to, or instead of, relying on breeding programs with animals already in human care.

Acquiring animals from the wild can result in socioeconomic benefit and environmental protection and therefore the AZA supports environmentally sustainable/beneficial acquisition from the wild when conservation is a positive outcome.

1. Before acquiring animals from the wild, institutions are encouraged to examine alternative sources including other AZA institutions and other regional zoological associations or other non-AZA entities.
2. When acquiring animals from the wild, both the long-term health and welfare impacts on the wild population as well as on individual animals must be considered. In crisis situations, when the survival of a population is at risk, rescue decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis by the appropriate agency and institution.
3. AZA zoos and aquariums may assist wildlife agencies by providing homes for animals born in nature if they are incapable of surviving on their own (e.g., in case of orphaned or injured animals) or by euthanizing the animals because they pose a risk to humans or for humane reasons.
4. Institutions should only accept animals from the wild after a risk assessment determines the zoo/aquarium can mitigate any potential adverse impacts on the health, care and maintenance of the existing animals already being housed at the zoo or aquarium, and the new animals being acquired.

IV. Transfer, Euthanasia and Reintroduction Requirements

A. Living Animals

Successful conservation and animal management relies on the cooperation of many entities, both AZA and non-AZA. While preference is given to placing animals with AZA-accredited institutions or related facilities, it is important to foster a cooperative culture among those who share AZA's mission of saving species and excellence in animal care.

1. AZA members should assure that all animals in their care are transferred, humanely euthanized and/or reintroduced in a manner that meets the standards of AZA, and that animals are not transferred to those not qualified to care for them properly. Refer to IV.12, below, for further requirements regarding euthanasia.
2. If the transfer of animals or their specimens (parts, materials, and products) involves a species managed by an AZA Animal Program, the institution should communicate with that Animal Program Leader and must adhere to the AZA Facility Engagement in Animal Programs Policy (see page 94).
3. AZA member institutions should consult APM Committee-approved TAG Regional Collection Plans, Animal Program Leaders, and Animal Care Manuals when making transfer decisions.
4. Animals acquired solely as a food source for animals in the institution's care are not typically accessioned. There may be occasions, however, when it is appropriate to use accessioned animals that exceed population carrying capacity as feeder animals to support other animals. In some cases, accessioned animals may have their status changed to "feeder animal" status by the institution as part of their program for long-term sustained population management of the species.
5. In transfers to non-AZA entities, AZA members must perform due diligence and should have documented validation, including one or more letters of reference, for example from an appropriate AZA Professional Fellow or other trusted source with expertise in animal care and welfare, who is familiar with the proposed recipient and their current practices, and that the recipient has the expertise and resources required to properly care for and maintain the animals. Any recipient must have the necessary expertise and resources to support and provide for the professional care and management of the species, so that the physical, psychological, and social needs of individual animals and species are met within the parameters of modern zoological philosophy and practice. Supporting documentation must be kept at the AZA member institution (see #IV.9 below).
6. Domestic animals should be transferred in accordance with locally acceptable humane farming practices, including auctions, and must be subject to all relevant laws and regulations.
7. AZA members must not send any non-domestic animal to auction or to any organization or individual that may display or sell the animal at an animal auction. *See certain taxa-specific appendices to this Policy (in development) for information regarding exceptions*.
8. Animals must not be sent to organizations or individuals that allow the hunting of these individual animals; that is, no individual animal transferred from an AZA institution may be hunted. For purposes of maintaining genetically healthy, sustainable zoo and aquarium populations, AZA-accredited institutions and related facilities may send animals to non-AZA organizations or individuals (refer to #IV.5 above). These non-AZA entities (for instance, ranching operations) should follow appropriate ranch management practices and other conservation minded practices to support population sustainability.
9. Every loaning institution must annually monitor and document the conditions of any loaned specimen(s) and the ability of the recipient(s) to provide proper care (refer to #IV.5 above). If the conditions and care of animals are in violation of the loan agreement, the loaning institution must recall the animal or assure prompt correction of the situation. Furthermore, an institution's loaning policy must not be in conflict with this AZA Policy on Responsible Population Management.
10. If living animals are sent to a non-AZA entity for research purposes, it must be a registered research facility by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and accredited by the Association for the Assessment & Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care, International (AAALAC), if eligible. For international transactions, the receiving facility must be registered by that country's equivalent body having enforcement over animal welfare. In cases where research is conducted, but governmental oversight is not required, institutions should do due diligence to assure the welfare of the animals during the research.
11. Reintroductions and release of animals into the wild must meet all applicable local, state, and international laws and regulations. Any reintroduction requires adherence to best health and veterinary practices to ensure that non-native pathogens are not released into the environment exposing naive wild animals to danger. Reintroductions may be a part of a recovery program and must be compatible with the IUCN Reintroduction Specialist Group's Reintroduction Guidelines (https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2013-009.pdf).
12. Humane euthanasia may be employed for medical reasons to address quality of life issues for animals or to prevent the transmission of disease. AZA also recognizes that humane euthanasia may be employed

for managing the demographics, genetics, and diversity of animal populations. Humane euthanasia must be performed in accordance with the established euthanasia policy of the institution and follow the recommendations of current AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals (https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/avma-policies/avma-guidelines-euthanasia-animals).

B. Non-Living Animals and Specimens

AZA members should optimize the use and recovery of animal remains. All transfers must meet the requirements of all applicable laws and regulations.

1. Optimal recovery of animal remains may include performing a complete necropsy including, if possible, histologic evaluation of tissues which should take priority over specimens' use in education/exhibits. AZA SSP and TAG necropsy and sampling protocols should be accommodated. This information should be available to SSP Programs for population management.
2. The educational use of non-living animals, parts, materials, and products should be maximized, and their use in Animal Program sponsored projects and other scientific projects that provide data for species management and/or conservation must be considered.
3. Non-living animals, if handled properly to protect the health of the recipient animals, may be utilized as feeder animals to support other animals as deemed appropriate by the institution.
4. AZA members should consult with AZA Animal Program Leaders prior to transferring or disposing of remains/samples to determine if existing projects or protocols are in place to optimize use.
5. AZA member institutions should develop agreements for the transfer or donation of non-living animals, parts, materials, products, and specimens and associated documentation, to non-AZA entities such as universities and museums. These agreements should be made with entities that have appropriate long-term curation/collections capacity and research protocols, or needs for educational programs and/or exhibits.

Appendix I: Definitions

Acquisition: Acquisition of animals can occur through breeding (births, hatchings, cloning, and division of marine invertebrates = "fragging"), trade, donation, lease, loan, transfer (inter- and intra-institution), purchase, collection, confiscation, appearing on zoo property, or rescue and/or rehabilitation for release.

Annual monitoring and Due diligence: Due diligence for the health of animals on loan is important. Examples of annual monitoring and documentation include and are not limited to inventory records, health records, photos of the recipient's facilities, and direct inspections by AZA professionals with knowledge of animal care. The level of due diligence will depend on professional relationships.

AZA member institution: In this Policy "AZA member institutions" refers to AZA-accredited institutions and related facilities (zoological parks and aquariums). "AZA members" may refer to either institutions or individuals.

Data sharing: When specimens are transferred, the transferring and receiving institutions should agree on data that must be transferred with the specimen(s). Examples of associated documentation include provenance of the animal, original permits, tags and other metadata, life history data for the animal, how and when specimens were collected and conserved, etc.

Dispose: "Dispose/Disposing of" in this document is limited to complete and permanent removal of an individual via incineration, burying or other means of permanent destruction

Documentation: Examples of documentation include ZIMS records, "Breeding Loan" agreements, chain-of-custody logs, letters of reference, transfer agreements, and transaction documents. This is documentation that maximizes data sharing.

Domestic animal: Examples of domestic animals may include certain camelids, cattle, cats, dogs, ferrets, goats, pigs, reindeer, rodents, sheep, budgerigars, chickens, doves, ducks, geese, pheasants, turkeys, and goldfish or koi.

Ethics of Acquisition/Transfer/Euthanasia: Attempts by members to circumvent AZA Animal Programs in the acquisition of animals can be detrimental to the Association and its Animal Programs. Such action may also be detrimental to the species involved and may be a violation of the Association's Code of Professional Ethics. Attempts by members to circumvent AZA Animal Programs in the transfer, euthanasia or reintroduction of animals may be detrimental to the Association and its Animal Programs (unless the animal or animals are deemed extra in the Animal Program population by the Animal Program Coordinator). Such action may be detrimental to the species involved and may be a violation of the Association's Code of Professional Ethics.

Euthanasia: Humane death. This act removes an animal from the managed population. Specimens can be maintained in museums or cryopreserved collections. Humane euthanasia must be performed in accordance with the established euthanasia policy of the institution and follow the recommendations of current AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals (https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/avma-policies/avma-guidelines-euthanasia-animals).

"Extra" or Surplus: AZA's scientifically-managed Animal Programs, including SSPs, have successfully bred and reintroduced critically endangered species for the benefit of humankind. To accomplish these critical conservation goals, populations must be managed within "carrying capacity" limits. At times, the number of individual animals in a population exceeds carrying capacity, and while meaning no disrespect for these individual animals, we refer to these individual animals as "extra" within the managed population.

Feral: Feral animals are animals that have escaped from domestication or have been abandoned to the wild and have become wild, and the offspring of such animals. Feral animals may be acquired for temporary or permanent reasons.

Group: Examples of colonial, group-living, or prolific species include and are not limited to certain terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates, fish, sharks/rays, amphibians, reptiles, birds, rodents, bats, big herds, and other mammals.

Lacey Act: The Lacey Act prohibits the importation, exportation, transportation, sale, receipt, acquisition or purchase of wildlife taken or possessed in violation of any law, treaty or regulation of the United States or any Indian tribal law of wildlife law. In cases when there is no documentation accompanying an acquisition, the animal(s) may not be transferred across state lines. If the animal was illegally acquired at any time then any movement across state or international borders would be a violation of the Lacey Act.

Museum: It is best practice for modern zoos and aquariums to establish relationships with nearby museums or other biorepositories, so that they can maximize the value of animals when they die (e.g., knowing who to call when they have an animal in necropsy, or specimens for cryopreservation). Natural history museums that are members of the Natural Science Collections Alliance (NSCA) and frozen biorepositories that are members of the International Society of Biological and Environmental Repositories (ISBER) are potential collaborators that could help zoos find appropriate repositories for biological specimens.

Non-AZA entity: Non–AZA entities includes facilities not accredited by the AZA, facilities in other zoological regions, academic institutions, museums, research facilities, private individuals, etc.

Reintroduction: Examples of transfers outside of a living zoological population include movements of animals from zoo/aquarium populations to the wild through reintroductions or other legal means.

Specimen: Examples of specimens include animal parts, materials and products including bodily fluids, cell lines, clones, digestive content, DNA, feces, marine invertebrate (coral) fragments ("frags"), germplasm, and tissues.

Transaction documents: Transaction documents must be signed by the authorized representatives of both parties, and copies must be retained by both parties*. In the case of loans, the owner's permission for appropriate activities should be documented in the institutional records. This document(s) should be completed prior to any transfer. In the case of rescue, confiscation, and evacuation due to natural disasters, it is understood that documents may not be available until after acceptance or shipping. In this case documentation (e.g., a log) must be kept to reconcile the inventory and chain of custody after the event occurs. (*In the case of government owned

animals, notification of transfers must be sent to species manager for the government owned species).

Transfer: Transfer occurs when an animal leaves the institution for any reason. Reasons for transfer or euthanasia may include cooperative population management (genetic, demographic or behavioral management), animal welfare or behavior management reasons (including sexual maturation and individual management needs). Types of transfer include withdrawal through donation, trade, lease, loan, inter- and intra-institution transfers, sale, escape, theft. Reintroduction to the wild, humane euthanasia or natural death are other possible individual animal changes in a population.

Appendix 2: Recipient Profile Example

Example questions for transfers to non-AZA entities (from AZA-member Recipient Profile documents):

Has your organization, or any of its officers, been indicted, convicted, or fined by a State or Federal agency for any statute or regulation involving the care or welfare of animals housed at your facility? (If yes, please explain on a separate sheet).

Recipients agree that the specimen(s) or their offspring will not be utilized, sold or traded for any purpose contrary to the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Code of Ethics (enclosed)

References, other than (LOCAL ZOO/AQUARIUM) employees, 2 minimum (please provide additional references on separate sheet):		
Reference Name	Phone	
Facility	Fax	
Address	E-mail	
City	State	Zip
Country	AZA Member?	

Reference Name	Phone	
Facility	Fax	
Address	E-mail	
City	State	Zip
Country	AZA Member?	

Veterinary Information		
Veterinarian	Phone	
Clinic/Practice	Fax	
Address	E-mail	
City	State	Zip
Country		

How are animals identified at your facility? If animals are not identified at your facility, please provide an explanation about why they are not here:

Where do you acquire and send animals? (Select all that apply)			
AZA Institutions	Non-AZA Institutions	Exotic Animal Auctions	Pet Stores
Hunting Ranches	Dealers	Private Breeders	Non-hunting Game Ranches
Entertainment Industry	Hobbyists	Research Labs	Wild
Other			

What specific criteria are used to evaluate if a facility is appropriate to receive animals from you?

Please provide all of the documents listed below:

Required:

1. Please provide a brief statement of intent for the specimens requested.
2. Resumes of primary caretakers and those who will be responsible for the husbandry and management of animals.
3. Description (including photographs) of facilities and exhibits where animals will be housed.
4. Copy of your current animal inventory.

Only if Applicable:

5. Copies of your last two USDA inspection reports (if applicable).
6. Copies of current federal and state permits.
7. Copy of your institutional acquisition/disposition policy.

(in-house use only) In-Person Inspection of this facility (Staff member/Date, attach notes):

(Local institution: provide Legal language certifying that the information contained herein is true and correct)

(Validity of this: This document and all materials associated will be valid for a period of 2 years from date of signature.)

Example agreement for Receiving institution (agrees to following condition upon signing):

Recipient agrees that the animal(s) and its (their) offspring will not be utilized, sold or traded for the purpose of commerce or sport hunting, or for use in any stressful or terminal research or sent to any animal auction. Recipient further agrees that in the event the recipient intends to dispose of an animal donated by (INSTITUTION), recipient will first notify (INSTITUTION) of the identity of the proposed transferee and the terms and conditions of such disposition and will provide (INSTITUTION) the opportunity to acquire the animal(s) without charge. If (INSTITUTION) elects not to reclaim the animal within ten (10) business days following such notification, then, in such event, (INSTITUTION) waives any right it may have to the animal and recipient may dispose of the animal as proposed.

Institutional note: The text above is similar to the language most dog breeders use in their contracts when they sell a puppy. If people can provide that protection to the puppies they place, zoos/aquariums can provide it for animals that we place too! Some entities have been reluctant to sign it, and in that case we revert to a loan and our institution retains ownership of the animal. Either way, we are advised of the animal's eventual placement and location.

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

PREAMBLE

The continued existence of zoological parks and aquariums depends upon recognition that our profession is based on the respect for the dignity of the animals in our care, the people we serve, and most importantly, for each other. Members of the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums (known as American Zoo and Aquarium Association or "AZA") have an important role in the preservation of our heritage. To fulfill this role, we must understand the relationships we share with the public, the animals under our care, and with each other. A consequent obligation of membership is to maintain high standards of ethical conduct. Members must have the courage and foresight to live up to their responsibilities within principles of professionalism.

A code of ethics provides standards by which we can judge our professional conduct. We must find in our consciences the point against which to test our actions. It is our desire to maintain the respect and confidence of fellow members and the public that ought to provide us with incentive for the highest degree of ethical conduct. The possible loss of that respect and confidence numbers among the severest sanctions possible.

So long as our profession is guided by these principles, ours will continue to be a respected profession.

Code of Professional Ethics

The following Code of Professional Ethics of the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) shall form the basis for all disciplinary actions of the Association.

Deviation by a member from the AZA Code of Professional Ethics or from any of the rules officially adopted by the Board of Directors supplemental thereto, or any action by a member that is detrimental to the best interest of the zoo and aquarium profession and the AZA, shall be considered unethical conduct. The member shall be subject to investigation by the AZA Ethics Board and, if warranted, to disciplinary action by the Ethics Board and/or the AZA Board of Directors. The Code is intended as an inspirational guide for members and as a basis for disciplinary action.

This Code cannot apply to nonmembers, except as they have agreed to follow the Code in a signed agreement to participate in an AZA program. This Code defines the type of ethical conduct the public has a right to expect, not only of staff members of an institution but also of their nonprofessional employees and associates in all matters pertaining to professional zoological park and aquarium employment. The director and/or governing authority of a member institution should ultimately be responsible for the conduct of their employees and others affiliated with the member institution.

The Obligations of Professional Ethics set forth are aspirational in character and represent the objectives towards which every member should strive.

The Code's Mandatory Standards, unlike the Obligations of Professional Ethics, are mandatory in character and, if violated, may result in disciplinary action. The Mandatory Standards, to be uniformly applied to all members, establish a level of conduct below which no member may fall without being subject to disciplinary action. The Code makes no attempt to prescribe either disciplinary procedures or penalties for violation of Mandatory Standards. The severity of judgment against a member found to be in violation of a Mandatory Standard shall be determined by the character of the offense and the attendant circumstances. The Ethics Board, in applying the Mandatory Standards, may find interpretive guidance in the basic principles embodied in the standards and objectives reflected in the Obligations of Professional Ethics.

The Board of Directors and Ethics Board shall be responsible for interpreting the Code of Professional Ethics, subject to all provisions of the Charter and Bylaws. The Ethics Board shall investigate allegations, render

decisions, and prescribe subsequent actions and/or penalties. An appeal may be made to the AZA Executive Committee within thirty (30) days of the date of mailing the Ethics Board decision to the complainant and defendant. Appeals may be granted if the Executive Committee concludes that the complainant or defendant appealing the Ethics Board decision has demonstrated that (1) there are new facts, not known at the time of the Ethics Board investigation, which the Executive Committee believes may have changed the outcome; or (2) the Ethics Board did not follow relevant AZA procedures; or (3) the penalty recommended by the Ethics Board was excessive under the circumstances. An appeal shall be granted upon a majority vote of the AZA Executive Committee. If the request for an appeal is granted, the Board of Directors shall hear the appeal at its next regularly scheduled meeting. The appellate decision of the Board of Directors shall be final and cannot be appealed.

I. Obligations of Professional Ethics

In order to promote high standards of conduct in our profession, the AZA has formulated the following basic principles for the guidance of its members:

AS A MEMBER OF THE AZA, I PLEDGE TO:

C. Realize that I have moral responsibilities not only to my professional associates, my fellow employees, and the public, but also to the animals under my care.

D. Display the highest integrity, the best judgment or ethics possible, and use my professional skills to the best interests of all.

E. Deal fairly with members in the dissemination of professional information and advice.

F. Use only legal and ethical means when seeking to influence governmental legislation or regulations.

G. Promote the interests of wildlife conservation, biodiversity, and animal welfare to the public and to colleagues.

H. Maintain high standards of personal, professional, and business conduct and behavior.

I. Promote the interests of AZA and do my full share of work in support of the concepts and ideals of AZA.

J. Cooperate with qualified zoos/aquariums and other qualified persons/organizations in breeding programs of endangered and other species.

K. Aid the professional development of those who enter the zoological park and aquarium profession by assisting them to understand the functions, duties, and responsibilities of the profession.

L. Seek opportunities to be of constructive service in civic affairs and, to the best of my ability, advance the understanding of all nature to the community in which I live.

M. Encourage publication of significant achievements in breeding husbandry, medical technology, architecture, etc., in the appropriate publications generally familiar to members.

N. Endeavor at all times to improve zoos and aquariums.

II. Mandatory Standards

1. Maintaining Integrity and Competence of the Zoological Park and Aquarium Profession

a. A member shall make no materially false statement or deliberately fail to disclose a material fact in connection with an application for membership or accreditation in AZA.

b. A member shall not endorse the application for membership in AZA of a person known by that member to be unqualified in respect to character, education, length of service, or some other relevant factor.

2. Misconduct

a. A member shall not violate a Mandatory Standard.

b. A member shall not solicit the aid of another individual to circumvent, or assist another to violate, a Mandatory Standard.

c. A member shall not knowingly engage in activities contrary to local, state, federal, or international laws as such laws relate to our profession; and a member will, to the best of his or her ability, cooperate with governmental agencies regulating animal welfare and animal transactions.

d. A member shall not engage in conduct that adversely affects, or is prejudicial to, the concepts and ideals of the AZA.

e. A member shall make every effort to assure that all animals in his/her collection and under his/her care are disposed of in a manner which meets the current disposition standards of the Association and do not find their way into the hands of those not qualified to care for them properly.

3. Disclosure of Information

a. A member shall not knowingly misinform others regarding animal records or specimen disposition, professional information, and advice.

b. A member shall not alter animal records or alter the facts concerning age, condition, or other material information about any animal in order to affect the sale, trade, loan, or other transaction with respect to such animal.

c. A member shall immediately bring to the attention of the Ethics Board of the AZA any information concerning a clear violation of a Mandatory Standard.

d. A member shall issue no statement to the public which they know (or should know) to be false or misleading.

General Advisories

The policies outlined below have been previously adopted by the AZA Board of Directors and are considered to expand the interpretation of the AZA Code of Professional Ethics that was developed to guide ethical conduct of all members. Amendments can be proposed by the AZA Board of Directors, the Ethics Board, and/or AZA members. Any proposed changes shall be reviewed by the Ethics Board and, as appropriate, by legal counsel. Proposed changes shall be submitted to the AZA Board of Directors for action.

Animal Auctions (1981)

AZA members offering wildlife for sale at auctions attended by the general public are in violation of the AZA Code of Professional Ethics, specifically Mandatory Standards, 2-e, which states, “As a member of AZA, I pledge to...make every effort to assure that all animals...do not find their way into the hands of those not qualified to care for them properly.”

Use of Animal Exchange (1984)

Individuals may utilize Animal Exchange to purchase specimens if the following criteria are followed: the individual should, during the initial contact, identify his or her intentions and make the seller aware if the specimen(s) will go to the purchaser’s private collection and not the zoo in question (adopted by the Ethics Board at the direction of the AZA Board).

Notification of Ethics Code Violations (1986-revised 1993)

Copies of all final actions (the denial of an appeal to the Executive Committee or notification to the complainant and defendant of the appellate decision) regarding violations of the Code of Professional Ethics shall be sent to the Director, Chief Executive Officer, or Governing Authority of the institution of the defendant(s) involved. Such final actions shall be published in Communiqué, including a brief and factual statement of the action, including the name(s) of the defendant(s) involved in the violation and a listing of the sections of the Code which were violated to provide guidance for AZA members.

Procurement of SSP Animals (1986-modified 1990-revised 1993)

Attempts by members to circumvent AZA conservation programs in the procurement and/or disposition of specimens of SSP animals are detrimental to the Association and its conservation programs. Such action may be

detrimental to the species involved and could be construed as a violation of the Association's Code of Professional Ethics. All Association members should work through SSP species coordinators and appropriate propagation groups in efforts to procure or dispose of specimens of SSP species.

Ethics Board

The Ethics Board, elected by the membership, has separate duties from the AZA Board of Directors. The Ethics Board shall consist of nine (9) members. The Ethics Board proposed guidelines on the function of the Ethics Board for consideration during the San Diego Annual Conference in 1977. The AZA Board of Directors unanimously adopted these guidelines and revised them in 1993:

All Ethics Board matters shall be handled in accordance with the objectives and standards of the Association's Code of Professional Ethics.

Matters called to the attention of the Ethics Board must be in writing and addressed to the Chairman or any member of the Ethics Board. The ethics charge must be signed by the complainant and must contain a full statement of the matter to be reviewed by the Ethics Board.

An individual filing an ethics complaint shall be advised that full disclosure of the complaint shall be made available to all parties concerned. At this time, the complainant has the right to withdraw the complaint; and thus, the matter will be closed.

The Ethics Board, the complainant, and the defendant shall at all times during the investigation maintain strict confidentiality regarding the case.

The initial responsibility of the Ethics Board is to determine the validity of the charge(s). If the charge(s) appears to be valid, the Ethics Board shall initiate a full investigation. Once a full investigation is initiated, the Ethics Board must determine if an Ethics Code violation has occurred and what action and/or penalty is necessary. In making its determination, the Ethics Board shall consult, where necessary or appropriate, with AZA legal counsel. The Ethics Board has the responsibility and authority to issue a judgment and determine disciplinary actions. The AZA Board of Directors serves as an appellate board.

The AZA Board of Directors may also direct the Ethics Board to perform additional duties as needed. The following procedures are hereby established:

The Chairman of the Ethics Board will distribute copies of all duly received ethics complaints to members of the Ethics, Board, the AZA President & CEO, Executive Director, Executive Vice President, and the AZA Board Liaison to the Ethics Board. All correspondence pertaining to the case shall be marked "Confidential." The Chairman shall request each Ethics Board member to render an opinion as to the validity of the complaint and make a recommendation on how to proceed and action to be taken.

The Chairman shall review all recommendations, suggest an Ethics Board action and, if necessary, arrange an appearance before the Ethics Board and/or a site visitation.

The Ethics Board may dismiss any charge for which there is insufficient evidence to pursue the investigation or for which there is no apparent violation of the Ethics Code. The complainant, defendant, and the Board of Directors shall be notified by the Ethics Board of the decision, for which there is no appeal.

The Ethics Board may determine that there is no clear violation or proof of a violation but that there is concern about the conduct of a member. The Ethics Board may issue a letter of concern.

If the Ethics Board determines that a violation of the Code has occurred, the following options shall be considered: (A) Letter of Reprimand from the Ethics Board. (B) Letter of Reprimand from the Ethics Board and the AZA Board of Directors. (C) Censorship and suspension of certain membership privileges (up to 2 years), to be determined on a case-by-case basis. (D) Expulsion from AZA membership for a minimum of two years. The Ethics Board may function as an investigative body as it determines whether or not a violation has occurred. The

Ethics Board shall make its determination based upon the greater weight of the evidence presented to it. Ethics matters often do not involve legal matters but are founded on moral values and industry standards and practices. Where necessary or appropriate, the Ethics Board shall consult with AZA legal counsel.

The Ethics Board shall deliberate, during a meeting or conference call, on the final determination and action to be taken. Actions by the Ethics Board shall require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of its members. When a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of guilty is not received the issue shall be dropped.

The Chairman of the Ethics Board shall submit a report to the President & CEO, Executive Director, Executive Vice President, AZA Board Liaison Representative, and legal counsel, if necessary, with the Ethics Board's findings and course of disciplinary action to be taken prior to advising the complainant and defendant.

The Chairman of the Ethics Board shall advise the complainant and the defendant of the findings and action taken by the Ethics Board.

An appeal may be made to the AZA Executive Committee within thirty (30) days of the date of mailing the Ethics Board decision to the complainant and defendant. Appeals may be granted if the Executive Committee concludes that the complainant or defendant appealing the Ethics Board decision has demonstrated that (1) there are new facts, not known at the time of the Ethics Board investigation, which the Executive Committee believes may have changed the outcome; or (2) the

Ethics Board did not follow relevant AZA procedures; or (3) the penalty recommended by the Ethics Board was excessive under the circumstances. Appeals shall be granted upon a majority vote of the AZA Executive Committee. The AZA Board of Directors shall hear the appeal at its next regularly scheduled meeting. The appellate decision of the Board of Directors shall be final and cannot be appealed.

At least one member of the Ethics Board shall be present during the appeal.

The Ethics Board shall notify the complainant and the defendant of the final action of the AZA Board of Directors once the appellate decision has been rendered.

General Administrative Policies of the Accreditation Commission

Accidents or Incidents Involving Potential Injury or Welfare. AZA's incident reporting policy exists to validate that accredited members are managing significant accidents/incidents related to human safety and/or animal wellbeing in compliance with accreditation standards. In addition, timely reporting of incidents, especially those incidents that may generate public scrutiny or media attention, provides an opportunity for AZA to provide support for the reporting institution in terms of technical expertise, confirmation that an institution is in compliance with accreditation standards, or other public relations support from AZA staff/leadership.

Should an accident or incident occur that meets one or more of the criteria below, Accreditation staff should be notified and a written report must be submitted to the Accreditation Commission within thirty (30) days explaining what happened and noting what corrective actions are being taken by the institution as a result.

The Commission will determine if a special inspection or other action is necessary and will notify the institution in writing once a decision has been made. All information submitted to the Commission will be kept strictly confidential.

For the purposes of this policy, potentially dangerous animals are defined as those species that could likely cause significant injury or death to a human. Significant injury or illness is defined as an injury/illness that results in in-patient hospitalization.

Considerations for submitting such reports include:

> ***Staff or Public Injuries*** – site and/or animal-related injury to a human resulting in death, dismemberment, permanent disability, or significant injury or illness.
>
> ***Unusual Animal Death/Injury*** – unusual, unexpected, or preventable circumstances resulting in death or grievous injury to an animal, particularly those events that could or do result in public scrutiny, regulatory investigation, or media attention.
>
> ***Mortality/Morbidity Events*** – death, injury, or illness involving multiple individuals of the same or different species due to a single cause/etiology that exceeds reasonable expectations for a species, group, situation, or habitat.
>
> ***Animal Transport Events*** – escape of any species during transport; unforeseen or preventable death of individuals or groups of individuals related to transport. [For taxa routinely shipped in large numbers/bulk (e.g., fish and inverts), see "Mortality/Morbidity Events" above to determine if the mortality event warrants reporting.]
>
> ***Animal Escapes*** – escape of a potentially dangerous animal or mass escapes of any species.
>
> ***Barrier Breaches*** – incidents in which a guest or other unauthorized individual crosses animal containment, putting themselves, others, or the animal in jeopardy of serious injury or death.
>
> ***Unintentional or Unexpected Sharing of Space*** – incidents in which a human unintentionally or unexpectedly shares unprotected space (in breach of protocol, as a result of a shifting or containment error, etc.) with a potentially dangerous animal regardless of the outcome of the incident.

Accidents Resulting in Human Fatality. An on-site inspection shall be automatic after any accident *involving an animal* that results in a human fatality. The inspection shall focus on the incident and shall be scheduled to take place as soon after the incident as can be reasonably scheduled. Site related human fatalities not involving an animal shall be immediately assessed by AZA relative to the AZA Accreditation Standards. The Commission shall

determine if a special inspection is necessary in those cases and will notify the institution in writing once a decision has been made. Institutions are responsible for submitting a written report to the Accreditation Commission as noted under *"Accidents Involving Injury or Welfare,"* above.

Accreditation Cycle. The cycle of accreditation shall be five years, after which an institution must undergo the full accreditation process again. *Exceptions:* • In cases where an applicant processes and is granted accreditation on a cycle in conflict with the geographic rule, its *initial* accreditation cycle will be shortened to four and a half years to place it on the proper seasonal cycle for future inspections (see *Geographic Location*, page 112). • If an extension is granted, the year of extension shall be deducted from the institution's subsequent five-year accreditation cycle if the institution receives accreditation at the end of the year of extension (see *Extensions of Accreditation*, page 112). • If an institution is granted provisional accreditation, the provisional year shall be deducted from the institution's subsequent five-year accreditation cycle if the institution receives accreditation at the end of the provisional year (see *Grant Provisional Accreditation*, page 29 of the *2025 Guide to the Accreditation of Zoological Parks and Aquariums*).

Achieving Accreditation. Accreditation can only be achieved by a judgment from the AZA Accreditation Commission that the applicant institution meets or exceeds all AZA standards, and supports and employs AZA practices and philosophies. This decision is preceded by a lengthy application and full evaluation process, involving information from a number of sources, including a thorough on-site inspection.

Addition of an Elephant Inspector. For institutions with elephants, an inspector who specializes in elephants will be added to the regular team and will focus on the institution's elephant program.

Addition of a Specialist Inspector. It is occasionally necessary for a specialist inspector to be added to an inspection team. The Commission will determine, on a case by case basis, when this is justified and will notify the institution. Examples would be zoological parks with aquarium facilities of a sufficient size and nature to require an inspection team member specializing in aquatics. The same would be true of aquariums with exhibits containing land-based animals, etc.

Attendance At The Hearing (Who Should Be There). The institution's CEO/Director must attend the hearing to answer questions, authorize action, and to make any statements desired. The CEO/Director may bring to the hearing any individual(s) he or she would like to have present. This may include members of the institution's staff, governing authority, support organization, or local government officials. If the CEO/Director cannot attend, a written notification must be provided to AZA as soon as possible. The notification must include an explanation, and give full authority to an individual selected by the CEO/Director to represent the institution in place of the CEO/Director.

CEO/Director Requirement For Applicants Not Currently AZA-Accredited. Any institution not currently accredited may not apply for accreditation if it is without a *permanent*, full-time CEO/Director. Materials may not be submitted under the leadership of an *Interim* or *Acting* Director.

CEO/Director Vacancy. When a vacancy occurs in the position of CEO/Director the AZA-accredited institution must notify the Accreditation Commission in writing, and a follow-up letter must be submitted to the Commission every six months thereafter reporting the status of the search until such time as the position is filled. The status update must include details as to what has occurred, how the institution is being managed in the interim, and an estimate as to when it is expected the position may be filled. An AZA-accredited institution that is without the services of a permanent, full-time, compensated CEO/Director for longer than one year may be subject to loss of accreditation and membership. An AZA-accredited institution that is temporarily without a permanent fulltime CEO/Director must process for accreditation on its regular 5-year cycle. Extensions may not be granted. Institutions that are not accredited by AZA may not apply without a permanent fulltime CEO/Director in place.

CEO/Director Vacancy Occurring Immediately After Receiving AZA Accreditation. If a CEO/Director vacates his or her position at the institution within ninety days of receiving accreditation, the Commission may, in its discretion, require written biannual progress reports, or may require that the institution reprocess again at the earliest opportunity to do so once a new CEO/Director is in place.

Change of Governance. A change in governance refers to a change of the governing authority, such as from a governmental agency to society or vice versa. If a change in governance occurs, a letter or affidavit from the CEO or chairperson of the new governing authority is required pledging to uphold and abide by accreditation standards, including the AZA Charter & Bylaws, Code of Ethics, Policy on Responsible Population Management, and other related policies. The letter must be sent to the Commission within 30 days of the governance change.

Change of Location. In the event of a relocation of an accredited institution, the institution must reprocess for accreditation as soon as the new location is officially open. An application must be received by the submission deadline that falls immediately prior to, or following, the opening.

Change of Ownership. A change in ownership refers to the sale or formal transfer of ownership of an institution. In the event of a change in ownership of an accredited institution, the institution must reprocess for accreditation within 12 months, regardless of when its accreditation is scheduled to expire. A letter or affidavit from the CEO or chairperson of the purchasing or receiving organization is also required pledging to uphold and abide by accreditation standards, including the AZA Charter & Bylaws, Code of Ethics, Policy on Responsible Population Management, and other related policies. The letter must also indicate the new owner's intent to submit materials applying for accreditation within the required time period. The letter must be sent to the Commission within 30 days of final sale or transfer.

Change of Scope. Accredited institutions must notify the Commission in writing in the event that a change in the scope of its facility occurs (for example, the opening of a new exhibit of significant proportions, or an exhibit that changes the overall scope of the institution, such as an aquarium in a zoo, or land-based animals in an aquarium, etc.). The Commission may assign a team, or individual, to conduct an inspection. Cost of such inspection shall be borne by the accredited institution concerned. (See *Interim or Special Inspection* page 113, and *Follow-up Inspections*, page 112.)

Complaints. If a documented, written complaint is received from a member of the general public, the institution's staff, or a professional colleague regarding an AZA-accredited institution, the Commission will take steps to investigate the situation. In most cases this will involve reaching out to the institution for their comments and to obtain specific documentation related to the complaint (e.g., exhibit photos, policies, procedures, etc.). Based upon its findings, the Commission will make recommendations to the institution to ensure that accreditation standards are being maintained, or take appropriate action. In some cases the Commission may assign a team to conduct an inspection. (See *Interim or Special Inspection* page 113, and *Follow-up Inspections*, page 112.)

Determining Compliance. The AZA Accreditation Commission, based on the collective professional training and experience of its 16 member panel, is the body officially tasked with determining whether a standard is being met or not. The Commission's decision is absolute. In cases of denial of accreditation, an appeal of that denial may be made to the AZA Executive Committee [see page 30 of the *2025 Guide to the Accreditation of Zoological Parks & Aquariums*].

Elephant Management and Care – Requesting A Temporary Variance Under the AZA Standards. Institutions requesting a temporary variance under the AZA Standards For Elephant Management & Care should submit that request to the Accreditation Commission at the time it becomes apparent that a temporary variance may be needed. The request should be in the form of a letter detailing the temporary variance being requested, and should include all necessary documentation. The Commission will consider the requested temporary variance and will thereafter notify the institution of its decision. Temporary variances must be re-applied for prior to the expiration date contained in the variance, or documentation must be provided that the reason for the temporary variance has been addressed. NOTE: institutions not currently AZA-accredited must be in full compliance with AZA standards at the time application is made.

Elephant Management and Care – Special Wellbeing Variance. In cases where an elephant's physical and/or psychological wellbeing is believed to be at risk by implementation of a standard, an institution may request a special wellbeing variance under the AZA Standards For Elephant Management & Care. To qualify for a special wellbeing variance, the elephant(s) in question must be considered geriatric, and the institution must provide

evidence that the elephant's physical and/or psychological wellbeing will be at risk without the variance, or that moving the elephant could result in serious injury or death. Evidence must be in the form of documentation from the institution's veterinary and animal management professional staff. The request for a special wellbeing variance must be in the form of a letter detailing the variance being requested, and containing all necessary documentation. The AZA Accreditation Commission will consider the request and will thereafter notify the institution of its decision. If granted, the variance will be for three (3) years and must be re-applied for prior to the expiration date contained in the variance. If granted, institutions must submit an annual report documenting the status and health of the elephant(s), including veterinary records, assessments, behavioral profiles, and the written recommendations of the institution's veterinary and animal management professional staff. NOTE: for the purpose of this variance, wellbeing should be assessed with a focus on physical and psychological health and function.

Elephant Management and Care – Substantial Compliance Extension [to an existing variance]. In cases where a deadline is set in a standard, and an institution has an existing variance until that deadline but has not yet achieved full compliance by the deadline, a Substantial Compliance Extension of the existing variance may be considered by the Accreditation Commission. Approval may be granted only if the institution can demonstrate clear and steady progress toward compliance with the standard, is actively engaged and working towards full compliance, and has identified a realistic completion date. Regular updates will be required until compliance is achieved, and the Commission may require an inspection of the elephant program, at its discretion, as a condition of maintaining accreditation.

Enforcement of Standards. Institutions holding accreditation from AZA must maintain all AZA standards, and support AZA practices and philosophies during the period that accreditation is held. If AZA has evidence that this is not taking place, it will work with the institution to see that standards are met, or will take whatever action is appropriate to ensure the integrity of its process, including removal of AZA-accreditation when deemed necessary. (See *Interim or Special Inspection* page 113, *Follow-up Inspections*, page 112, and *Rescinding Accreditation*, page 114.)

Extensions of Accreditation. Under extenuating or special circumstances extensions of accreditation may be granted to extend current accreditation by one year. An institution desiring an extension must submit a request in writing to the Accreditation Commission, including a full explanation as to why the extension is being requested, as soon as possible to avoid a potential lapse in accreditation and AZA membership. Before considering the request, the Commission may require a site visit to assess the institution's ability to maintain accreditation standards during the period of extension. If a site visit is deemed necessary, it must take place prior to any decision being made by the Commission. The Commission will thereafter make a determination, and the institution will be notified. A second extension will be considered only in extreme cases, and will require a site visit. If an extension is granted, the year of extension shall be deducted from the institution's subsequent five-year accreditation cycle should the institution receive accreditation at the end of the year of extension. [NOTE: *Missing a deadline will not be considered an acceptable reason for extension of accreditation. Extenuating or special circumstances shall not include a vacancy in the position of CEO/Director.]*

Follow-up Inspections. A follow-up inspection shall be conducted for all provisionally accredited and tabled applicants at the end of the tabled/provisional period, as a condition of proceeding forward in the process. While on site, the inspection team may, at their discretion, inspect all or portions of the institution. Cost of such inspection shall be borne by the institution as a requirement of maintaining and/or achieving accreditation. *(See Mid-Cycle Inspections,* page 113*).*

Geographic Location and Accreditation Cycle. To optimize weather conditions for inspectors and to create a more even distribution of the case load for the Commission, institutions located in geographic areas that typically experience a mild winter season will be placed on a five-year accreditation cycle that affords a fall-winter inspection (i.e., will have their accreditation expire in March). Institutions located in geographic areas that typically experience a harsh winter season will be placed on a five-year accreditation cycle that affords a spring-summer inspection (i.e., will have their accreditation expire in September). In cases where an applicant processes and is granted accreditation on a cycle in conflict with the geographic rule, its *initial* accreditation cycle will be shortened

to four and a half years to place it on the proper seasonal cycle for future inspections. **NOTE**: Because aquariums, by their nature, are primarily indoor facilities, they will be placed on a five-year accreditation cycle that affords a fall-winter inspection (i.e., will have their accreditation expire in March).

Implementation of New Standards. The Accreditation Standards and Related Policies document is thoroughly reviewed and updated annually. New editions are released in the Fall for the following year. New standards and revisions go into effect beginning January 1st. (Example: The 2026 standards will be released in Fall 2025 and will go into effect on January 1, 2026**.) All facilities are expected to begin implementing new standards as soon as they are released.** It is not practical to expect facilities to be fully up to speed as soon as new standards go into effect, but they should begin to develop a plan for implementation as quickly as possible.

Institution's Membership In AZA. An institution's membership and participation in AZA must be maintained as a condition of accreditation.

Institutions Under Construction. Institutions currently being constructed may apply for accreditation prior to the opening date; however, the onsite inspection will not take place until the institution is officially open to the general public and a permanent, fulltime CEO/Director has been on board for at least six months. (See *Deadlines* and *Early Submittals,* pages 17 – 18 of the *2025 Guide to the Accreditation of Zoological Parks and Aquariums*).

Institutions Within Institutions. In order to be accredited, a zoological park or aquarium which is a part of a larger institution (such as a university, museum, or botanical garden) must be distinct enough to be separately identified and must adequately fulfill the definition of a zoological park or aquarium as earlier defined. When accreditation is granted in such cases, it will apply only to the zoological park or aquarium concerned and not to the nonzoological activities of the larger organization in fields in which AZA has no expertise.

Interim or Special Inspections. The Accreditation Commission or AZA Board of Directors may, at its discretion, assign a team to conduct an interim or special inspection of any AZA-accredited institution at any time during the five-year accreditation period. While on site, the team may, at their discretion, inspect all or portions of the institution. Cost of such inspection shall be borne by the institution as a requirement of maintaining and/or achieving accreditation. *(See Mid-Cycle Inspections,* page 113*).*

"Last Minute" Inspector Replacements. Although it is highly unusual, a "last minute" change in inspectors may become necessary in a sudden emergency. In this case, there may not be sufficient time for AZA to follow its standard procedure and provide the institution with a list of potential replacements. Every effort will be made to alert the institution in advance, but in extreme circumstances, AZA will assign a replacement inspector and notify the institution thereafter.

Mid-Cycle Inspections. The Accreditation Commission may, at its discretion, require a mid-cycle inspection as a condition of maintaining accreditation. When such an inspection is required, the visiting team will focus on key areas identified when accreditation was issued, and will also review the institution as a whole. Cost of such inspection shall be borne by the institution as a condition of maintaining accreditation. An application and application fees are not required.

Mid-cycle inspections may apply to the following:

- Institutions that are granted provisional accreditation and receive full accreditation one year later; or institutions whose initial (new) applications are tabled and receive accreditation at the end of the tabling period.
- Institutions that meet minimum standards when accreditation is granted but that the Commission believes may be challenged in successfully maintaining AZA standards throughout the full five-year cycle of accreditation.
- Institutions with a large number of identified concerns; institutions with significant safety and/or animal wellbeing concerns; institutions that are not well prepared for the inspection.

Multiple Facilities Under One Authority. If two or more institutions are under the same ownership and governing authority, administration or control, are located on the same property, and public admittance for all institutions is covered by a single entrance fee (or a combination ticket can be purchased that allows entrance to all institutions), they will be considered as a single institution. All facilities are subject to inspection. If it is determined that the institutions do not meet the above criteria, processing as separate facilities will be necessary.

Museums Within Animal Facilities. If a museum exists within an animal facility, adjacent to an animal facility, or if an animal facility exists within a museum, only the animal facility is inspected and considered as falling under AZA's standards of accreditation.

Offsite Facilities. The inspection will include an institution's offsite facilities. An offsite facility is one that is owned and operated by the institution, functions in support of the institution, but exists at a separate location away from the institution itself. Institutions must list all offsite facilities in the space provided on the application for accreditation. Examples of offsite facilities include, but are not limited to: food storage areas, maintenance and equipment facilities, quarantine spaces, and animal holding areas or exhibits. The Primary Reviewer, in consultation with the inspection team chair, will determine which of these areas must be inspected.

Provisional Accreditation. The Commission may implement provisional accreditation at any time during the five-year cycle if it concludes that accreditation standards are not being consistently met and/or maintained. In such case, if practicable, the institution shall receive immediate notice of the Commission's decision. The Commission may also choose to conduct an on-site inspection, after which the facility will be afforded an opportunity for a hearing. The hearing will be scheduled for an upcoming monthly virtual meeting of the Commission. The Commission may take any additional action it deems appropriate upon consideration of the issues.

Rescinding Accreditation. The Commission may rescind accreditation at any time if it concludes that accreditation standards are not being consistently met and/or maintained. In such case the institution shall receive immediate notice of the Commission's decision. The Commission may also choose to conduct an on-site inspection, after which the facility will be afforded an opportunity for a hearing. The hearing will be scheduled for an upcoming monthly Zoom meeting of the Commission. The Commission may take any additional action it deems appropriate upon consideration of the issues. Rescinding or denial of accreditation is appealable under the bylaws to the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors.

Seasonal Closings. Institutions that are closed for winter months must be on a summer inspection schedule. No regular accreditation inspections will be done when institutions are closed for the winter.

Special Wellbeing Variance. In cases where it is believed that an animal's physical and/or psychological wellbeing would be at risk by the implementation of a standard, an institution may request a special wellbeing variance. To qualify for a special wellbeing variance, the animal(s) in question must be considered geriatric or handicapped, and the institution must provide evidence that the animal's wellbeing will be at risk if the standard as written is imposed, or that moving the animal isn't possible and/or could result in serious injury or death. The request for a special wellbeing variance must be in the form of a letter detailing the variance being requested, and containing all necessary documentation from the institution's veterinary and animal management professional staff, and any other experts involved. The AZA Accreditation Commission will consider the request and will thereafter notify the institution of its decision. If granted, the variance will be for three (3) years and must be re-applied for prior to the expiration date contained in the variance. If granted, institutions must submit an annual report documenting the status and health of the animal(s), including veterinary records, assessments, and the written recommendations of the institution's veterinary and animal management professional staff. NOTE: for the purpose of this variance, wellbeing should be assessed with a focus on physical and psychological health and function. For elephants, see "Elephant Management and Care – Special Wellbeing Variance" (page 111).

Temporary Closings. Institutions temporarily closed to the public will retain their accreditation and their AZA membership. Should an institution's cycle of accreditation review fall within the period of temporary closure, an extension must be requested in writing prior to the institution's regular deadline for submission of accreditation materials. During the period of closure, a written Progress Report must be submitted every six months until such

time as the institution has re-opened. Upon re-opening, the institution must submit materials for full accreditation review by the first deadline that falls after re-opening. In the case of institutions closed for less than six (6) months, a waiver may be requested in writing.

Rev. 11/2024

© 2020 | 8403 Colesville Road, Suite 710 | Silver Spring, MD 20910–3314 | www.aza.org