

Animal Welfare Policy

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1. Purpose

The Zoo and Aquarium Association (ZAA) believes that all zoos and aquariums must ensure the animals under their care live a good life by promoting positive welfare to the highest possible standard for the duration of their lifetime. Progressive zoos and aquariums strive for continuous improvement in animal welfare as it underpins all that we do as a sector.

This Policy establishes a contemporary understanding of animal welfare and encourages zoos and aquariums to promote good animal welfare (Positive Welfare) within their organisations.

2. Scope and exemptions

This Policy applies to all Regional and International Association Members.

3. Policy Statement

Zoos and aquariums undertake conservation, education, research and recreation activities for the community, and provide a significant socio-economic contribution to society. The Association recognises that in all activities zoos and aquariums have a responsibility to ensure a high standard of animal welfare, described as *Positive Animal Welfare*.

The Association adopts the *Five Domains Model*¹ to assist members in assessing and achieving positive animal welfare, and for the Associations' Accreditation Program.

¹ Mellor, D.J. and Beausoleil, N.J. (2015). Extending the 'Five Domains' model for animal welfare assessment to incorporate positive welfare states. *Animal Welfare* 24:241-253

The Association differentiates between animal welfare and ethics. While zoos and aquariums should also consider the ethical positions associated with keeping captive non-domestic animals, nations in the Australasian region have democratically accepted the use of animals for a range of purposes including in agriculture, as pets, and for sport and recreation. Further ethical positions are considered separately to this policy.

Zoos and aquariums have taken a strong lead in several areas of animal welfare research including behavioural analysis and non-invasive physiological assessment of stress. Member organisations are encouraged to contribute to the knowledge of animal welfare science through participation in research projects and broad dissemination of project findings.

The Association recommends members develop their own position statements, policies, and procedures that align with this policy, and to maintain and improve welfare for all animals in their care.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Compliance

- a. The Association's Accreditation Program shall ensure confirmation of Positive Welfare is occurring and supported within its assessment processes.
- b. The Director/CEO/Owner of an Association member, or their delegate, shall ensure that animals under the care of their organisation can satisfy the requirements of this Policy, as well as the requirements of all relevant welfare legislation and regulation.
- c. The Director/CEO/Owner of an Association member or their delegate is responsible for addressing situations of welfare compromise when they are identified.
- d. The Director/CEO/Owner of an Association member or their delegate shall ensure their organisation identifies all current situations of potential welfare compromise and implements plans to address these. These include:
 - (i) Where animals express abnormal behaviours and stereotypies; or
 - (ii) Where the animal has a form of functional impairment or chronic health issue that would compromise welfare if it does not receive additional care and support; or
 - (iii) Where social animals are being permanently or temporarily managed in a solitary or semi-solitary situation, other than for veterinary treatment procedures.

Plans to address such scenarios should be targeted at returning the animal to a state that is in the animal's best interests. Plans to support an animal during its compromised state is generally considered temporarily acceptable unless the issue is of a more permanent nature and the animal's welfare is demonstrably not significantly compromised.

To ensure plans are appropriate and fit for purpose Members are encouraged to consult with the ZAA Office or with Species Coordinators, TAG Co-conveners and/or

other identified subject matter experts to proactively develop management plans for all declared animals.

- e. The Director/CEO/Owner of an Association member or their delegate shall ensure their organisation identifies likely future risks to animal welfare and proactively plans to mitigate these risks. Assessment via a risk matrix support identification of priority risks. These risk scenarios could include:
- (i) Animals of a social species becoming solitary through loss of a companion animal (e.g. a pair of primates reducing to a solitary animal due to age, poor health etc), or
 - (ii) Where animals are part of a non-breeding and aging group which is reducing in number and are unlikely to be resocialised (e.g. a non-breeding pack of canids), or
 - (iii) Where animals belong to a species for which there are few or no specimens available within the region (e.g. an exotic species with no regional program and only a very small representative population), or
 - (iv) Where there are aging animals that may require future additional support as they get older.

Note that in such scenarios, Association members should have plans in place to enable an effective response to maintain good welfare and return the animal to its ideal state as soon as possible through enrichment plans, prearranged transfer plans, or establish end-of-life assessment processes.

- f. The Director/CEO/Owner of an Association member or their delegate must ensure mitigation strategies to all identified risk scenarios are in place and documented. Plans should be made available to all personnel working with these animals and must be presented to the SMP Position Holders and ZAA Executive Office when required (e.g. through regional planning discussions and through Accreditation review)

Note: Association members are required to consult with Species Coordinators, TAG Co-conveners and other identified subject matter experts to proactively develop management plans for all declared animals.

4.2 Reporting

- a. The Director/CEO/Owner of an Association member or their delegate is responsible for reporting any situations of welfare compromise in accordance with the Association's Accreditation Policy as well as in accordance with all relevant welfare legislation and regulation.
- b. The Director/CEO/Owner of an Association member or their delegate is responsible for informing the ZAA of any existing or known risks to an animal's welfare as they arise and must declare all known circumstances through the ZAA Accreditation Program's Declaration process.

- c. The Accreditation Program shall report any situations of welfare compromise to the Board if they cannot be addressed through the approved review processes.

5. Related Documents

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following policies, procedures and guidelines of the Association:

- Code of Conduct
- Accreditation Policy
- Member Policy
- Regional Species Management Program Policy
- Animal Visitor Interactions Position Statement

6. Definitions

Affective States/Experiences: Individual mental experiences that are subjective to the animal and occur in its consciousness. These can be negative (e.g. pain, hunger) or positive (e.g. satiety, excitement).

Positive Welfare/Good Welfare: The welfare state of an animal that is achieved when positive mental experiences are promoted and at the same time negative mental experiences are minimised.

Negative Welfare/Poor Welfare: The welfare state of an animal when there are negative mental experiences occurring on a severe, frequent or ongoing basis.

Relevant legislation and regulation: legislation and regulation applicable to locations of Association members.

Social species: Species regarded as highly interactive with members of their same species and whose psychological well-being is associated with social interactions (<https://az.research.umich.edu/animalcare/glossary/social-species>)

Solitary animal/ species: Solitary animals are those that spend a majority of their lives without others of their species, with possible exceptions for mating and raising their young. (<https://www.definitions.net/definition/solitary+animal>)

7. Approval and Review Details

Approval History	Details
Approval Authority	Association Board
Relevant Committee and/or Stakeholders	Animal Management Committee
Original Approval Date	27/08/2012 (as Position Statement)
Last Review Date	05/08/2024
Next review date	05/08/2029

This document should be reviewed within five (5) years of the date of approval or last review.

Amendment History Approved / Amended / Rescinded / Reviewed	Authority	Date	Description / Notes
Approved	Board	05/08/2024	4.1 Compliance and Definitions: clarify the expectation that members are to identify animals under their care who may face certain risks, and to proactively establish strategies to minimise these
Approved	Board	12/12/2019	Upgraded from Position Statement to Policy