

Principal Partner  
**Westpac**

Zoos South Australia  
**Animal  
Welfare  
Charter**

**ZOOS**  
SOUTH AUSTRALIA



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**Zoos South Australia is a charitable conservation society that exists to save species from extinction and to connect people with nature. Our vision is to lead and achieve long-term conservation change through our internationally renowned sites, programs and people.**

As a zoo-based conservation organisation with responsibility for the care of animals in our collection and in the field through our conservation projects, we aim to ensure that our activities are underpinned by high standards (5) in animal welfare that reflect the needs and interests of our animals at all times.

Zoos SA's Animal Welfare Charter is underpinned by the following commitments from Living Conservation: A Strategic Plan for Zoos SA 2012-2017 (1) which states that at Zoos SA we will:

- aim to lead in our care and presentation of animals,
- work as leaders in ex-situ conservation practices and undertake the highest level of husbandry,
- conduct our activities to reach the highest welfare standards,
- underpin our conservation, education, recreation and research activities with appropriate animal welfare outcomes at all times,
- seek to satisfy the five welfare domains of nutrition, environment, health, behavior and mental well-being for all animals in our collection,
- set a leading standard for husbandry, veterinary care and exhibit design that balances the needs of visitors, staff and the animals in our care,
- communicate our practices and accomplishments to achieve animal welfare.

We recognise that within a zoo environment we cannot completely replicate an animal's natural habitat but to the best of our abilities we will endeavor to meet their physical, behavioral and psychological needs.

Zoos provide an important opportunity for people to learn about and connect with animals which they may never otherwise see and through our ambassador species people can learn about the challenges facing species in the wild. Zoos SA will manage its animal collection to strongly reflect its species welfare, conservation, public engagement and sustainability goals.



## Charter's Purpose

**This document is intended to provide a framework for staff, Zoos SA members and external stakeholders that details Zoos South Australia's approach and application of welfare to the animals in our care.**

### **Zoo Aquarium Association standards**

Zoos SA is a full accredited member of Zoo Aquarium Association (ZAA) and is therefore guided by the Association's code of ethics and Animal Welfare Position Statement. (2)

ZAA has chosen the Five Domain model of animal welfare (3) as its contemporary welfare framework for animal welfare assessment in zoos. The Five Domains (nutrition, environment, health, behavior and mental state) represent areas of potential welfare compromise and, conversely, areas where welfare can be enhanced. The first four of the domains are largely physical or functional. Sensory inputs from these physical domains provide experiences for the fifth (mental).

Zoos SA has adopted the Five Domain model. This Charter addresses our commitments to the first four domains recognising that through these activities we will achieve the fifth.

To underpin these commitments Zoos SA will need to acknowledge our life-long responsibility for animals in our care, manage our programs and knowledge systems appropriately, dedicate adequate resources and monitor and evaluate our efforts.

The domains are largely designed to address the needs of exhibited captive animals (4); through our project standards and life-long commitment to animals this Charter also addresses welfare associated with field research and conservation program activities.



# Our Commitment

## We will provide appropriate nutrition and drinking water by:

- storing, handling and preparing food hygienically,
- providing drinkable water and good quality food,
- providing diets, based on sound scientific principles, that meet the dietary and nutritional requirements for every animal in our care,
- paying close attention to variation in an individual animal's needs so that adaptations can be made as and when required,
- presenting food and/or water to animals in a form that satisfies both nutritional and behavioral needs,
- evaluating and reviewing zoo diets under the supervision of a veterinarian and/or nutritionist,
- maintaining accurate records on the diets, consumption and animal condition in relation to the diets provided,
- taking steps to prepare animals to changes in food and water type and availability associated by changes in location, including reintroduction,
- providing staff with on-the-job training to ensure we meet standards for hygienic food storage handling and preparation.

## We will provide space, housing and facilities that:

- meet the wellbeing of animals,
- meet and where possible exceed legislative requirements,
- are safe and provides protection from the elements, intruders, disease and potentially harmful interactions with other species,
- are secure and have compliant, effective and well maintained external barriers,
- minimise exposure to fear and distress, including opportunities to withdraw from enclosure mates and visitors,
- provide choice and the opportunity to express species appropriate behaviours,
- are able to be readily maintained at appropriate hygienic and environmental standards,
- present animals with dignity in a setting that provides effective learning experiences for visitors.

## In providing the highest standards of health care for all animals, we will:

- deliver a veterinary care program with medicine, diagnostics and treatment options that meets current international standards for zoo and wildlife health care,
- provide prompt veterinary response to any ill or injured animal in our care,
- provide preventative health care programs tailored to individual animals or species, including parasite control, isolation/quarantine and necropsies,
- ensure that animal health records are maintained to industry standards,
- keep up to date our working knowledge on the status, health and needs of all our animals by maintaining our networks and working with other forums,
- review biosecurity measures to prevent disease incursion from staff, visitors and free ranging animals,
- acknowledge that humane euthanasia is at times necessary to bring about the best welfare outcome for an animal or a groups of animals in our care.

## To ensure our animals are able to express species specific behaviours, we will:

- provide enclosures, group demographics and exposure to other animals that promote species appropriate behaviours, social skill development and the ability of an animal to breed with and be integrated with its own kind,
- provide periodic environmental changes appropriate for the species such as replicating seasonal weather patterns and breeding cycles,
- undertake appropriate research, and planning, and provide resources to support, train for and document safe, effective environmental enrichment programs,
- conduct safe enrichment that stimulates mental and physical activity, promote species appropriate behaviours and activity levels and maintains behavioral diversity,
- provide outcome-based conditioning programs that develop confidence, trust and reduce stress including programs to facilitate the delivery of health care,
- regularly review and change our enrichment programs to maximise stimulation, interest and learning,
- take steps to allow animals to learn species specific behaviours to cope with changing situations, including reintroduction.

# Underpinning Our Commitment

## We will uphold a life-long responsibility for our animals, ensuring that:

- life-long plans are developed prior to acquisition and breeding/birth of animals,
- animals are only sent to other institutions where they demonstrate a commitment to welfare equal to our own,
- our field and research practices satisfy high ethical standards, comply with all legal requirements including ethics committee approval as required.

## We will only undertake animal encounters and presentations that:

- deliver Zoos SA conservation messages in an appropriate context,
- focus on natural and species appropriate behavior,
- provide for the dignity of the animal,
- do not compromise the welfare of the animal.

## We will work to maintain and continually improve our knowledge base, ensuring that:

- comprehensive reporting and animal information management systems are in place,
- we evaluate the effectiveness of our animal management programs,
- we undertake research that provide information on how animal welfare is being maintained,
- adjust activity as new information on best practice or legislation becomes available.

## We will strive to provide staff the resources, skills and experience appropriate to their roles and responsibilities, ensuring we are able to meet our commitments to:

- maintain and develop the professional skills and standards of our staff,
- ensure staff have access to appropriate policies, procedures and reporting processes relating to animal welfare,
- maintain staffing levels sufficient to deliver our programs effectively.

# Evaluation

## We will ensure we deliver on our commitment by:

- including animal welfare as a key design principle in all new and/or renovated exhibits,
- integrating the Five Domains of animal welfare in all routine inspections and/or audits of exhibits,
- reviewing diet, enrichment and husbandry programs on an annual basis,
- monitoring and analysing trends and any anomalies in Animal Health Centre admissions,
- critically evaluating Zoo Watch results,
- animal Welfare Committee oversight.

The Animal Welfare Charter will be reviewed every five years but updates may occur at any time if changes to relevant legislation or accreditation requirements require an amendment.

# Glossary of Terms

## Ambassador species

Normally an animal kept in the zoo that either represents that or a similar species in the wild  
The animals we keep in our zoos

## Animal collection

## Animal welfare

Description of the level of an animal's physical and psychological well-being .

## Charitable

Zoos SA is a not for profit conservation charity, financial contributions to which may enjoy a tax deductible status.

## Ecosystems

Systems involving the interactions between living and non-living environment

## Euthanasia

Intentionally ending a life with the minimum of pain, fear and distress

## Ex-situ conservation

Offsite conservation, not in its natural habitat. For example breeding animals in zoos for reintroduction to the wild, or for insurance population reasons.

## Reintroduction

The release of an animal or plant back into its native or original habitat

## Necropsy

The examination of a dead animal to establish cause of death

## Preventative health care

Program of testing, treatments and examinations which aim to prevent disease

## Biosecurity

Procedures intended to protect humans or animals against disease or harmful biological agents

## Sustainability

Ability to persist or endure, including zoo populations, wildlife, resources, human or financial capital

## Demographics

The statistics of a population

## Zoo Watch

Zoos SA volunteer animal watch program, used for collecting data on animal behaviours





## References

1. Living Conservation: A Strategic Plan for Zoos SA 2012-2017
2. Animal Welfare position statement: Zoo Aquarium Association
3. Mellor, D.J., and Bayvel, A.C.D. (2011). The Scientific assessment of animal welfare. In: "Evolving Veterinary Education for a safer world" O.I.E. Technical Services Publication
4. DAFF (2009 revised) Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines: Exhibited Animals.
5. WAZA : WAZA code of Ethics and Animal Welfare.



