



ZOOS VICTORIA ANIMAL WELFARE

MAKING THE TRANSFORMATION
TO A ZOO-BASED CONSERVATION
ORGANISATION



OUR CODE

As a zoo-based conservation organisation, Zoos Victoria believes that just as the conservation and welfare of species in the wild is paramount, so too is the welfare of the animals in our collection.

Zoos Victoria's Animal Welfare Code is intended to ensure that at all times and in all instances, the needs, interests and welfare of our animals is our primary consideration.

Zoos Victoria's Animal Welfare Code is underpinned by the following guiding principles in the 2009-2029 Strategic Plan.

- + Zoos Victoria (ZV) strives to be an international leader of best practices in the care and wellbeing of animals, ensuring that we have appropriate infrastructure, expertise and capacity to maintain the dignity and wellbeing of all animals in our care at all times.
- + We will ensure that our wildlife response and rehabilitation practices for both animals in our care and animals brought to us are ethically sound and ecologically responsible.
- + We accept a life-long duty of care for our animals, both to those that remain in our collection, and to those transferred to other institutions that meet our high standards of care.

We understand that within a zoo environment we cannot truly replicate the natural environments, behaviours and preferences of all the animals in our care, however to the very best of our abilities, we will meet their needs.

Zoos Victoria's Animal Collection shall comprise only those species that satisfy the requirements of our Strategic Plan (Recovery, Ark, Ambassador, Enabling and Research species) and for which we can properly provide.

OUR COMMITMENTS



We will provide housing and facilities that:

- + are of generous size, striving to exceed minimum legislative requirements;
- + are secure and have compliant, effective and well-maintained barriers;
- + are safe and provide protection from the elements, intruders, pests, predators, physical injury and disease;
- + provide for the environmental, behavioural and psychological needs of the species;
- + ensure freedom from fear and distress, including opportunities to avoid aggression and seek sanctuary from enclosure-mates and visitors;
- + provide choice and opportunities for a range of species-appropriate behaviours;
- + are designed so that they may be readily maintained at appropriate hygiene standards, including water quality;
- + are checked daily (including water bodies), cleaned and replenished as required, and monitored to ensure a safe environment is maintained;
- + present animals with dignity and in a setting that provides appropriate thematic context for visitor experience.

We will provide appropriate nutrition and drinking water, ensuring that:

- + the dietary and nutritional requirements of every animal in our care are always met with special attention to individual needs;
- + there is choice and variation as appropriate, and that presentation of food provides for behavioural and health needs;
- + the quality and hygiene of food and water are of the highest standards.

We will provide the highest standards of health care for all animals, including:

- + regular monitoring of each individual, appropriate to the health and wellbeing requirements for that species;
- + delivery of a comprehensive veterinary care program with the resource capacity for high quality medicine, surgery, diagnostics and pathology, meeting current international standards for zoo and wildlife health care;
- + provision of prompt veterinary response to any injured or ill animal in our care;
- + provision of preventative health care, including effective quarantine for all incoming animals and prevention of disease incursion from staff, visitors and free-ranging animals;
- + clinical euthanasia whenever it is in the best welfare interests of an animal.

We will provide appropriate social groupings and group management, including:

- + housing of animals that provides for welfare of the individual animal, having considered social dynamics for the species and strategies for display and management;
- + provision of species appropriate social opportunities, including opportunities for learning behaviours;
- + provision of periodic changes appropriate for the species, this might coincide with breeding cycles, seasonal weather, day-length, etc;
- + maintenance of behaviours critical for social interactions and breeding;
- + maintenance of behaviours that preserve natural social skills and interactions.

We will maximise enrichment of life, including provision of:

- + enrichment and conditioning programs that stimulate mental and physical activity, promote species appropriate behaviours and activity levels, and minimize aberrant behaviours;
- + enrichment and conditioning programs that promote social skills and maintain the ability of an animal to breed or be integrated with its own kind;
- + outcome-based programs that develop confidence and trust and reduce stress, including programs to facilitate delivery of health care;
- + enrichment items, and assessment to ensure that they are safe for use.

We will undertake reproductive management programs, ensuring that:

- + animals selected for breeding are of suitable age, in good health and have appropriate fitness levels, both physical and psychological;
- + reproductive management considers species reproductive biology and implications of delayed breeding;
- + management of offspring shall provide for development of species appropriate behaviours and social competencies / long-term welfare;
- + animals being bred are of the same agreed taxon;
- + reproductive management is programmed consistent with in-house or collaborative management plans;
- + recommended breeding provides appropriate genetic and demographic outcomes, accepting that to ensure survival of small populations, including threatened species, reproductive management may not strictly adhere to these principles;
- + management practices and resources are available to provide for health and housing of parents and offspring, specific requirements associated with birth and care of offspring.



OUR COMMITMENTS



We will only undertake animal encounters and presentations that:

- + deliver a sound conservation message using ZV's Connect-Understand-Act model;
- + focus on natural behaviour;
- + provide for the dignity of the animal;
- + provide an appropriate context and setting to deliver conservation outcomes;
- + do not compromise the welfare of the animal.

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

- + life-long plans are developed prior to acquisition and/or birth of animals, accepting that these plans may involve management euthanasia;
- + we send animals only to other recipients that demonstrate welfare values, policies and standards equal to our own;
- + there is careful planning and that animals are properly prepared prior to transport and/or transfer to/from another zoo, enclosure, or presentation area.

We will ensure that systems and knowledge on the status, health and wellbeing of all our animals are maintained and continually improved, through:

- + accurate and comprehensive reporting processes and animal information management systems;
- + knowledge management systems that provide easy access and analysis of information;
- + consistent and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of our practices;
- + ethically sound research to measure the effectiveness of our animal management programs and improve the wellbeing of our animals.

We will ensure that our staff have adequate resources, training, skills and experience appropriate to their roles and responsibilities to ensure all of the above.

This will include:

- + maintenance of highest professional standards of our life sciences staff;
- + staffing levels that enable our programs to be delivered effectively;
- + ensuring awareness and understanding of ZV policies, procedures and reporting processes, and training relating to animal welfare;
- + supporting and encouraging staff to obtain tertiary level qualifications in disciplines such as Zoo Keeping and Veterinary Science;
- + working with relevant organisations to develop training that complements the needs of Zoos Victoria;
- + development and delivery of Zoos Victoria formal in-house training programs;
- + ongoing 'on the job' training and professional development.



Melbourne Zoo

PO Box 74
Parkville Victoria 3052
Elliott Avenue
Parkville Victoria
Tel: 61 3 9285 9300
Fax: 61 3 9285 9330

Healesville Sanctuary

PO Box 248
Healesville Victoria 3777
Badger Creek Road
Healesville Victoria
Tel: 61 3 5957 2800
Fax: 61 3 5957 2870

Werribee Open Range Zoo

PO Box 460
Werribee Victoria 3030
K Road
Werribee Victoria
Tel: 61 3 9731 9600
Fax: 61 3 9731 9644

Zoos Victoria

PO Box 74
Parkville Victoria 3052
Elliott Avenue
Parkville Victoria
Tel: 61 3 9285 9300
Fax: 61 3 9285 9330
Email: zv@zoo.org.au
ABN 96 913 959 053

www.zoo.org.au

References:

- 1 ARAZPA (2007) – *ARAZPA Animal Welfare Statement*
- 2 DAFF (2005): *The Australian Animal Welfare Strategy*, produced by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF)
- 3 RSPCA Charter
- 4 WAZA (2005) – *The World Zoos and Aquarium Conservation Strategy*
- 5 WPSA, *Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare*
- 6 Zoos Victoria (May 2009) – *Zoos Victoria Strategic Plan: making the transformation to a Zoo-Based Conservation Organisation 2009 – 2029* (May 2009)

