

DETROIT ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY®



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Center for Zoo Animal Welfare  
helping improve zoo animal well-being



*Zoos and aquariums assume a profound and unique responsibility by keeping animals in captivity. How captive exotic animals experience life is determined by the humans and institutions that keep them. It is presumed that zoos and aquariums are only helping animals by providing dedicated care, but there is little scientific research and data on how captive animals are faring. Are they thriving or just surviving?\**

*The Detroit Zoological Society's (DZS) Center for Zoo Animal Welfare is a resource center for captive animal welfare knowledge, research and best practices; a convener and forum for exotic animal welfare science, practice and policy discussions; and a center conducting research and training, and recognizing advances in exotic animal welfare.*

\*Kagan, R. and Veasey, J. 2010. Challenges of Zoo Animal Welfare. In Kleiman, D., Thompson, V., and Baer, C. (eds.) Wild Mammals in Captivity: Principles and Techniques for Zoo Management, Second Edition, pp 11-21, Chicago University Press.

## Ensuring Captive Animal Welfare

Ensuring the well-being of captive exotic animals requires acknowledgement of fundamental issues:

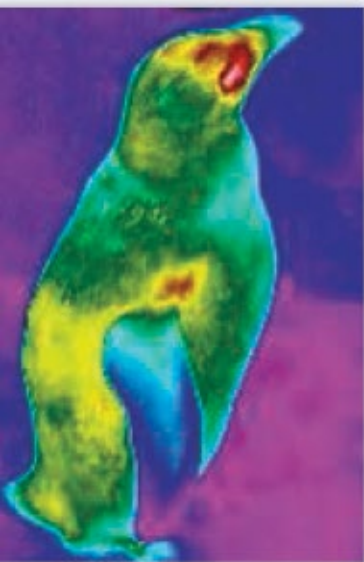
- An individual's overall mental, physical and emotional state (referred to as welfare or well-being) is determined solely by that individual.
- Captive exotic animals must be able to exercise relevant and meaningful control and choice in their lives.
- Good care is not the same as good welfare.
- Constant, rigorous evaluation of captive environments and practices is essential.
- Sharing of information and open dialogue is essential.

### A Human Model

Human medicine offers a compelling model for considering the unintended effects that zoos may have on the animals in their care. Some hospitals have challenged widely-held presumptions that they only help patients and have found, despite good intentions, their efforts can actually result in unintended harm to patients. Internal focus on the issue led to assessment of unintended consequences in patient care and to changes that have dramatically affected how some hospitals operate. The Center for Zoo Animal Welfare parallels this work for captive exotic animals.

### Individuals and Species

For some, ensuring the well-being of individuals (animal welfare) conflicts with ensuring the well-being of species (conservation). Animals that are old, non-breeding, or otherwise not considered valuable are often viewed as competitors for resources in zoos. We can and should balance the needs of both individuals and populations by developing programs that ensure the well-being of both.



The Center has five goals:

1. **Acquire and make easily accessible to zoo and aquarium professionals the current body of knowledge on animal welfare.**

The Center is acquiring all known published texts related to captive animal welfare (exotic animal welfare, farm animal welfare, welfare law, philosophy). We also maintain a large, searchable database of animal welfare references, current list of scientists working in the field, protocols for welfare assessment techniques, and links to other electronic resources. The Center's website ([czaw.org](http://czaw.org)) serves as a captive exotic animal welfare information hub.

2. **Conduct and facilitate welfare assessments and applied welfare research on captive exotic animals.**

Comprehensive knowledge of how animals are faring in captivity requires research across a broad representation of species and issues. Research is conducted at the Detroit Zoo by DZS staff, students and other scientists and is encouraged and facilitated in other institutions. The research conducted through the Center represents two key areas of interest: developing additional measures of animal welfare and the effects of captive environments and management practices on welfare. Although broadly applied across species, our focus is on several taxa/animal groups.

#### **Additional Measures of Animal Welfare**

The Center is exploring and validating new measures of animal welfare, including thermal imaging, that when combined with traditional assessment will provide a more complete picture of an animal's state of well-being.

#### **Effects of captive environments and management practices on welfare –**

**Large carnivores and great apes**, a focus of our current research, are iconic and popular zoo residents, but they are especially prone to development of stereotypic behavior in captivity. Other species such as **antarctic and sub-antarctic penguins**, another focus, often demonstrate behavioral, reproductive, or physical indicators of sub-optimal welfare. Systematic investigation of factors that influence captive behavior and health is necessary to provide an assessment of what animals experience and need in a captive environment and will help to advance development of facilities and programs that better ensure well-being.



Although amphibian conservation is a world-wide concern and the number and variety of amphibians in captivity are increasing, there is virtually no literature on captive amphibian welfare. In 2002, the DZS won the Association of Zoos and Aquarium's National Exhibit award for the National Amphibian Center. We have expanded our commitment to amphibian conservation to include a commitment to include captive amphibian welfare research.

3. **Convene important discussions and presentations on captive exotic animal welfare.**

The Center hosts animal welfare lectures, forums, and symposia that provide opportunities for presenting research findings and for engaging in important discussion and dialogue on animal welfare science and policy. Results of these events are published on the Center's website and in professional journals, and are presented at conferences.

4. **Train professionals on captive exotic animal welfare best practices and policies.**

The Center also hosts applied training workshops each year. Workshops integrate research findings and information relevant to animal welfare into best practices in animal care and husbandry. Training workshops are targeted at staff actively engaged in the care of captive exotic animals.

5. **Recognize advances in improving captive exotic animal welfare through awards.**

The Center has established two animal welfare awards. The Bärle Award (named after a female polar bear rescued by the Detroit Zoo from a circus in 2002), recognizes significant advancement of captive exotic animal welfare science, practice or policy. The second award proves financial support for research on captive exotic animal welfare.





## **The Center for Zoo Animal Welfare Advisory Committee**

The Center for Zoo Animal Welfare International Advisory Committee is composed of zoo and aquarium professionals, scientists, sociologists and animal advocacy leaders. The Advisory Committee helps in the formulation and review of the Center for Zoo Animal Welfare's work.

### **Members**

Ron Kagan, Executive Director/CEO, Detroit Zoological Society

Kevin Bell, CEO and President, Lincoln Park Zoo

Cynthia Bennett, Ph.D., Associate Editor, Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science

Sarah Bexell, Ph.D., Director of Conservation Education, Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding; Humane Education & Anti-Cruelty Programs Manager, Institute for Human-Animal Connection; Adjunct, University of Denver

William Conway, M.D., Executive Vice President, Henry Ford Health System

Craig Dinsmore, Executive Director, Utah's Hogle Zoo

David Fraser, Ph.D., Professor of Animal Welfare, University of British Columbia

Deborah Luke, Ph.D., Vice President for Conservation, Association of Zoos & Aquariums

Georgia Mason, Ph.D., Professor of Animal Behaviour and Welfare, University of Guelph

David Mellor, Ph.D., Co-Director, Animal Welfare Science & Bioethics Centre; Professor, Massey University

Joel Parrott, DVM, Executive Director, Oakland Zoo

John Racanelli, Chief Executive Officer, National Aquarium

Andrew Rowan, Ph.D., President/CEO, Humane Society International

Ken Shapiro, Ph.D., President of the Board, Animals & Society Institute

Ed Stewart, President/Co-Founder, Performing Animal Welfare Society

Janice Swanson, Ph.D., Director of Animal Welfare, Michigan State University

**To support the Center's activities or for further information  
please visit: [www.czaw.org](http://www.czaw.org)**

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