



## Center for Zoo and Aquarium Animal Welfare and Ethics

helping improve zoo and aquarium  
animal well-being and advancing ethics



DETROIT ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Zoos and aquariums assume a profound ethical responsibility by keeping animals in captivity. An animal's perception of its welfare is determined solely by that animal, but the potential for the animal to experience great welfare is in the hands of the humans and institutions that keep animals. It is presumed that zoos and aquariums are helping animals by providing dedicated and professional care, but there is still insufficient 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 and Aquarium Animal Welfare and Ethics is a resource center for captive animal welfare and ethics knowledge, research and best practices; a convener and forum for exotic animal welfare science, practice, ethics and policy discussions; and a center conducting research and training, as well as recognizing advances in captive exotic animal welfare and ethics.*

\* 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 Great Captive Animal Welfare

Ensuring that exotic animals in the care of humans experience great welfare requires acknowledgement of fundamental issues:

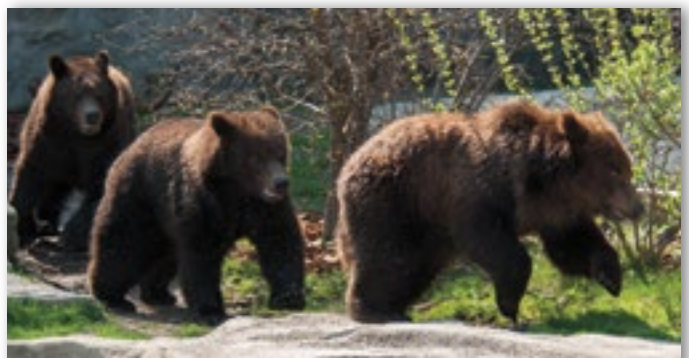
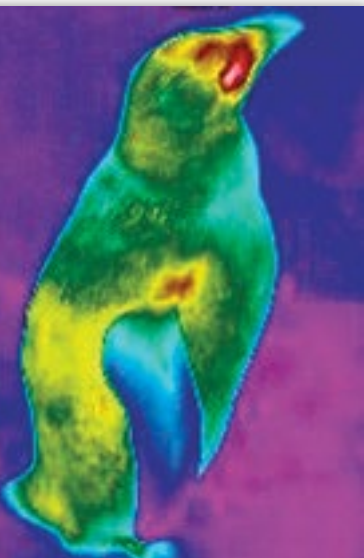
- Zoos and aquariums have an ethical obligation to understand and ensure the well-being of every animal.
- An individual's overall mental, physical and emotional state (referred to as welfare or well-being) is determined only by that individual.
- Captive exotic animals must be able to exercise relevant 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 potential unintended effects that zoos may have on some of the animals in their care. Some hospitals have challenged widely held presumptions that they only help patients. Many have found that despite good intentions, their efforts can actually result in unintended harm to patients. Internal focus on this led to assessment of unintended consequences in patient care and to many changes that have dramatically affected how some hospitals operate. The Center for Zoo and Aquarium Animal Welfare and Ethics parallels this work for exotic animals in the care of humans.

### Individuals and Species

In zoos and aquariums, ensuring the well-being of individuals (animal welfare) may sometimes conflict with ensuring the well-being of species (conservation). Animals that are old, non-breeding, or not considered genetically "valuable" are often viewed as competitors for resources. Zoos and aquariums need to move forward as welfare centers, championing compassionate approaches that ensure the well-being of the animals within their organizations as well as for the animals in their field conservation programs. Compassionate conservation is an emerging



field that considers the welfare of individual animals affected by conservation practices (e.g., capturing, marking/tagging). Zoos and aquariums are especially well-suited to promoting compassionate conservation.

### The Center has five goals:

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

The Center acquires all known published material related to captive animal welfare (exotic animal welfare, farm animal welfare, welfare law, philosophy/ethics). We also maintain a large, searchable database of animal welfare references, a 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) serves as a captive exotic animal welfare and ethics 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 indicators of animal welfare and the effects of captive environments and management practices on welfare.

\*Although amphibian conservation is a worldwide 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 & Aquariums' national exhibit award for the National Amphibian Conservation Center. We have continued to expand our commitment to amphibian conservation by including captive amphibian welfare research.



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

The Center hosts animal welfare and ethics lectures, forums and symposia that provide opportunities for sharing 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 hosts applied training workshops each year, both at the Detroit Zoo and at other institutions. Workshops integrate research findings and information relevant to animal welfare into best practices in animal care and husbandry, and include ethical considerations of keeping animals in the care of humans. Training workshops are targeted at staff actively engaged in the care of captive exotic animals.

#### 5. Recognize advances in improving captive exotic animal welfare and ethics through awards.

The Center has established two animal welfare awards. The Bärle Award (named after a 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 provides financial support for graduate-level research on captive exotic animal welfare.



## The Center for Zoo and Aquarium Animal Welfare and Ethics International Advisory Committee

The Center for Zoo and Aquarium Animal Welfare and Ethics International Advisory Committee is composed of zoo and aquarium leaders, scientists, ethicists and animal advocacy leaders. The Advisory Committee helps in the formulation and review of the work undertaken by the Center for Zoo and Aquarium Animal Welfare and Ethics.

### Members

- Ron Kagan, Chair, Executive Director/CEO, Detroit Zoological Society
- Dan Ashe, President and CEO, Association of Zoos and Aquariums
- 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; Research Associate Professor, Institute for Human-Animal Connection; Adjunct, University of Denver
- William Conway, M.D., CEO, Henry Ford Medical Group; Executive Vice President, Henry Ford Health System
- David Fraser, Ph.D., Professor of Animal Welfare, University of British Columbia
- Lori Gruen, Ph.D., William Griffin Professor of Philosophy, Wesleyan University
- Dwight Lawson, Ph.D., Executive Director/CEO, Oklahoma City Zoo
- Joel Parrott, DVM, Executive Director, Oakland Zoo
- John Racanelli, Chief Executive Officer, National Aquarium
- Andrew Rowan, Ph.D., Chief Scientific Officer, The Humane Society of the United States
- 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,  
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