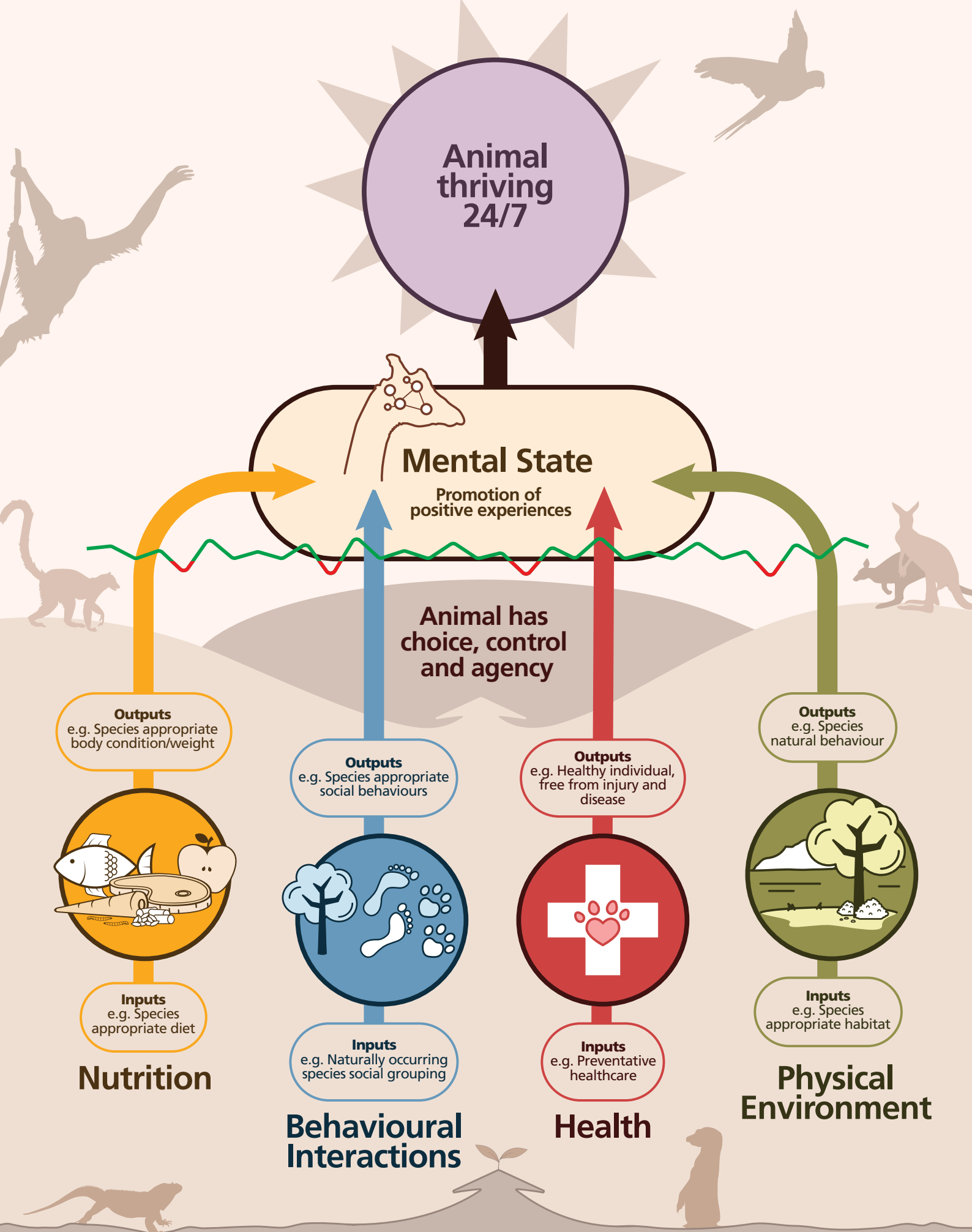


# Animal Welfare and Ethics Charter

A thriving, rewarding life  
for all animals in our care.





## Our foundational commitment to animal welfare

Ethical foundation

Evidence-based management

Evaluation and continuous improvement

Growing understanding and expertise

Education and advocacy

# All animals have the right to a thriving, rewarding life worth living.

As a not-for-profit conservation charity working to connect people with nature and save species from extinction, the ethical care and welfare of animals at Zoos SA is a priority.

We are committed to delivering expertise and excellence in wildlife care and animal welfare that is holistic, ethically sound, and based on animal welfare science.

Our objective is to ensure that every animal in our care always achieves net positive welfare, where the overall balance of experiences provide a positive quality of life, for the entirety of their lives.

We are dedicated to offering the animals in our care the opportunity to make choices, exert control and exercise agency, as these concepts play a crucial role in promoting positive welfare.

Our aspiration is for all animals to experience optimal welfare states: thriving 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Zoos SA's model of animal welfare comprises five components, each critical to successfully providing a thriving, rewarding life for every animal in our care. These five components include:

1. Ethical foundation
2. Evidence-based management
3. Evaluation and continuous improvement
4. Building understanding and expertise
5. Education and advocacy



# Ethical Foundation

Zoos SA is part of a global effort to support the survival of species, both nationally and internationally. As a community, we aim to preserve and protect the biodiversity of all living systems, while ensuring the animals in our care experience optimal welfare. To achieve these outcomes requires an empirical approach and ongoing operational improvement, supported by peer-reviewed science.

Zoos SA has adopted a strong ethical operational framework to effectively navigate the inherent challenges that are associated with maintaining animals in human care. Acknowledgement of animal sentience is fundamental to our ethical commitment, guiding us to prioritise the cognitive needs and wellbeing of each individual, no matter how big or small.

We actively engage the community to build trust and support. Our commitment to optimal animal welfare, as well as our organisational viability and social licence to operate, rests on four principles:

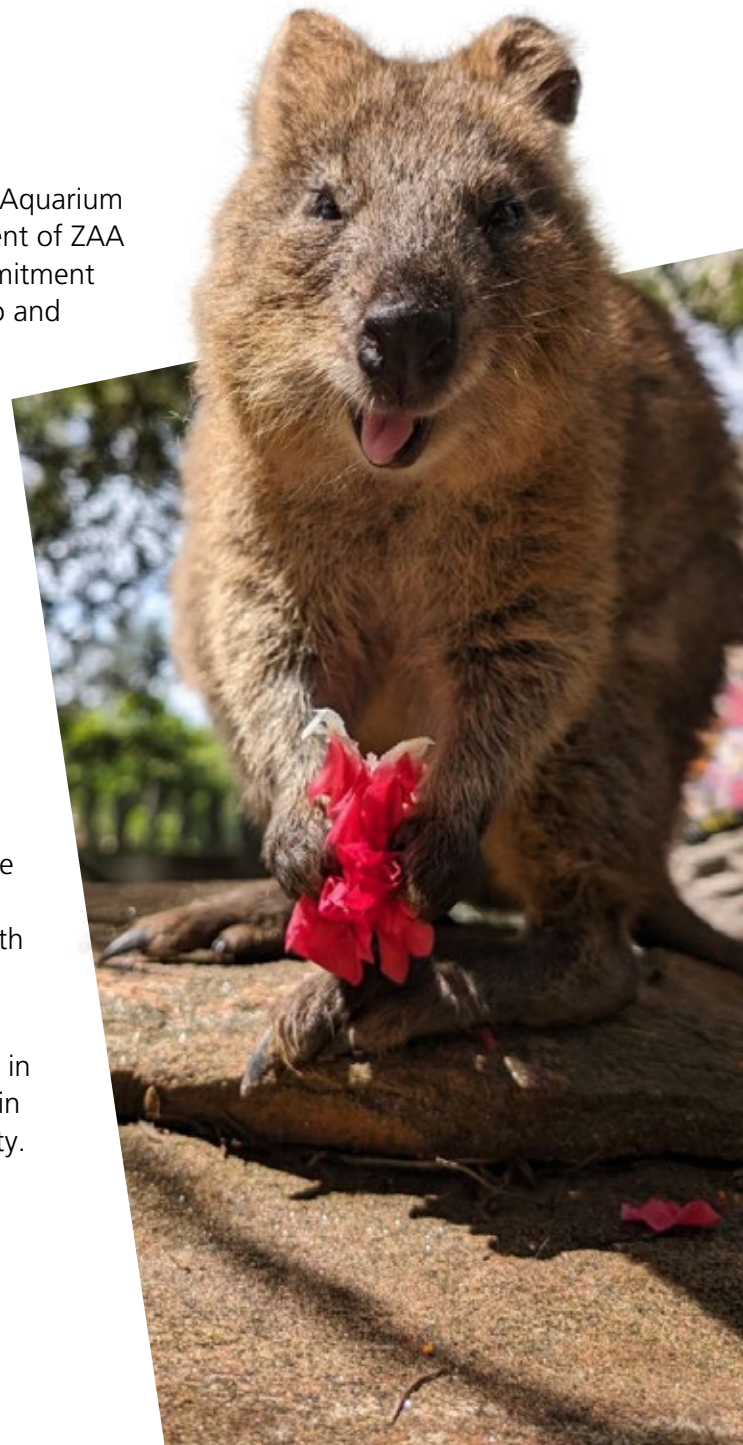
1. Transparent operations
2. Diligent monitoring
3. Evidence-based evaluation
4. Responsive measures

Zoos SA is an accredited member of the Zoo and Aquarium Association (ZAA) of Australasia. A core component of ZAA accreditation requires a clear, demonstrated commitment to positive animal welfare with both Adelaide Zoo and Monarto Safari Park being formally accredited by ZAA. Zoos SA is also a member of the World Association of Zoos and Aquarium (WAZA).

In addition, our Animal Welfare and Ethics Committee provides valuable, independent oversight and advice, supporting the implementation of this Charter and our Animal Welfare Strategy. This approach ensures an ongoing commitment to the highest level of animal care, improved positive animal welfare, and sustained ethical practices.

We value open and honest communication with the public and provide accurate information about our practices, policies, and the measures we take to ensure positive animal welfare. By doing so, we aim to ensure that our operations align with the values and interests of the community.

We understand that by working collaboratively with the public, we can make significant progress in promoting the well-being of animals, both those in our care and those more broadly in the community.



## Evidence-based management

Animal welfare science is a rapidly emerging field, and our understanding of animal welfare is constantly improving and expanding. Animal welfare science encompasses various disciplines as part of its multidimensional nature. Despite significant advances in understanding animal welfare, varying viewpoints persist regarding its precise definition. To focus and guide our activities, our scientific approach to animal welfare encompasses three primary domains:

1. Biological functioning
2. Natural behaviour
3. Affective state

Our animal care management decisions are informed by sound, peer-reviewed science and are delivered with compassion, ensuring our animals are treated with respect and dignity.

We provide animals with the ability to make choices, exert control, and exercise agency, fostering positive welfare. These three concepts are interconnected: choice lets an animal react to its current environment, while control lets an animal proactively change its environment. Agency is the capacity of an animal to engage in voluntary, self-generated, and goal-directed behaviour (i.e., having flexibility in the choices they make with a clear purpose in mind).

We believe that all animals are entitled to the highest quality of life possible and actively promote positive experiences such as happiness, playfulness, and joy.

We understand that animal welfare is determined by an individual animal's internal experience of its quality of life. The Five Domains Model, developed by Mellor and Reid (1994), and updated in 2020 (Mellor et al., 2020), is a contemporary, holistic structured framework that we use to evaluate animal welfare through the identification of welfare compromise and welfare enhancement.

The first four functional domains are: nutrition, health, physical environment, and behavioural interactions (with the environment, other animals, and humans). The fifth domain, the mental domain or affective state, assesses the animal's welfare by examining negative or positive emotional experiences within each of the four physical domains. The assessment process relies on evidence, using behavioural and physiological indicators. We cannot directly measure the mental domain as it is an internal experience, only directly accessible to the animal itself, and therefore susceptible to subjectivity. However, we can use observable evidence to cautiously infer an animal's affective state, assisting us in drawing conclusions about its welfare.

Evidence-based management will continue to underpin our decision-making processes and our aspiration to continually improve animal welfare. To support our efforts, we will collaborate with relevant external researchers, colleagues, and partners to ensure we always have access to developments at the frontier of animal welfare science.



# Evaluation and Improvement

Zoos SA is committed to taking an holistic and inclusive approach to its operations, where animal welfare is respected, promoted, and advanced based on the latest scientific findings. Our animal welfare assessment tools are scientifically robust, evidence-based, practical, and applicable to all species in our care.

Zoos SA uses the Five Domains Model for assessing animal welfare, acknowledging that animal welfare is on a continuum encompassing both positive experiences—i.e. play, pleasure, and joy—and negative experiences—i.e. pain, fear, and anxiety. Animal welfare is a cumulative experience based on the sum of negative and positive states. Our goal is to achieve net positive welfare for all our animals, focusing on promoting positive experiences and flourishing, whilst also providing resources and mechanisms that assist our animals in dealing effectively with transient negative experiences.

Zoos SA monitors the welfare of animals across Adelaide Zoo and Monarto Safari Park. Zoos SA uses many mechanisms to assess animal welfare, many of which are highlighted in Figure 1.

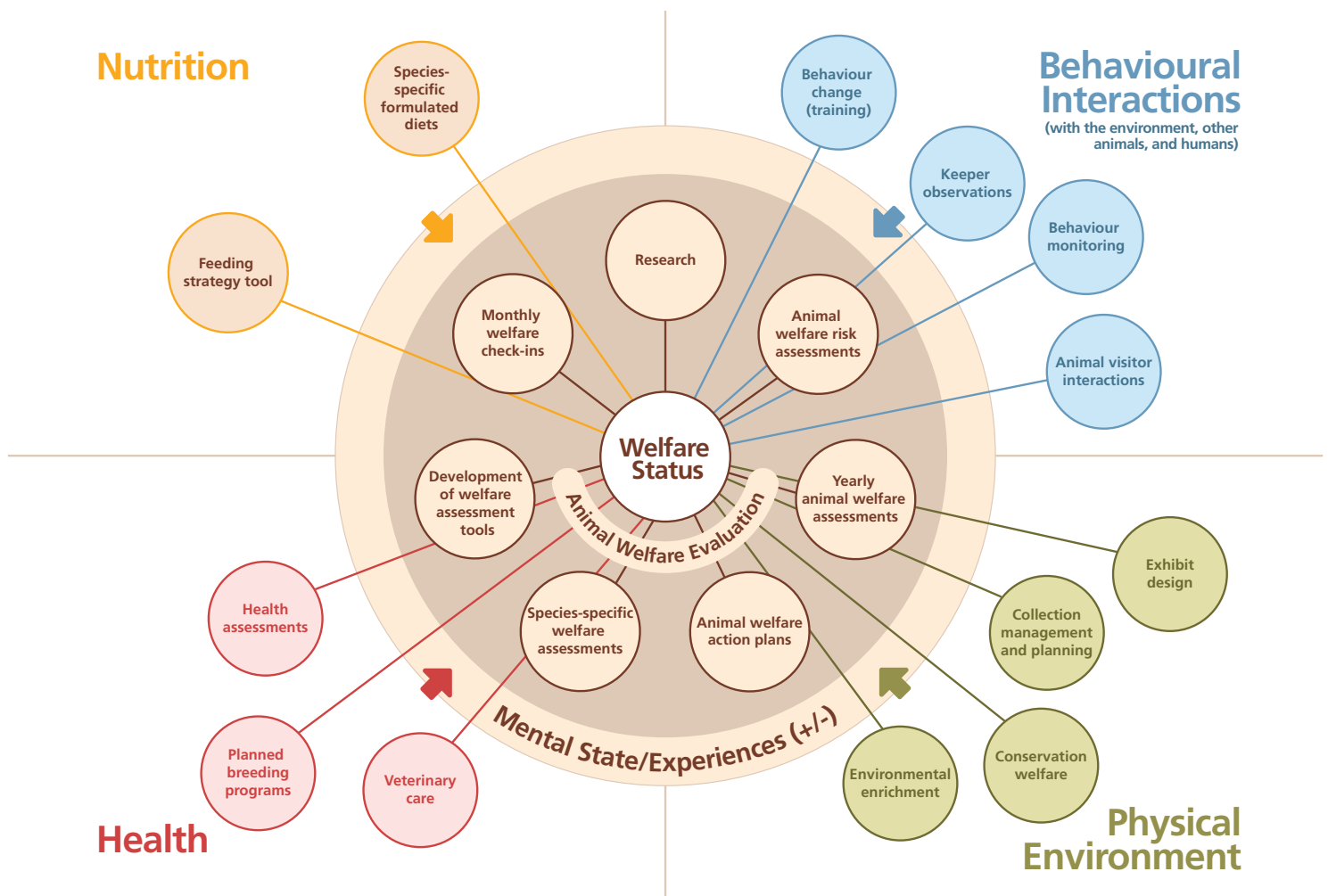


Figure 1: An overview of Zoos South Australia's approach to animal welfare assessment, with incorporation of the Five Domains Model.

A comprehensive and robust formalised species-general assessment is conducted on all animals on an annual basis, to capture and evaluate welfare states over time. Our assessments include, resource-based measures, or 'inputs' available to the animal (e.g., health care, diet, enrichment, social group), and animal-based measures, or 'outputs' (i.e., measures of the animal's response to the inputs—e.g., health status, body condition, enrichment engagement, social behaviours). An example of this fundamental interplay between resources/inputs and responses/outputs is highlighted in Figure 2.



*Figure 2: A schematic representation of the two measures, inputs, and outputs, showing how inclusion of both is essential when assessing animal welfare.*

Zoos SA has a research team that contributes to the advancement of animal welfare science. Our in situ and ex situ research projects satisfy the highest ethical standards, and comply with relevant legal requirements, including independent ethics committee approval as appropriate. We have an ongoing commitment to expand our engagement with animal welfare scientists, to continually self-educate, and to increase the publication of relevant peer-reviewed papers, ensuring that we remain at the forefront of animal welfare science.

A detailed account of how we deliver positive animal welfare is provided in Appendix 1, including nutrition, health, physical environment, and behavioural interactions, as well as our unwavering commitment to continuous improvement and professional development to all species for the entirety of their lives.

## **Building Understanding and Expertise**

At the heart of Zoos SA commitment to positive animal welfare is a dedication to build upon our understanding and expertise.

All staff undertake an animal welfare course when first employed, to provide a uniform and foundational understanding of animal welfare science, irrespective of their role in the organisation.

We continually learn, share knowledge, and work with our teams to further develop ways to improve the lives of the animals in our care.

Our approach to animal welfare is informed by peer-reviewed science, using the latest research findings to guide our practices.

We base our management practices on ethical principles and evidence, relying on objective data to inform decision-making.

We continuously monitor, record, and assess animal data to understand welfare outcomes and to review programs to improve our welfare practices and standards.

## **Education and Advocacy**

Education and advocacy play a crucial role in promoting animal welfare and fostering a society that values and respects animals.

We understand the critical importance of educating our own staff and, in accord with our Animal Welfare Strategy, we provide foundational and ongoing training to promote positive animal welfare.

We actively engage in opportunities to promote, inform, and educate the broader community about animal welfare through our visitor experiences, education programs, and campaigns, always taking into account broader public perspectives.

By organising educational events, sharing information, and collaborating with other organisations, we work towards creating a society that appreciates and safeguards animal wellbeing, ensuring animal welfare is always valued and promoted.



# Delivering Animal Welfare

Our commitment to animal welfare focuses on nutrition, physical environment, health care, and behavioural interactions, as well as continuous improvement and professional development. We will ensure each of the following requirements are met to provide the animals in our care a thriving rewarding life worth living:

## 1. Nutrition

- 1.1. Promotion of positive experiences through, satiety, satiation, pleasure, taste, smell, texture, novelty, gastro-intestinal comfort, masticatory pleasure, tongue work/play, and choice.
- 1.2. Animals have access to adequate and appropriate food and drinking water.
- 1.3. Animal diets are based on sound scientific principles, meeting their dietary and nutritional requirements.
- 1.4. All food is of the highest quality and is stored appropriately and prepared hygienically.
- 1.5. Provide zoo staff with training to ensure standards for hygienic food storage, handling and preparation are maintained.
- 1.6. Dietary variations for individual animals are recognised and adjustments made where appropriate.
- 1.7. Provide dietary choice and variation, presenting food to animals in a form that satisfies both their nutritional and behavioural needs.
- 1.8. Prepare animals appropriately for changes in diet type and food availability associated with changes to their environment (e.g., reintroduction to the wild).
- 1.9. Accurate dietary records are maintained, detailing diets, rations, food preparation procedures, food consumption rates and animal body condition.
- 1.10. In consultation with our animal nutritionist, undertake regular reviews of animal diets referencing the known diets of wild conspecifics.

## 2. Health

- 2.1. Promotion of positive mental experiences through physical comfort, high functionality capacity, vitality of fitness and pleasurable exercise.
- 2.2. A comprehensive and proactive veterinary and nutrition program for all animals at all stages of life, which meet international standards for zoo and wildlife health care.
- 2.3. A prompt veterinary response to any ill or injured animal within our care.
- 2.4. Preventative health care programs tailored to meet individual animals and/or species needs, including parasite control, isolation/quarantine, etc.
- 2.5. Regular monitoring of the health of all animals, including accurate records of all events to industry standards.
- 2.6. Staff awareness and understanding of Zoos SA policies, procedures and reporting processes relating to animal health.
- 2.7. An up-to-date working knowledge of the status, health and needs of all our animals by maintaining professional networks and through other relevant forums.
- 2.8. Biosecurity measures are regularly reviewed, and practices maintained to prevent disease incursion from staff, visitors, and free ranging animals.
- 2.9. Humane euthanasia decisions are based on the best welfare outcome for the animal in question, using evidence-based objective assessments.

### **3. Physical environment**

- 3.1. Promotion of positive mental experiences through forms of comfort, including thermal, physical, respiratory, olfactory, auditory, and visual. This includes promoting enjoyment through variety and choice.
- 3.2. All animals have space to move freely, in complex and comfortable environments, which meet their wellbeing needs and strive to exceed legislative spatial requirements.
- 3.3. All animals are safe and provided protection from the elements, predators, disease and potentially harmful interactions with conspecifics and other species.
- 3.4. All animals are secure and have compliant, effective, and well-maintained external barriers for their protection and the protection of people and other animals.
- 3.5. All animals are provided with a habitat that meets the physical, behavioural, and psychological needs of the species, considering their diurnal/nocturnal activity, biological rhythms, and individual animal preferences.
- 3.6. All animals are provided an environment and housing conditions where they can thrive.
- 3.7. All animals can be readily maintained to a high level of hygiene.
- 3.8. All animals are provided opportunities to express species-appropriate behaviours.
- 3.9. All animals are provided with opportunities to engage in voluntary, self-generated, and goal-directed behaviour that they are motivated to perform (i.e., provided flexibility in the choices they make).
- 3.10. Exposure to fear and distress is minimised for all animals, including opportunities to withdraw from conspecifics, other species, and zoo visitors.
- 3.11. All animals are offered the opportunity for dignity, in a setting that provides effective learning experiences for visitors.

### **4. Behavioural interactions**

- 4.1. Promotion of positive experiences and agency through interactions with the environment ability to choose, avoid threats, explore, move, and rest freely.
- 4.2. Promotion of positive experiences through interactions with other animals, including affectionate sociability, maternal, paternal or group rewards, playfulness, sexually gratified, secure, protected, confident and energised.
- 4.3. Promotion of positive experiences through interactions with humans, including feeling calm, confident, in control and if applicable, finds being bonded with humans rewarding.
- 4.4. Habitats, environments, and social groups are provided that promote and support species-appropriate behaviours.
- 4.5. Naturalistic social opportunities and challenges that maintain and develop behaviours critical to social interactions, and which provide for the ability of an animal to breed where appropriate.
- 4.6. Provide animals with opportunities to learn species-specific behaviours to cope with changing situations associated with changes to their environment (e.g., reintroduction to the wild).
- 4.7. Collection of behavioural data to understand how much time animals spend performing different behaviours and implementing effective change when required.
- 4.8. Ensuring animals have agency, including measures that allow for choice and control over their own wellbeing and environment.
- 4.9. Provision of 'most positive, least intrusive, effective approach' training and conditioning programs, using positive reinforcement methods to develop animal confidence and trust, which reduces stress in animals and facilitates the delivery of health care procedures.
- 4.10. We will aspire to train all animals to be voluntary participants in their own health care.
- 4.11. We aspire to support animals with engaging in their environment by fostering the science of behaviour change.

- 4.12. Provision of resources to plan, research, document, and evaluate the delivery of safe and effective environmental enrichment programs.
- 4.13. Ensure enrichment programs stimulate mental and physical activity, promote species-appropriate behaviours and activity levels, and maintain behavioural diversity.
- 4.14. We will only undertake animal-visitor interactions and presentations that deliver Zoos SA conservation messages in an appropriate context, which are focused on natural and species-appropriate behaviour, provide for the respect and dignity of the animal, and do not compromise animal welfare.
- 4.15. We will regularly assess animal-visitor interactions and presentations to ensure they remain safe, positive, and engaging for animals and visitors alike.

## **5. Continuous improvement and professional development**

- 5.1. Continuous improvement of our knowledge of animal welfare science and management, incorporating the latest research and information on animal welfare, health, and wellbeing.
- 5.2. Evaluation and monitoring of the effectiveness of animal welfare and animal management systems through ethically sound and rigorous science-based research, ongoing assessments, comprehensive reporting, and the effective use of animal information management systems.
- 5.3. Provision of sufficient staff with time and resources, as well as skills and experience appropriate to their roles and responsibilities, to deliver high standards of animal care.
- 5.4. All staff have access to and understand Zoos SA policies, procedures and reporting processes related to animal welfare, and are provided with professional development to maintain skills and standards relating to animal welfare.

- 5.5. A culture of openness, innovation, and ongoing learning to ensure the advancement of animal welfare throughout Zoos SA and beyond.
- 5.6. Encouragement of our values 'WILD', Working together; Innovating; Leading with integrity; and delivering with purpose is essential to engage team members to continue to improve animal welfare overtime.

## **6. Life-long responsibility and commitment**

- 6.1. Provision for the needs of all animals for the entirety of their lives, ensuring robust life-long plans are developed prior to acquisition and breeding, and a commitment to the life-long needs of all offspring.
- 6.2. Transfer of animals to other institutions only when they can demonstrate welfare standards equal to or greater than our own.
- 6.3. Carefully planned animal transfers/transportations, whereby the animal is properly prepared, and all logistics are established to safeguard animal welfare throughout the process.
- 6.4. Species management recommendations are rigorously followed, aligning with regional and global species conservation plans, that advocate for and maximise positive welfare outcomes for individual animals.
- 6.5. All animals intended for release-to-the-wild are properly prepared to cope with the physical and behavioural rigors of life in the wild.

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