Policy Position Statement
Euthanasia

Purpose

Zoos South Australia (Zoos SA) is committed to providing the highest level of welfare for all animals under its care.

This encompasses animals within the animal collection at Adelaide Zoo and Monarto Safari Park (including those involved with public contact and behavioural presentations), in the field and research projects, rescue and rehabilitation animals, and those intended as animal food.

Zoos SA acknowledges its life-long responsibility for animals in its care, to manage its programs and knowledge systems appropriately, dedicate adequate resources and monitor and evaluate its efforts.

Zoos SA also recognises its responsibility to ensure effective management of its animal collection in collaboration with other zoos throughout the Australasian region.

While Zoos SA recognises that it has an overriding responsibility to safeguard the lives of animals under its care, it is also accepted that under certain circumstances where no other practical resolution exists it may be necessary to euthanise individual animals.

Rationale

It is recognised that euthanasia is an emotive topic. Zoos SA will actively engage with its staff and stakeholders to ensure decisions are made using best practice science and welfare considerations.

Zoos SA supports the decision to undertake euthanasia of animals under certain circumstances to achieve the best possible welfare outcome for an individual animal or its wider population. The circumstances under which the euthanasia of an animal may be considered include:

Individual animal welfare - where illness, injury or age-related factors adversely affect quality of life of an individual or their dependent young, or a serious disease is diagnosed that is known to be contagious to other animals or humans.

Population and demographic animal management - to safeguard sustainable management of a species and ensuring institutional population capacities are not exceeded, euthanasia may be undertaken as a last resort when no practical resolutions are available. Relevant situations include overpopulation, extreme sex biases and solitary individuals of a social species that is held in isolation, This circumstance must be approved for a species held within the ZAA Species Management Program, from now referred to as the SMP in this document, through an annex process and approved by the ZAA Animal Management Committee.

Operational animal management - as seen in approved research, recovery and fieldwork programs; in the event of a dangerous animal escape; as an intended fresh food source; for feral animal control; and where over population impact adversely on the environment. This circumstance must be approved for an SMP species through an annex process and approved by the ZAA animal management committee.

Monitoring and review

Zoos SA's Position Statement – Euthanasia will be reviewed every two years or where circumstances warrant by the Zoos SA Board. This Statement will guide the work of all staff and volunteers of Zoos SA.

Next review due: September 2028

References

Rules of the Royal Zoological Society of South Australia Incorporated

Zoos SA Animal Welfare Charter