

CODE OF ETHICS OF THE EURASIAN REGIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS AND AQUARIUMS (EARAZA)

1. Introduction

Zoos and aquariums make an important contribution to biodiversity conservation, conservation research, and environmental education through their role as cultural and social institutions of society. In order to fulfill their conservation and social responsibilities, members of the Eurasian Regional Association of Zoos and Aquariums must adhere to the ethical principles that underpin activities in each of these areas. In this regard, all EARAZA members must abide by the provisions of the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy (WAZA, 2015).

2. Obligations of EARAZA members

All members of the Association must:

- Carry out and support species conservation activities, avoiding hybridization and striving to maintain a high level of genetic diversity in the population (in particular, avoiding inbreeding);
- Carry out any actions taken in relation to a particular animal from the perspective of the highest objective defined by the concept of species and biodiversity conservation, taking into account the interests of maintaining the highest possible level of welfare of a particular animal;
- Avoid situations in which commercial interests prevail over interests of conservation breeding;
- Ensure that any of their activities do not threaten in any way the short- or long-term survival of threatened species in the wild;
- Strive for the highest standards of and encourage best practices in animal welfare;
- Spread the message of conservation, biodiversity, and animal welfare;
- Assist the wider conservation community including wildlife agencies, conservation organizations, governments and research institutions in maintaining global biodiversity;
- In cooperation with governmental and nongovernmental organizations, work to improve animal husbandry standards and strive to meet such standards;
- Stimulate scientific research in the areas of species conservation, animal husbandry, veterinary medicine, zoo architecture, exhibit design, etc., and promote dissemination of knowledge gained;
- Develop and conduct educational programs based on recognized scientific facts;
- Exchange professional experience and information with other members of the Association;
- Provide the visitors, volunteers, and employees with the conditions that ensure their safety and provide every opportunity to maintain their health;
- Refrain from any action which could adversely affect the development or reputation of EARAZA or its individual members;
- Comply with local, regional, and international environmental legislation.

3. Animal welfare

Zoos can only receive general recognition if they consistently demonstrate full understanding of and respect for the rights of the animals in their care.

To maintain high standards of animal welfare, EARAZA zoos and aquariums must adopt recognized best practice approaches based on the model of Five Domains (see the World Zoo and Aquarium Animal Welfare Strategy WAZA, 2015) and continuously improve the living conditions of animals, taking into account changes in existing and emerging housing practices and providing the animals with professional veterinary care.

The provision of high-quality care for animals, including meeting their species-specific needs (nutrition, enclosure design, social structure of the group, etc.) must be considered a priority for EARAZA zoos and aquariums. Any legally recognized standards related to animal welfare must always be considered as minimum requirements.

All EARAZA members must have animal welfare policies in place (e.g. in the form of animal welfare code, animal-visitor interaction policy, animal acquisition/disposition policy, etc.)

3.1. Animal exhibits and housing

All exhibits must be of sufficient size and space for animals to exhibit natural behaviours. Materials and structures that enrich the housing conditions and behaviour of individuals, as well as shelters where animals can hide, must be provided. It should also be possible to isolate animals from other individuals, when necessary.

EARAZA zoos and aquariums must avoid practices that have a negative effect on animal welfare. Such practices include but are not limited to the following:

- a) Confinement of animals in the enclosures that severely restrict physical movement and compromise psychological welfare of individuals;
- b) Unnecessary animal restraint that prevents natural and normal behaviours and physical activity;
- c) Uncontrolled feeding of animals by visitors that is detrimental to the physical and psychological welfare of the animals;
- d) Breeding of animals that results in overcrowding, disease, injury or isolation of individuals;
- e) The use of training practices that compromise the physical or psychological health, development, or behavior of the animals;

Off-exhibit facilities (aquariums, terrariums, etc.) must also meet species-specific needs of the animals and must be equipped with elements that provide environmental enrichment.

3.2. Use of animals kept in zoos and aquariums in the demonstrations for public

In situations where wild animals are used in the demonstrations for public, such shows shall:

- a) Have conservation or other educational content;
- b) Emphasize to visitors the natural behaviour of the animals;
- c) Not humiliate the animals in any way.

If there is any indication that animal welfare is deteriorating the demonstration must be discontinued. The sizes of enclosures that are not used for demonstrations of animals to the public must allow the animals to exhibit natural behaviour; in addition, such enclosures must be equipped with elements of animal behaviour enrichment.

3.3. Acquisition of animals

EARAZA Members must endeavour to ensure that the animals they acquire are captive-born, which must be supported by relevant documentation. This will not preclude acquisition of animals resulting from confiscation or rescues. Direct contact between zoos must be considered the best approach to the acquisition of animals.

It is recognized that there is a legitimate need for conservation breeding programs, education programs or basic biological studies to obtain animals from the wild. In such cases, the removal of animals from the wild and their acquisition by zoos or aquariums must be carried out within the current national and international legislation.

3.4. Transfer of animals

Before transferring animals to any other institution, EAZA Members must ensure that such institution has both the necessary housing facilities and skilled staff who are capable of maintaining the same high standard of husbandry and welfare as required of all EAZA members.

Comprehensive information on the physical, genetic and reproductive status of the transferred animals, diet and feeding recommendations, as well as behavioural traits that may be important to the husbandry of the individuals and management of the captive population of the species must be provided to the receiving zoo in writing (e.g., as an attachment to the animal transfer agreement). Any other information necessary for the recipient zoo to make appropriate decisions regarding the management of the animal so that it could quickly adapt to the new environment must be provided to the recipient zoo in a timely manner.

All animal transfers must comply with national and international regulations and standards applying to the particular species. Where appropriate, animals should be accompanied by qualified staff during the transportation.

Members of the Association must not:

- transfer animals to individuals or organizations that have not provided evidence of the conditions or professional experience necessary for the management and breeding of the species;
- sell or otherwise transfer animals for breeding purposes to individuals or organizations whose participation in the breeding of the species concerned is considered undesirable;
- transfer animals of rare and endangered species to circuses or other organizations that use animals solely for commercial purposes and do not participate in conservation programs.

3.5. Contraception

Contraception must be considered if there is a need to limit breeding in captive population management programs or to improve animal welfare (including the management or prevention of health-related problems). The possible side effects of surgical or chemical contraceptive methods must be evaluated to make a final decision on their use.

3.6. Euthanasia

Euthanasia must be carried out where an animal's physiological or psychological welfare is severely compromised and cannot be adequately improved through the use of any other approach. Euthanasia must be undertaken in a stress-free manner that involves a rapid and painless death of the animal. Euthanasia may be controlled by local laws but must always be considered a priority, if the animal is suffering from a severe, incurable disease.

Whenever possible a post-mortem examination must be performed and biological material collected for future research and gene conservation.

3.7. Mutilation

Mutilation of an animal for cosmetic or aesthetic purposes is absolutely unacceptable. Pinioning of birds for educational or management purposes must only be undertaken when no other form of

restraint is feasible and marking animals for identification must always be carried out in a way that minimizes suffering. The use of procedures resulting in mutilation of the animals that prevent them from exhibiting normal and natural behaviour or cause physiological or psychological harm is totally unacceptable.

3.8. Release of animals into the wild

Any project of the release of animals into the wild must be carried out in accordance with IUCN/SSC/Reintroduction Species Group guidelines and only if approved by national (and, where appropriate, other) regulatory and supervisory authorities. No release program must be undertaken without veterinary examinations to confirm that the animals are fit for the release into the wild. Following the release, a thorough monitoring program must be established and carried out.

3.9. Deaths of animals in zoos

Unless there are sound reasons not to do so, each animal which dies in captivity or during a program of release into the wild must be subjected to a post-mortem examination. The autopsy results and cause of death (where it can be established) must be recorded or entered into an animal database.