

# WAZA Guidelines for Improving Standards in Zoos

## Background

The 60th WAZA Annual Conference encouraged Associations to develop and implement accreditation systems or other peer-reviewed means for ensuring a high standard of animal keeping, in particular for those species managed by cooperative *ex situ* breeding programmes (COM.60.3).

A Drafting Group consisting of Dave Morgan, Rosamira Guillen, Kris Vehrs, Sally Walker, Olivia Walter and Thomas Althaus was formed after the 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference and was given the following mandate:

- a) To develop ideas, how WAZA should deal with so called "substandard zoos"
- b) To provide guidance to regional associations on how to deal with the issue
- c) To clarify the tasks of WAZA and regional Associations in this issue.

The Drafting Group met in April 2006 in Berne (Switzerland) and prepared a document on this issue for the 61<sup>st</sup> WAZA Annual Conference. On the basis of this document, WAZA, at its 61<sup>st</sup> Annual conference, adopted the "WAZA Resolution on Improving Standards in Zoos" [COM.61.10 (rev.1)] and gave the Drafting Group a new follow-up mandate:

1. Based on the WAZA Resolution COM.61.10 (rev. 1) to propose an Action Plan on how Associations and individual institutions could assist in improving "substandard zoos".
2. To review current WAZA complaint procedures and to propose modifications if necessary.
3. To develop an assessment form to differentiate a "substandard zoo".
4. To develop monitoring guidelines.

The Drafting Group met again in April 2007 in Karlsruhe (Germany) and continued its work following strictly the instructions contained in the mandate. However the Drafting Group decided that the following terms needed to be changed:

The term "substandard zoo(s)" (mandate no. 1) was replaced with the term "zoos in need of improvement"

and

the term "assessment form" (mandate no. 3) was replaced by the term "Assessment Tool".

The result of the work is submitted to the 62<sup>nd</sup> WAZA Annual Conference in form of the attached document "**Guidelines for improving Standards in Zoos**". This document contains four chapters according to the four points in the mandate, as well as an **Appendix I (Definitions)** and an **Appendix II (Complaint Procedure Questionnaire)**.

**Appendix I** contains the definitions valid for this document, in particular a definition of "zoo" (including among others aquariums), a definition of 13 elements of "Best Practice in Zoos" and - following from this - a definition of what is to be considered as "zoos in need of improvement". The term "institution" refers to WAZA members.

**Point I** is the "Action Plan on How Associations and Individual Institutions Could Assist Zoos in Need of Improvement". Here, ideas and material from previous work and documents have been taken up. For zoos in need of improvement wanting help (or asking for help) more general ways of assistance but also specific short-term and long-term specific types of help are defined.



For **point 2** in the absence of a formal documented complaint procedure a new complaint procedure was developed that differentiates whether the complaint concerns either a WAZA-member or a non-WAZA member but member of a WAZA Member Association, or a non-WAZA member and not a member of a WAZA Association (non-affiliated) . A core element in this complaint procedure is the "Complaint Procedure Questionnaire" contained in **Appendix II** of the document. The idea is that this questionnaire would be used to test the seriousness of the complainant and give an idea of the context of the complaint and the background and knowledge of the complainant. In addition such a procedure would allow to gather specific data to document complaints.

As concerns **point 3**, an Assessment Tool to identify zoos in need of improvement was developed. This Assessment Tool has several functions: It allows a systematic assessment of zoos (not only zoos in need of improvement). It allows however to differentiate between zoos in need of improvement and others and makes possible to establish ways and means how a zoo in need of improvement could be assisted in order to raise its standard: Points and questions where compliance is fundamental to zoo operation are identified on the Tool. The Tool may however also assist a zoo that is basically not a "zoo in need of improvement" to evaluate its own situation and define areas where there is still room for improvement in the direction to the so called "Best practice". Thus this Assessment Tool is not a marking system that leads one to a pass/fail outcome and therefore cannot exclude anybody. It allows equal opportunity for the identification of strengths as for weaknesses. In this regard, it is a true "assessment" as opposed to being a yes/no standard. The tool should be used to guide and direct rather than being seen as an examination that you have to pass. The only outcome that should be generated from this tool would be a list of recommendations.

The Assessment Tool is also an instrument for further mentoring. Therefore specific "mentoring guidelines", as asked for in mandate **point 4**, are not necessary. The Assessment Tool is the basis from which a suitable and appropriate mentoring plan can be developed. The Tool highlights areas which need improvement and future plans can focus on these.

While mentoring guidelines are not specified, however a mentoring process is defined. At a closer look this mentoring process has close links to point 1; after all it also deals with organizing, providing and giving assistance.



## GUIDELINES FOR IMPROVING STANDARDS IN ZOOS

### 1) ACTION PLAN ON HOW ASSOCIATIONS AND INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTIONS COULD ASSIST ZOOS IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT

A. If a zoo wants help, an Association or individual institution can:

- Provide assistance with the use of the Assessment Tool and subsequent report (help should be appropriate to the needs of the zoo)
- Establish a brother/sister relationship (help should be appropriate to the needs of the zoo)
- Offer training/mentoring/consultation
- Work with the relevant authorities \*
- Provide basic information such as WZACS, the Code of Ethics and Animal Welfare and other available and appropriate management guidelines
- Look for/organize help from outside the region \*\*

\* The WAZA Office can provide expertise on zoo and aquarium legislation, including which WAZA members to ask for assistance in their region.

\*\* For example, when institutions send people overseas for field conservation work, they should visit the local zoo and offer assistance and – if wanted and appropriate - provide general advice.

B. Specific types of help:

Short-term Assistance for Zoos in Need of Improvement

- One-off capacity building
- One-off facility improvement
- One-off veterinary assistance
- One-off personnel provision
- One-off material supply
- One-off engagement with licensing authorities
- Temporary housing of animals
- Emergency relief
- Monetary support
- General skills transfer

Long-term Assistance for Zoos in Need of Improvement

- Capacity building
- Skills transfer
- Mentoring or partnership relationship
- Engaging licensing authority

## 2) FORMAL WAZA COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

When WAZA receives a complaint:

1) Concerning a WAZA member



- WAZA Office acknowledges receipt of the complaint and sends a questionnaire (Appendix II) to the complainant
- If a response to the questionnaire is received, then the WAZA Office sends the original complaint and copy of the filled in questionnaire to the CEO of the institution concerned
- WAZA Office notifies complainant that the complaint has been forwarded to the CEO of the institution concerned and/or to the WAZA's Welfare and Ethics Committee and the relevant regional or national Association
- WAZA Office requests that the CEO responds directly to the complainant and copies WAZA Office in all ensuing correspondence.

2 ) Concerning a non-WAZA member but member of a WAZA Member Association

- WAZA Office acknowledges receipt of the complaint and notifies the complainant that the institution is not a member of WAZA and that the complaint will be forwarded to the relevant national or regional Association

3) Concerning a non-WAZA member and not a member of a WAZA Association (non-affiliated)

- WAZA Office acknowledges receipt of the complaint and notifies the complainant that the institution is not a member of WAZA or a WAZA Member Association and refers the complainant to the relevant authorities
- Alternatively, if the WAZA Office determines there is sufficient evidence of an ongoing serious animal welfare problem, it may request a filled in questionnaire (Appendix II) and take further action

### 3) ASSESSMENT TOOL TO IDENTIFY ZOOS IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT

The Assessment Tool assists WAZA members in pursuing the following WAZA policy statement:

*"We as a community of organised zoos, have a moral, ethical and professional responsibility to engage with needy institutions in order to help them improve their standards, achieve conservation goals and benefit the animals they hold."*  
(COM. 61.10)

The Assessment Tool allows the evaluation of a zoo in need of improvement, as outlined in Appendix I.

The Assessment Tool does not contain comprehensive questions regarding applicable legal requirements because of the differences in legislation throughout the world. Therefore, relevant questions need to be added to the Tool by the person/institution using it.

The Assessment Tool will be available to the members through the WAZA Office.

### 4) MENTORING GUIDELINES (MENTORING PROCESS)

The Assessment Tool will also form a basis from which a mentoring plan may be developed. The Tool covers areas of best practice as well as the lowest acceptable standards. The use of the Tool may highlight areas which need improvement and future plans can focus on these.

Local norms may be taken into account when using this Tool.

#### Mentoring process:

1. As zoos in need of improvement are identified through a number of different means, it is not suitable to prescribe such identifying processes in detail.
2. WAZA Office may be able to facilitate the contact between zoos that need improvement and associations/institutions that may be able to help.



3. The use of the Assessment Tool will draw attention to those issues where improvement and corrective actions are required.
4. It is suggested that the zoo discusses the process for implementing the suggestions outlined in the Action Plan with other zoo/aquarium professionals (e.g. national/regional zoo Association, WAZA, other zoo professionals).



## APPENDIX I

### DEFINITIONS

#### „Zoo“

For the purpose of this document, a zoo is a permanently sited legal establishment, in which wild species of animals are displayed under predominantly *ex situ* conditions, primarily open to and administered for the visiting public and where the principal business rationale is not commercial trade in living organisms or their products.\*

This definition includes establishments such as zoological gardens, wildlife parks, animal parks, dolphinariums, bird parks, vivariums, aquariums, insectariums etc. but not fenced nature reserves.

\* This definition is not a definition of a WAZA Member Institution.

#### „Best Practice in Zoos“

WAZA perceives best zoo practice as;

1. Compliance with the applicable legal requirements;
2. The establishment and provision of a supportive environment for the animals, personnel and public (duty of care);
3. The maintenance of the collection of animals in accordance with ethical animal welfare and scientific management principles, for the foremost and demonstrable purpose of conservation through exhibition, education and research;
4. A structured continuity of competence;
5. Having a statement of operational succession (Continuity of operations; succession plan; exit strategy; contingency plan);
6. Active involvement in the conservation of biodiversity (being involved in *in situ* conservation);
7. Working with institutions that need assistance to improve their standards, to achieve conservation goals, and to benefit the animals they hold;
8. Being committed to communication, cooperation and coordination among institutions;
9. The promotion of civic good will in the larger community;
10. The promotion of the fact that animals and ecosystems have inherent value (Promotion of a positive perception of nature and wild animals);
11. The pursuit of environmentally sustainable practices;
12. The provision of educational opportunities for learning about animals and their environments and;
13. Compliance with the WAZA Code of Ethics and Animal Welfare and/or equivalent industry standard.

#### „Zoos in need of improvement“

The minimum norms of standard zoo practice are compliance with the applicable legal requirements and the establishment and provision of a supportive environment for the animals, personnel and public (see Best Practices 1 and 2 above).

Non-compliance with these minimum norms identifies a zoo as in need of improvement.



## APPENDIX II

# COMPLAINT PROCEDURE QUESTIONNAIRE

In order to process your complaint, we would like to ask you a few questions. Your answers may be used as part of our continuing research.

### About you

1) Age

Up to 12  13-25  26-35  36-65  66+

2) Gender

Male  Female

3) Profession

(please specify) .....

4) Are you affiliated/members with or members of the following organizations?

Predominantly animal rights/welfare organization (please give examples)  
.....

Predominantly conservation orientated organization (please give examples)  
.....

5) Your experience with animals

Do you keep pets? Yes  No

If yes, are they non-domestic animals? Yes  No

6) Your experience as a zoo visitor

Do you visit zoos often?

Yes, more than once a year .....

Yes, every 2-5 years .....

Yes, rarely (5-10 years) .....

Not for 10+ years .....

Never .....

Other .....

### About your complaint

7) Did you personally visit the zoo/aquarium in question?

Yes  (go to question 8a,b,c) No  (go to question 9)

8a) what was the date, time of day and weather conditions?

Date .....

Time of day .....

Predominant weather conditions during visits:

Raining/snowing  Cloudy/grey/cold

Clear/bright/cold  Sunny/hot

Very hot/humid

8b) Were you responsible for children (under the age of 13) during your visit?

Yes  No



**8c) How long were you in the zoo/aquarium in question on this particular visit?**

1-2 hours  2-5 hours (half a day)   
 5+ hours (a whole day)

**9) If you did not personally visit the zoo/aquarium in question, how did you learn about the alleged problem?**

From a friend .....   
 From an organization .....   
 From the media (tv, radio, newspapers, magazines etc)   
 Other (please specify) .....

**10) If not given in your original complaint, please provide us with some details that are relevant to the complaint:**

Which species?

.....  
 One particular animal of that species,  or the whole group?

If only one animal please give details .....

Which particular exhibit or part of exhibit?

.....  
 .....

**11) Did you express your concern to any member of staff from the institution concerned?**

Yes  No

If yes, then what was the response? .....

**12) Have you sent this complaint to anyone else?**

Yes  No

If yes, then to whom? .....

**Thank you very much for your response.**

**We are now in a better position to process your query.**

