

The Zoo

Sphere of Influence

Core Values



ZooSphere - CORE VALUES CHECKLIST

The Core Values are based on key WAZA documents and guidelines. Next to each standard in the Checklist we have indicated whether the standard is required or recommended according to the WAZA Assessment Tool (accessed 2023).

PLEASE NOTE that some standards (which we have listed as recommended) are mandatory for some regulatory bodies and membership organisations. It is important that zoo/aquariums consult the documents provided by their relevant member body or licensing authority. This checklist is not a replacement for official documents.

Whilst completion of this check list is not mandatory for generating the Zoo Sphere of Influence Model, we strongly encourage zoo/aquariums to fulfil these core areas. The core values represent the fundamental standards of running a conservation zoo/aquarium. We encourage zoo/aquariums to meet ALL 'required' and 'recommended' core values before addressing the other areas of the model.

Zoo/Aquarium Site		
Required	Zoo/aquarium is compliant with the applicable legal requirements [W.S.1]	
Required	Zoo/aquarium is open to the public and is permanently sited [W.AT1/2]	
Required	The total financial support is adequate to meet the needs of the zoo/aquarium [W.AT. 28]	
Required	The staff are adequately directed/led [W.AT.20]	
Required	The buildings, paths and roads within the zoo/aquarium are maintained [W.AT.10/11]	
Required	The animals are in good health [W.AT.36]	
Required	Animal care is appropriately balanced between the animal welfare needs and responsible public viewing [W.AT.58]	
Required	Visitor facilities (including provision for disabled visitors) are adequate and operate under appropriate hygienic/sanitary standards [W.AT.3/4/8]	
Required	Zoo/aquarium provides accessible facilities and inclusive spaces for all visitors regardless of cognitive or physical ability, gender, social, cultural, ethnic or economic background e.g., provision of sensory bags, quiet days, adult changing facilities [W.AT.3, W.P. 4]	
Recommended	The zoo/aquarium has an organised management structure for making decisions within the zoo/aquarium (W.S.4/5)	
Recommended	The zoo/aquarium should present accurate and relevant information about the species, ecosystems, and issues exhibited, including the IUCN Red List Status of each species. This information should be based on scientific facts and theories [W.CE.4, E.CE.12/ 13, R+R]	
Recommended	Zoo/aquarium demonstrates a range of delivery approaches to cater to different audience needs and diversities [W.CE.3]	

Husbandry		
Required	The zoo/aquarium maintains up to date records on all animals within the collection (past and present), with an individual staff member responsible for ensuring they are up to date [W.AT.37/63-65, W.CW.2.3]	
Required	Zoo/aquarium habitats are clean and well maintained AND are of appropriate size for the species housed to enable them to express natural behaviours [W.AT. 44/51, W.EW.3]	

Required	Zoo/aquarium habitats are of sufficient size and animals managed in a way that: undue dominance is avoided, persistent/unresolved conflict is avoided, the physical carrying capacity of the space is not exceeded, and an uncontrolled buildup of parasites or pests is avoided [W.AT.45, W.EW.3]	
Required	Adequate quantity and quality food and drink is provided for animals housed. Food and drink are accessible to every animal and is provided in a way that meets the animals' biological and behavioural needs [W.AT.54/55/56/57, W.P.6]	
Required	Separate accommodation where appropriate is provided for pregnant animals and those with young. Separation of individuals is possible for animal welfare management [W.AT.46, W.EW.3, W.CW.4.3]	
Required	There are sufficient and suitable (e.g. nontoxic, safe), design features, shelters and furniture to meet the needs of all the animals housed and allow animals the opportunity to retreat and hide [W.AT.49/50, W.EW.3]	
Required	Adequate facilities are available for crating and transporting animals and animal welfare is considered when moving/transporting animals [W.AT.69, W.EW.5/W.CW.2.5]	
Required	There are adequate veterinary facilities and procedures to meet the needs of all animals housed [W.AT.35]	
Required	Zoo/aquarium habitats provide for the animals' wellbeing throughout the year. Any temporary housing is regularly assessed [W.AT.47/48]	
Required	Animals are only handled by or under the supervision of authorised personnel. Handling is consistent with the animal's welfare [W.AT.61/62, W.AV]	

Core Welfare		
Required	The animal collection is under the supervision of a trained veterinarian who provides adequate (e.g. at least once per week) supervision and care [W.AT.34/35/41]	
Recommended	Zoo/aquarium has an animal welfare policy with a clear commitment to animal welfare principles and applicable to all animals housed [W. CW.1.1]	
Recommended	Zoo/aquarium has an animal welfare evaluation process (AWEP) based on science and best practice guidelines [W.AWG.1.1/ W.CW.1.4]	
Recommended	Welfare assessment is focused around the 5-domains model [W.AWG.1.3/ W.CW.1.5/W.AWG 2.2]	
Recommended	Zoo/aquarium monitors and records animal health and welfare daily	
Recommended	Animal health plans are developed to consider whole-life-care (considers specialist needs of very young, ill, injured and geriatric animals) [W.CW.2.7]	
Recommended	The zoo/aquarium can provide evidence of monitoring animal welfare [W.AWG.3.6]	
Recommended	Zoo/aquarium creates zoo/aquarium habitats which cater to the behavioural and physical needs of the animals housed including providing choices and rewarding challenges [W.CW.1.2/3.2]	
Recommended	Providing animal enrichment is embedded into the daily management of animals [W.CW.3.1]	
Recommended	The zoo/aquarium should comply with WAZA or regional guidelines on animal-visitor interactions [W.CE.2/ 5, WAWG, W.EW.2, W.AV, W.CW.1]	
Recommended	Visitors are informed about personal actions they can take to ensure the welfare of animals anywhere [C.CW.4.6]	

Recommended	Zoo/aquarium avoids using animals in any interactive experience where the welfare of the animal may be compromised [W.CW.9.1]	
Recommended	The zoo/aquarium demonstrates to visitors how they achieve high welfare standards for the species in their care [W.CE.2/ 5, WAWG, W.EW.2, W.AV, W.CW 1.6/9.6]	
Recommended	Positive reinforcement is used as a training tool [W.CP.3.3]	
Recommended	Enrichment success is regularly evaluated [W.CW.3.4]	
Recommended	Zoo/aquarium aims to continuously monitor and improve animal welfare and husbandry for all species kept [W.CW. 1.3]	
Recommended	Animal welfare is a primary criterion of all exhibit design and upgrades. [W.CW. 4.1]	
Recommended	Zoo/aquarium habitat design and zoo/aquarium habitat use is regularly monitored and evaluated [W.CW.4.5, W.CC]	
Recommended	There is a clear ethical review process for any research involving people or animals [W.CC, W.AT. 43, W.EW.9]	
Recommended	Conduct specific animal welfare evaluations and ongoing monitoring of all individuals used in interactive experiences [W.CW.9.2]	
Recommended	Zoo/aquarium does not undertake, participate or contribute to animal shows, displays or interactions where animals perform unnatural behaviours. [W.CW.9.4/W.EW.2]	
Recommended	The zoo/aquarium performs necropsies to establish the cause of death and reports zoonotic diseases to national authorities [W.AT.42, W.EW. 7/11]	
Recommended	Animal welfare, welfare monitoring, and animal sentence are priority areas for research (both in-house and through external partnerships) [W.CW.7.1/8.3]	
Recommended	Staff are trained to observe behaviour and monitor the welfare of animals in their care [W.CC]	
Recommended	Zoo/aquarium facilitates positive welfare management during breeding events (oestrus monitoring, skilled observation, separations) [W.CW.5.2]	
Recommended	Professional external advice is sought to oversee breeding related issues [W.CW 5.3]	
Recommended	Zoo/aquarium partners with other organisations to share expertise and ensure the best welfare outcomes for their animals (e.g. through staff exchanges) [W.CW.8.5]	
Recommended	Good welfare practices are shared with other zoo/aquarium practitioners through national and international conferences, discussion boards, and committees	
Recommended	Enrichment stories and successful practices are shared with visitors and the wider audience (e.g. through social media) [W.CW.3.6]	
Recommended	Published scientific literature and expert advice (including in the fields of effective environmental education), are consulted when developing animal management strategies and interactive experiences [W.CW.7.2/9.7]	
Exceeding expectations	Zoo/aquarium has its own veterinary hospital or pathology labs which support other zoo/aquariums nationally and internationally	
Exceeding expectations	Zoo/aquarium conducts animal behaviour welfare research and publishes in international peer reviewed journals	
Exceeding expectations	Zoo/aquarium is a recognised centre for animal welfare expertise and assists other organisations with improving their animal welfare [W.CW.8.1]	
Exceeding expectations	When animals are bred for release, specific attention is given to balance animal welfare with survival in the wild and replenishment of wild populations [W.CW.5.4]	

Exceeding expectations	Ensure that the promotion of positive animal welfare is always considered throughout the conservation work of the zoo/aquarium and of all its conservation partners [W.CW.6.5]	
Exceeding expectations	The skills and experience of the zoo/aquarium's veterinary and pathology teams are used for aiding the wild population	

Health & Safety		
Required	Zoo/aquarium habitats are designed, constructed and maintained to ensure the animal is contained within [W.AT.75/76]	
Required	First aid is readily available to staff and the public, with clear emergency procedures and equipment in the event of major injury/death from a large or venomous animal [W.AT.92/93]	
Required	Personnel who handle animals are aware of common zoonoses and zoo/aquarium provides suitable facilities and PPE to reduce the chance of zoonosis amongst staff and visitors [W.AT.98/W. AV]	
Required	Zoo/aquarium has implemented a protocol to prevent the establishment and spread of diseases within the One Health approach on site (e.g. ensuring quarantine protocols are in place, control of pests/vermin, measures to prevent disease transfer) [W.AT.38, W.CW.2.8]	
Required	Personnel can safely service all exhibits [W.AT.99]	
Required	Toxic or hazardous waste (including sewage and animal waste) is stored and disposed of appropriately [W.AT. 5/6/7]	
Required	Deceased animals are stored away from food and are disposed of appropriately [W.AT.39/40]	
Required	Gates and doors are equally as strong as the surrounding barriers and are locked where zoo/aquarium habitats contain hazardous animals [W.AT.79/80]	
Required	Standoff barriers prevent direct contact between visitors and hazardous animals. These barriers should discourage individuals from climbing or sitting on them and should not be a hazard to visitors [WAT.77/78/81]	

Staff		
Recommended	Zoo/aquarium provides a programme of wellbeing activities for staff and regularly undertakes staff surveys or staff meetings to discuss problems, develop solutions and assess staff wellbeing [W.AT.23]	
Recommended	Zoo/aquarium has a written policy for addressing justice, equity, diversity, access and inclusion (DEAI). A paid staff member is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented.	
Recommended	Zoo/aquarium conducts an audit of staffing, and onsite practices to assess inclusivity, diversity, equity, access, and justice. [W.P.5/ 10]	
Recommended	A significant focus is also placed on developing an inclusive staff culture, including providing regular opportunities for training or discussion of DEAI and social justice issues. [W.P.5/10]	
Recommended	Zoo/aquarium targets career and training opportunities towards locally under-represented groups. E.g., individuals from deprived areas, LGBTQ2+, ethnic minorities. [W.P.8/ 10]	
Recommended	Zoo/aquarium applies best practices for healthy management of staff's compassion fatigue.	
Recommended	Zoo/aquarium pays staff a sustainable wage in line with national averages [W.P.8]	
Recommended	Zoo/aquarium supports staff to develop as conservation leaders [W.AT. 25]	

Glossary

BIAZA: British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums

CoP: Conference of Parties

DEAI: Diversity, Equity, Access & Inclusion

EAZA: European Association of Zoos and Aquaria

EEP: European Endangered Species Programme

ESB: European Stud Book

EU: European Union

GBF: UNEP Global Biodiversity Framework

House/ housed (species/ animals) (formerly 'keep'): To 'keep/ exhibit' a particular species or animal

Interested parties (formerly stakeholders): refer to all individuals who should have a voice in decisions and projects.

IP & LCs: Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

IUCN: International Union for Conservation of Nature

IZE: International Zoo Educators Association

LGBTQ+/LGBTQ2+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Others

MAZPA: Malaysian Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria

MSC: Marine Stewardship Council

NGO: Non-Government Organisation

PMX/PMx: pedigree management software

RSPO: Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil

RtR: Reverse the Red

SDG: Sustainable Development Goals

SEAZA: South-east Asian Zoos and Aquariums Association

SSC: Species Survival Commission

TAG: Taxon Advisory Group

UNEP: United Nations Environment Programme

UNFCCC: UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

W.AT.: WAZA Assessment Tool

W. AV.: WAZA Animal Visitor Interactions (2020)

WAWG: WAZA Animal Welfare Goal (2023)

WAZA: World Association of Zoos and Aquariums

W. CC.: WAZA Committing to Conservation (2015)

W. CE: WAZA Social Change for Conservation (2020)

W. CW.: WAZA Caring for Wildlife (2015)

W.E: WAZA Code of Ethics (2023)

W. EW: WAZA Code of Ethics and Animal Welfare (2003)

W.P.: WAZA Protecting Our Planet (2020)

WPMG: WAZA Population Management Goal (2023)

W.S.: WAZA Guidelines for Improving Standards in Zoo/aquariums

Zoo: we use the term zoo in this document to refer to both zoos and aquariums

Zoo habitat (formerly 'zoo enclosure'): refers to the animals' 'enclosure' within the zoo site

Core References

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