

CAZA Policy Re: Human and Animal Contact

Preamble

Contact with animals can provide a valuable educational experience for visitors and participants in education and public programs to zoological parks and aquariums. Nearly all contact with other living organisms, whether it is animals, or other humans, carries some risk of disease transmission. While animal contact opportunities for the general public can present increased risks, these can be controlled with reasonable precautions. Transmission of zoonotic diseases can be prevented with appropriate testing and quarantine programs and proper hand washing or sanitizing techniques at the contact site.

Definitions

Contact opportunities refer to those situations in which there is direct physical contact between animals and people.

Zoonotic diseases are those able to be transferred from animals to humans.

Policy

CAZA supports the use of appropriate animals in contact opportunities with the public. All facilities providing contact opportunities must take reasonable precautions to preclude mistreatment of animals, and to promote public health. Institutions must make all reasonable attempts to limit the risk and spread of disease from the animals in their care to their employees or the general public.

Policy Specifications (Mandatory)

1. Guardrails and barriers must be constructed in all areas where the visiting public could have contact with any animals other than those appropriate for public handling or whose nature would predispose them from this contact.
2. Potentially dangerous animals must be held in facilities that prevent physical contact with staff and visitors, unless a full risk assessment has been conducted and the results used to develop procedures, which minimize the likelihood of attacks on handlers and visitors where they are permitted to come into contact.
3. Where direct contact between animals and the visiting public is promoted, the animals concerned must be carefully selected, monitored, treated

- humanely, and with respect at all times; staff must be on hand and visible at all times to ensure this, and monitor public behaviour.
4. Where direct contact between animals and the visiting public is promoted, hand washing and/or sanitizing facilities must be provided, and the public must be encouraged to use them.
 5. Animals in contact programs must be checked on a regular basis to ensure that they are free of infectious processes transmissible to people. There must be a regular program of cleaning faeces and other debris from contact areas to which the public has access.
 6. Animals displayed in an area that the public enters and are encouraged to have direct contact with, must have a separate area to which they may retreat and be isolated from the public. Public feeding of contact animals must be monitored by staff to ensure proper nutritional requirements of the animals is met.
 7. Animals in a contact area must be monitored by facility staff on a regular basis to ensure they have not become aggressive, putting the public in harms way. The facility should have protocols in place to deal with aggressive animal behaviour.
 8. Animals that appear in meet the keeper presentations, or that are used in presentations either on or off the facility site and are in contact with the public, will be considered to be animals in contact areas and must have the same rules of hygiene and food monitoring applied. This includes animals in drive through exhibits where feeding is allowed as part of the visitor experience and for institutions that allow animal feeding or contact through a barrier.
 9. A review must be undertaken should a member of the public be injured in a contact situation.