

CAZA Policy Re: Development and Evaluation of Educational Activities in Zoos and Aquariums

Preamble

The role of animals in an educational activity in zoos and aquariums is acceptable only if the program contributes to the understanding of fundamental biological and ecological principles; the development of knowledge that can reasonably be expected to benefit the animals, their environments, and humans; or that contributes to the understanding of environmental principles and issues with the goal of changing human behavior. These are outcomes of the process we define here as Education.

Policy

All CAZA accredited zoos and aquariums are to ensure that the evaluation of both educational activities and outcomes takes place on a formal basis. The following process for describing activities and assessing results has been adopted by CAZA.

Policy Specifications (Mandatory)

Each member institution will establish an Education Committee that will, using this national protocol and locally defined criteria, evaluate their programs' goals, merit and effectiveness.

Each institution will address and evaluate their programs in key areas, including:

- specific program goals
- pedagogical merit
- conservation merit
- defined target audiences
- formal evaluation

Zoos and aquariums with marine mammals (defined as cetaceans, pinnipeds and sea otters) must have a formal Animal Care Committee operating under the guidelines of the Canadian Council for Animal Care (CCAC); this committee must work collaboratively with the Education Committee to ensure that all programs that use marine mammals undergo both educational and ethical review. For institutions housing marine mammals the following elements shall be considered mandatory.

Policy Recommendations

Institutional education committees should:

- Have a clearly-described mandate and terms of reference
- Have clearly described overall goals
- Include at least two permanent outside representatives – one from formal education and one representing community interests and concerns, who have had no affiliation with the institution.
- Have a clearly described organizational structure and process with:
 - Chair
 - Members – a management rep, at least one paid educational staff member, a volunteer if appropriate.
 - Schedule – a minimum of two meetings per year, and more if justified by program scope
 - Minutes – retained for five years (for CAZA accreditation purposes)
 - Accountability –
 - Will report to the zoo and aquarium administration and board where appropriate
 - Will liaise with the Animal Care Committee, if applicable, or with professional staff
 - Will liaise with the media, politicians, public etc., as appropriate
 - Will adhere to the CAZA accreditation process and report as appropriate to CAZA.

CAZA recognizes that there is a wide range of types and numbers of programs offered by its member institutions.

- It is recommended that Education Committee will, for the purpose of consistency across institutions, group educational programs into one of four categories:
 - Formal educational programs
 - Informal educational activities
 - Outreach programs
 - Public programs
- It is recommended that educational committees review for appropriateness:
 - The number of staff dedicated to education programming, their training and qualifications
 - That at least one paid staff member is dedicated to education on at least a part-time basis
 - The classrooms and other teaching areas

- The level of contact with local schools, colleges, and other academia,
- The availability of funds allocated for educational programs

- In addition, review the goals, pedagogical approach, and conservation merit of:
 - the educational messages and the means of communication to the casual visitor
 - all relevant publications, brochures and other printed material on an ongoing basis
 - exhibit signage and graphics
 - the volunteer, docent and outreach programs
 - all outreach programming and that use of animals off-site meets CAZA guidelines
 - all shows and public demonstrations

- For each separate program, the following should be clearly described:
 - Overall goal for the program including cognitive and affective learning or behavioral change outcomes
 - Definition of the specific target audience.
 - Description and evaluation of the educational approach (pedagogy)
 - Program Evaluation Methodology
 - A description of how the program will be evaluated for effectiveness and whether the results achieve the goals described.
 - Evaluation techniques will vary with the category (formal, informal, outreach, public), and will range in complexity and sophistication depending on the circumstances. The range will include, at one extreme, simple questionnaires administered to teachers; to, at the other extreme, fully structured, quantified professional evaluation methodology for extensive, formal programs.
 - Assessment of Relevance to:
 - National CAZA goals
 - CAZA exists, in part, to ensure that animals in the care of zoos and aquariums receive the best possible care and that there is continuous improvement.

- The assessment should describe how the program addresses or conveys messages about the care of the animals used in each program.
- Conservation
 - Educational programs should be clearly designed to connect the animal or situation the program is based on with conservation issues or concerns. These could be topical, current issues such as climate change and its impact on the natural environment and on wildlife species, the need for water conservation, the status of Canada's Arctic animals – and others that will emerge in coming years.
 - Institutional goals
 - There should be a relationship to the institution's local circumstances, the nature of its collection, and the needs and interests of the local community.
 - Audiences and their needs
- The educational plan should identify the target audience(s) for the program, and the particular characteristics of the audience(s) that shape the nature and scope of the program including:
 - Ways to reach the audience
 - A clear description of the type of educational approach chosen to reach the audience.
 - Role of the animals in the educational program
 - The appropriate use of the animals involved, and an evaluation of how the animals can best be used to achieve the stated goals.
 - Careful consideration of the role of the animals in order to ensure maximum impact, and to ensure that the animals are not negatively stressed in their role.
 - Careful consideration of an approach and methodology that ensures that the impact of this program on the animal or ecosystem is reduced to the minimum.

- There should be an examination of the need to allocate resources to the development and delivery of the educational program to ensure that sufficient resources are provided for effective delivery.