

Elements Of A Good Enrichment Program

Following Are The Current Written Accreditation Standards Related To Enrichment

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- 1.6.1. The institution must follow a formal written enrichment program that promotes species-appropriate behavioral opportunities.

Explanation: An enrichment program should be based on current information in biology, and should include the following elements: goal-setting, planning and approval process, implementation, documentation/record-keeping (see standard 1.6.3), evaluation, and reassessment. The enrichment program should also apply to animals in quarantine, as appropriate and possible. In some cases, the features and complexity of the exhibit may provide sufficient enrichment. Further information on the establishment of an enrichment program is available from AZA, and online at <https://www.aza.org/accred-resource-center> (you will be requested to log in using your individual membership user name and password).

- 1.6.2. The institution must have a specific paid staff member(s) or committee assigned for enrichment program oversight, implementation, assessment, and interdepartmental coordination of enrichment efforts.

- 1.6.3. Enrichment activities must be documented and evaluated, and program refinements should be made based on the results, if appropriate. Records must be kept current.

- 1.5.4. If ambassador animals are used, a written policy on the use of live animals in programs must be followed and incorporate the elements contained in AZA's "Recommendations For Developing an Institutional Ambassador Animal Policy" (see pages 86 – 91 of the *Standards*). An education, conservation, and welfare message must be an integral component of all programs. Animals in education programs must be maintained and cared for by paid and/or unpaid trained staff, and housing conditions must meet standards required for the remainder of the animals in the institution. While outside their primary enclosure, although the conditions may be different, animal safety and welfare need to be assured at all times.

Explanation: As stated in the AZA Ambassador Animal Policy, the management of ambassador animals requires special consideration. Although the housing conditions for ambassador animals may look different at times to those provided to exhibit animals, institutions must provide similar social, physical, behavioral and nutritional opportunities to ambassador animals. Regular holding enclosures (this does not include short-term holding for programs or transport) for any given ambassador animal species must provide sufficient space for comfort, exercise, shelter, and have sufficient complexity. Ambassador animals should be housed socially when appropriate for the species. Also, providing ambassador animals with choices and control over their environment (e.g., whether they want to participate in a program on any given day) and incorporating time limitations (including animal rotation and rest periods), where and when appropriate, is essential to ensuring effective care and management. Activities associated with programs may provide some of these needs from time to time.

- 2.4.2. Paid and unpaid animal care staff should be trained to assess welfare and recognize abnormal behavior and clinical signs of illness and have knowledge of the diets,

husbandry (including enrichment items and strategies), and restraint procedures required for the animals under their care. However, animal care staff (paid and unpaid) must not diagnose illnesses nor prescribe treatment.

- 2.6.2. The institution must follow a written nutrition program that meets the behavioral and nutritional needs of all species, individuals, and colonies/groups in the institution. Animal diets must be of a quality and quantity suitable for each animal's nutritional and psychological needs.

Explanation: Nutrition programs should be developed using the recommendations of appropriate AZA TAGs or SAGs, and the AZA Nutrition Advisory Group <http://nagonline.net/guidelines-aza-institutions/feeding-guidelines/>. Diet formulation criteria should include each animal's individual history and natural history, feeding ecology and behavioral needs. Meat processed on site must be processed following all USDA (or federal) standards.

- 2.6.3. If the institution uses browse plants as part of the diet or as enrichment items for its animals, the items must be identified and reviewed for safety prior to use.

Explanation: At minimum, the program should identify what plants are safe to feed and to which species, which parts of the plant are safe, whether the browse plants have been treated with any chemicals or if they are near any point sources of pollution.

- 10.3.3. All animal enclosures (exhibits, holding areas, hospital, and quarantine/isolation) must be of a size and complexity sufficient to provide for the animal's physical, social, and psychological well-being. AZA housing guidelines outlined in the Animal Care Manuals should be followed.

End Written Standards

Following Are The Characteristics Of A Good Enrichment Program (AZA Behavior Advisory Group)

We believe that an acceptable enrichment program, much like any other essential husbandry program (such as nutrition or record keeping), should incorporate: A, some essential basic elements, and B, the organizational infrastructure necessary to support the program including, financial resources, organizational support, and staffing/accountability. We recognize that different institutions (i.e. small/large, zoo/aquarium/park etc.) must necessarily implement programs in different ways, and this document can serve as a model to aspire to.

A. Program elements:

We would expect to see the following elements in a good institution enrichment program:

- Program description and goals
- Planning/approval process
- Implementation system
- Documentation/record keeping
- Evaluation and readjustment

Program description and goals

A description of the program should include goals, priorities, responsibilities, and resource availability. Priorities for allocation of enrichment resources should identify those species or individuals on which the facility is focusing its efforts, but should consider that enrichment at some level can benefit all species.

Planning/approval process

Some formal process for approval of enrichment techniques should exist and take into account veterinary and nutritional issues (i.e., either through approval process for new techniques and/or through production of an approved catalogue of activities for different taxa).

Implementation system

It is recommended that enrichment be scheduled in advance on a regular basis to allow for planning, preparation and delivery of materials, and to ensure variety and consistency (for example, a matrix upon which enrichment activities for each exhibit are scheduled one week in advance).

Documentation/record-keeping

Historical record of the enrichment activities that actually took place, since this may differ from those that were scheduled. This is necessary to satisfy regulations and external concerns about animal welfare, to assess the effectiveness of the program, and to maintain variety and consistency.

Evaluation and readjustment

We recognize that at this point in time there is no universally accepted and validated method for evaluating enrichment. Indeed, there is a need to develop a rapid assessment tool to assess effectiveness of enrichment. Nevertheless, some effort to evaluate success should be a part of an enrichment program. A process for reviewing the success of the program and re-adjusting on a regular basis (e.g. quarterly) is necessary.

While not an essential program element, we would recommend that dissemination of information, both internally and externally, be a part of any enrichment program. Evidence of such dissemination may take the form of articles submitted to journals and newsletters, contribution to e-mail lists, papers presented at conferences etc.

Quantitative and qualitative documentation of changes in animal behavior and activities over time is critical. Evaluation is critical in order to:

- know that behavior or welfare improvements have occurred.
- provides a framework for enhanced animal management and husbandry, evaluation allows you to be consistent and objective across individuals/species and provides a basis for revision and improvement.
- provides justification for procurement of resources.

B. Infrastructure elements:

We believe that for an enrichment program to thrive and prosper the following infrastructure elements are required:

- Organizational support
- Staffing/accountability
- Financial Support
- Knowledge Resources

Organizational support

The program should have as broad a representation as possible across organizational levels, including husbandry, veterinarian, nutritional, behavioral research, horticulture, and facilities staff. Support for the program should reach to the level of director.

Staffing/accountability

Enrichment should be included in job descriptions as well as the performance management process, and included in Standard Operating Procedures. Also, in the rapidly developing field of environmental enrichment it is critical to stay current through staff training programs.

An effective program requires an accountable person or persons. Further, this accountability extends up the lines of authority. Accountability can be accomplished in a variety of ways: through a single “point person”, or through a committee. Those involved should have knowledge, interest and expertise in animal behavior/enrichment. Further, to facilitate buy-in at different levels of the organization, they should have strong people and organization skills.

Accountability for program management may lie with this point person/committee; however, accountability for enrichment implementation should lie with both the managers (e.g., collection manager/curator/supervisors), and front-line employees (e.g., keepers). The point person/committee is responsible for: coordination, program evaluation, staff training, keeping up to date with advances in the field, accessibility of resources (e.g., periodicals, AAZK, Internet, etc.). Enrichment is no more an “option” than veterinary care or diet preparation.

Financial support

The program may require financial support, for items such as:

- Personnel effort to guide and implement the program
- Purchasing enrichment materials
- Exhibit modification
- Training/travel to workshops/conferences/exchanges
- Contracting consultants

Knowledge resources

The ideal program is based on access to basic animal research and understanding of species' behavioral biology. Programs established without this knowledge base may be ineffective or not meet the animals' needs. Programs should have access to available resources on enrichment ideas such as through the Internet, AAZK, periodicals, newsletters, books, and consultants, etc.

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