

## **SEAZA Code of Welfare & Ethics**

*English Version*

The Southeast Asian region is characterized by a rich diversity of cultures and zoological institutions. Bound by a common vision, SEAZA members must work together to achieve a high standard of animal welfare & ethics for all animals in their care.

The continued existence of zoos and aquariums depends on the recognition that our profession is based on the welfare of the animals in our care, the people we serve and most importantly, for each other.

To promote high standards of animal welfare, we adopt global best practices that incorporates the “Five Domains” model for animal welfare and will continually uphold positive animal welfare standards and keep abreast of practices that are continually changing and evolving.

The following actions are those that SEAZA believes are unacceptable and prevent the application of the principles that the Animal Welfare Certification Standard will promote. These statements may underpin the decision-making process taken by the SEAZA board when addressing non-compliance to the Certification Standard.

**1. *Training practices that compromise the animal’s physical or behavioral health, development or psychological well-being.***

Training of captive wild animals is often required for the treatment, movement and care to reduce stress and ensure long term positive welfare. It can be a constructive aspect of captive welfare management and encourage positive relationships to be built between animal care staff and the animals. However, the training of captive wild animals should always use positive reinforcement practices – whereby the animal is rewarded for positive responses and there is trust between the animal and the staff involved. Positive reinforcement or operant conditioning training can support best practice, reduce stress during required veterinary care, provide cognitive behavioral stimulation and mitigate boredom. SEAZA believes that training techniques involving physical punishment that deliberately inflicts injury or pain, or training practices that compromise the animal’s short and long-term physical or behavioral health, development or psychological well-being are not acceptable under any circumstances. Under circumstances that involve training, SEAZA members aim to meet the training principles outlined in the SEAZA Animal Welfare Standard and only use staff that are experienced in positive reinforcement training. As with all practices directly involving animal care, SEAZA supports continual assessment of training methods utilizing the five domains of animal welfare where appropriate.

***2. Animal demonstrations and animal-visitor interactions that are detrimental to the physical or psychological well-being of the animals and do not respect an animal's dignity***

Contact animals or animal-visitor interactions are commonly used in zoos and aquariums. Different species and individuals will respond differently in show environments, and ensuring positive welfare for the animals involved, before, during and after a show or interaction is of paramount importance. In all situations, the focus should be on educating visitors about natural and normal animal behaviors, animal biology and conservation. Animals involved should have received positive reinforcement training, be habituated to demonstration circumstances and supervised or under the direct control of an experienced, competent animal keeper and the animals should be able to be returned or regrouped to their normal social structure. SEAZA believes animal demonstrations and animal-visitor interactions that are detrimental to the physical or psychological well-being of the animals are unacceptable. These include circus-like shows, demonstrations, animal photography or interactions that are not respectful, demonstrate unnatural behaviors and are detrimental to an animal's immediate and long-term physical and psychological well-being. SEAZA members aim to meet the animal demonstration principles outlined in the SEAZA Animal Welfare Standard. They aim to strictly regulate, control and regularly monitor the standard of care and delivery of animal shows and interactions to adequately protect the welfare of the animals as well as the health and safety of members of the public. Appropriate monitoring, suitability of species, staff expertise and safety are essential considerations.

***3. Confinement in any enclosures that severely restrict physical movement and compromise psychological wellbeing***

SEAZA believes that the confinement of animals in barren enclosures that severely restrict physical movement and compromise their psychological wellbeing is unacceptable. In captivity, it is important that an enclosure is designed in a manner that seeks to meet the physical, physiological and psychological requirements of the animal at all times and throughout its entire lifetime. Different species have different needs, and an enclosure should be designed to offer choice, comfort and appropriate movement opportunities. Behavioral and environmental enrichment should be an important aspect of a zoo's remit and applied in a manner that consistently supports species specific needs. This includes where animals are held in off show facilities such as quarantine or show-holding enclosures. SEAZA members aim to provide the highest possible enclosure care and meet the principles outlined in our Animal Welfare Standard Guidelines and Appendices.

**4. *Mutilation procedures that prevent natural and normal behaviors or cause physiological or psychological harm.***

SEAZA considers mutilation procedures that prevent natural and normal behaviors or cause physiological or psychological harm unacceptable. Mutilation is defined as an action that deliberately injures, disfigures, or physically changes an animal by removing or irreparably damaging parts of its body. Mutilation procedures for cosmetic purposes or to make an animal safe for handling is also considered unacceptable. SEAZA members aim to meet the guidelines outlining mutilation principles in our Animal Welfare Standard Guidelines and Appendices.

**5. *Unregulated feeding of the animals by visitors that is detrimental to the physical and psychological well-being of the animals***

Unregulated feeding is the act of feeding animals by visiting public within a zoo or aquarium without the supervision of an experienced member of staff. SEAZA believes that some unregulated feeding can result in unnatural behaviors such as begging, can increase the risk of zoonotic diseases and prevent natural and normal feeding behaviors. Unregulated feeding can also cause health related problems, particularly if inappropriate food is given to the animals. SEAZA members aim to ensure visitor animal feeding is appropriately monitored and supervised. Where unregulated feeding does take place, for example the feeding of free-roaming ungulates, it is advised that appropriate and regular monitoring of food quantity and quality is undertaken and the use of signs and disinfection stations provide information on appropriate feeding opportunities for visitors at the facility.

**6. *The breeding of animals that results in overcrowding, disease, injury or isolation of animals within an institution.***

One of the main objectives of a zoo or aquarium is the propagation of species to support in-situ and *ex situ* conservation breeding programmes. As a result, many species of animals are bred in captivity. Breeding can also support appropriate social interactions and positive behaviors. However, SEAZA believes that over-breeding of animals which results in overcrowding, disease, solitary confinement, stress and poor welfare is unacceptable. SEAZA members aim to ensure breeding programmes should be managed to prevent overpopulation and to ensure that each animal or group of animals can be maintained in compliance with the breeding principles outlined in SEAZA's Animal Welfare Standard. SEAZA members are committed to implement a collection plan and partake only in recognized and cooperative breeding programmes and cooperative population management plan that ensures their facility can provide the necessary veterinary and husbandry expertise and resources to effectively care for every individual within the population.

***7. The feeding of live vertebrate animals to other animals that causes physical and psychological suffering.***

Good animal welfare applies to all animals under human care, which includes animals being used as food for other animals. An animal can suffer stress and injuries when being used as prey, with potential for injury also being applied to the predator animal too. While food should be presented to animals in a way that satisfies the animal's natural feeding behavioral requirements and motivations, SEAZA believes in most circumstances, this is not considered reason enough to carry out the live feeding of vertebrate animals and it should be avoided save under exceptional and specified circumstances. These may include if the animal is a candidate for breeding and release programmes, will not take non-live prey foods, or it has been instructed by veterinary expertise for medical reasons. Where it has to be undertaken, SEAZA members aim to provide a written justification and ethical review process and following feeding principles outlined in the Animal Welfare Standard Guidelines. Live feeding needs to also be considered against prevailing national animal welfare legislation and the necessity of doing so.

***8. Unnecessary animal restraint that prevents natural and normal behaviors and movement.***

Animal restraint can be defined as an action that deliberately hinders an animal's natural behavior and movement through the use of an artificial restraint tool. Examples of animal restraint include tethering, chaining, or hobbling of an animal's front legs. SEAZA considers restraint unacceptable where the restraint purposefully, unnecessarily and consistently hinders an animal's natural behavior, with no obvious benefits to the animal involved. Acceptable restraint can be used during necessary management practices such as transport of the animal, where there are health and welfare benefits for the animal involved.