AFRICAN ASSOCIATION FOR WILDLIFE IN HUMAN CARE (AAWHC)

Animal Welfare Assessment MANUAL

This document has been developed in accordance with the Five Domains framework and the WAZA Welfare Assessment and the AAWHC Animal Welfare policy. It is intended to help applicants understand the requirements in terms of documentation and physical facility onsite assessment to comply with the AAWHC Animal Welfare Assessment.

Reason for implementation - (WAZA Global Strategy 2023)

Definitions

Welfare	-	*An animal's collective physical and mental states over a period of time, measured on a continuum from good to poor.*
Audit Cycle	-	*A facility is required to undergo the full Operational Accreditation process every 5 (five)_ years. The 'renewal' audit needs to be completed by the expiration date of the current certification.*
Annual Self-Assessment Audit	-	*An AAWHC member facility is expected to do an annual self-assessment that forms part of the mandatory requirements and can be viewed by AAWHC upon request at any time or during the onsite assessment of the audit.*

Welfare assessment as integral aspect

The welfare assessment is a combination of parameters, inputs and outputs, that describe the welfare of an animal. They are usually based on common sense and do not require expert training to be understood. The audit team will be experienced in animal care to ensure a fair and comprehensive assessment

AAWHC will establish a committee to appoint trained auditors for each application from members to be audited. The Welfare assessment is a combination of documents submitted online such as the application to be audited, policies, ownership (physical address, registration) and plans which is listed in the assessment tool. A physical onsite assessment is compulsory by trained auditors. Should circumstances prevent a physical onsite assessment, an online assessment will be considered by the committee. Assessments will be done every five years with the expectation that members will continue with their self-assessments on an annual basis.

A welfare assessment considers elements such as physical health, nutritional state, environmental utilization, behaviour, and mental domains (i.e. choice, control, experiences, and positive or negative affective states) as described by the 5 Domains Welfare model.

Welfare is best assessed as a combination of parameters, also called inputs and outputs.

AAWHC follows the WAZA recommendations as below:

WAZA Recommendation on output-based measures

AIM

As stated in the WAZA 2023 Animal Welfare Goal Action Plan, the WAZA Ethics and Animal Welfare Committee (EAWC) should provide a recommendation on output-based measures that can be most easily incorporated as requirements of the 2023 goals thinking on the timeline and feasibility.

Output-based measures

Also known as animal-based measures which are species specific. They usually reflect the effect of resources provided to animals and are measured directly on the animals using a combination of physical, physiological and behavioural indices. Such measures provide more direct insights of an individual welfare state and are commonly regarded as more accurate welfare indicators. Some examples of animal-based measures include, but are not limited to physical condition, weight, explorative behaviour, faecal glucocorticoid metabolite concentration etc.

Prior to the Five Domains (Mellor, Beausoleil, 2015), the common way to assess welfare was to assess the environment and standard of care provided and assume that if the care is good, then the welfare is good. Now that we have a more systematic and holistic way to assess welfare which can provide us with a greater understanding of the welfare state of an animal, it means assessing care has a different remit which is assessing the output rather than the input e.g. you do not assess what diet you give the animal, but rather assess if the animal responded positively to the diet provided. In a global context, it is how the animal responds to the conditions it lives in as defined by the Five Domains in Caring for Wildlife: The World Zoo and Aquarium Animal Welfare Strategy.

DOMAIN 1: NUTRITION

Scientifically formulated diets and availability of food for the animals to meet the nutritional requirements of the species (reference to: diets documented, access to food adapted to the type of animal).

- Example output would be animal weight and physical condition/ evidence via animal records.

DOMAIN 2: ENVIRONMENT

Appropriate environmental parameters and behavioural opportunities in each enclosure/exhibit/habitat for each species throughout the year (reference to ventilation, lighting, temperature, humidity, noise, water quality, substrate, natural habitat, enrichment)

- Example output would be animal natural behaviours are exhibited / evidence via diary notes, records, photos, behavioural observations.

Providing secure and safe enclosures/exhibits/habitats for animals.

- Example output would be use of safe spaces where individual animals can separate themselves (or seek refuge) from conspecifics, other species and people.

DOMAIN 3: HEALTH

Documented preventative medicine programme (reference to preventative and routine health programme including vaccinations, deworming, beak and nails trimming and any other recurrent medical procedure)

- Example outputs would be natural body condition and muscle tone of the species with no disease or injury apparent from observation, or if evident it is being treated as required / evidence via protocol and records (All animal health records are on file, either in the animal file itself or filed into a health record file).

Biosecurity procedures/protocols are in place for both animals and humans.

- Example output would be no evidence of transmittable disease/evidence via risk assessment, biosecurity protocols and animal records

DOMAIN 4: BEHAVIOUR

Species appropriate behaviour (reference to documented summary of natural behaviour and daily activity records in order to assess the Positive behaviours e.g. exploration, foraging, play, affiliative, sexual).

- Example output would be species typical exploration, foraging, hunting behaviour, interactions with conspecifics.

DOMAIN 5: MENTAL STATE

The first four domains all help inform us about an animal's various life experiences, which contribute to the Mental Domain, the fifth Domain. The mental, or affective, state considers psychological well-being and is the most direct reflection of the animal's welfare state. This Domain represents the individual animal's overall consciousness and subjective feelings and experiences in its life.

"Inputs" are the resources, facilities, processes and practices that contribute to the animal's overall experience. "Outputs" are what the animal actually experiences and should be measured from the perspective of the animal itself (or the group's perspective). Videos, photos, data sheets in terms of animal health and behaviour, diet sheets, health records and species records are part of the proof that can be asked for.

When embarking upon the Welfare assessments, please remember that good care and good husbandry does not necessarily = good welfare: care is not welfare and vice-versa. However, good animal care and good husbandry are elements that contribute to good animal welfare: Welfare is how the animal experiences / perceives the care being provided - Care is an ethical obligation of owners for a captive environment.

"Animal welfare refers to a state that is specific for every individual animal; it is how the animal experiences its own world and life through its association with pleasant experiences specific for that species such as vitality, affection, safety and excitement, or unpleasant experiences such as pain, hunger, fear, boredom, loneliness and frustration.

Many of these experiences can be generated through features of an animal's diet; environment; physical health and fitness (including injury and disease); social environment (including interactions with humans); and its ability to fulfil the species specific and individual animal's behavioural motivations to have positive physical or social experiences. An animal's welfare state can be influenced both positively and negatively by all parameters of its living environment with husbandry practices (i.e. animal care) being only one of them. The ability to have species specific choices and individual control over their environment are very important contributing factors for positive animal welfare."

Definition from the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA), 2020.

<u>Animal Welfare Assessment Requirements:</u>

The application form (Appendix 1) needs to be completed in full with the following documents for the desktop assessment:

Copies of

1. Company registration and physical address
2. Operational permit/s
3. Animal Welfare Self-assessment
4. Animal welfare policy
5. Animal collections Plan
6. Animal collection inventory
7. Site plan showing enclosure layout with enclosure names / numbers
8. Diet sheet template and 10 examples of an actual diet sheet
9. Environmental enrichment SOP and 10 examples of implementation
10. Daily monitoring sheet template and 10 examples of implementation
11. Life support system SOPs and 10 examples of implementation, if applicable
12. Visitor Animal Interaction policy, if applicable
13. Staff training records for Animal Welfare related training
14. Listed SOPs (Appendix 2)

Stage 1 Once the application and documents have been received the Auditors will conduct a desktop assessment using the submitted documents to verify the self-assessment. Additional requests for information may be submitted throughout the desktop review process to the auditee for a response within a 72-hour period. Timeline: Three (3) months.

Stage 2 Onsite Audit will be conducted to verify selected responses. This will include but not be limited to a sample of enclosure self-assessments to verify accuracy. Timeline: Within one (1) week after desktop inspection is completed.

Stage 3 Final report will be submitted to the auditee. Timeline: Within four (4) weeks of the onsite assessment.

Stage 4 Any corrective action required and reassessment: Timeline: Within two (2) months.

Flowchart

Onsite

Section A Nutrition total for each response option
Section B Environment total for each response option
Section C Physical Health total for each response option
Section D Behaviour total for each response option
Section E Management total for each response option
Section F Operational total for each response option

How do you use this Framework?

The Framework takes the form of a checklist of 104 questions, focussing on the five domains. The 104 questions are divided into six sections. Questions 1-39 are enclosure specific and are split into four sections (A. Nutrition, B. Environment, C. Physical health and D. Behaviour). Questions 40-104 (Section E Management and F Operational) are directed at facility wide operations and also cover indirect welfare requirements such as record keeping and staff training.

There are six response options for each question. See Table 1 below for more detail.

Table 1. *Key to response options and classification of questions to assess an animal's welfare.*

Response Options

4 = Excellent
3 = Acceptable (requires no immediate attention)
2 = Questionable (should be improved or changed as soon as possible)
1 = Unacceptable (must be addressed immediately)
N/Ap = Not Applicable
N/As = Not Assessed

The Assessment can be used by members to assess animal welfare conditions. It can also be used for external evaluations. Essential background on the questions, their underlying scientific rationale and how to apply them is provided in Wild Welfare's Core Standard of Welfare Practice for Captive Animals. It is hoped that implementing this Assessment will help inspire member facilities to make continual improvements in animal care and animal welfare and embrace more comprehensive animal welfare within their organisations.

Pass/Fail criteria

1. No question may have an Unacceptable response option (Option 1). If any questions have a score of 1, this is regarded as a major fail and items will need to be addressed before continuing
2. Questionable responses (Option 2) may not account for more than 30% of the overall score. If these responses are above 30%, the overall assessment is considered as a minor fail, and the facility will be required to conduct corrective action to ensure this score is above 30%
3. If there are no Unacceptable responses (Option 1), and Option 2 is below 30%, this is considered a Pass
4. If more than 50% of the questions are considered Excellent (Option 4), a Pass with Merit is awarded.

The 'Final Result' spreadsheet

This ‘Final Result’ spreadsheet is automatically calculated and then fully checked by the auditors is sent to the Board for approval before being sent to a facility. There should not be any discrepancies. However, should you see a mistake, you are welcome to submit a request detailing your query for review.