AFRICAN ASSOCIATION FOR WILDLIFE IN HUMAN CARE (AAWHC)

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1. Purpose

The African Association for Wildlife in Human Care (AAWHC) affirms that all animals under human care must live a good life with sustained positive welfare. This policy is rooted in the values outlines in the WAZA Animal Welfare Statergy: Caring for Wildlife and aims to embed these standards across all member institutions.

AAWHC supports progressive, evidence-based welfare practices and encourages continuous improvement through innovation, research, education and responsible management.

This Policy establishes a contemporary understanding of animal welfare and encourages members to promote good animal welfare (Positive Welfare) within their organisations.

2. Scope and exemptions

This policy applies to all accredited and welfare assessed members of the AAWHC. All other members are encouraged to abide by or achieve the standards set by the policy.

3. Definitions

Animal Welfare: Animal welfare focuses on the state of an animal in relation to its environment and its ability to cope, encompassing physical and mental health.

Animal Wellbeing: Animal wellbeing is a broader term referring to the holistic condition of an animal, including its physical, physiological, and mental health, as well as its quality of life.

Affective States/Experiences: Individual mental, emotional and sentient experiences that are subjective to the animal and occur in its consciousness. These can be negative (e.g. pain, hunger) or positive (e.g. satiety, excitement).

Positive Welfare/Good Welfare: The welfare state of an animal that is achieved when positive mental experiences are promoted and at the same time negative mental experiences are minimised.

Negative Welfare/Poor Welfare: The welfare state of an animal when there are negative mental experiences occurring on a severe, frequent or ongoing basis.

Relevant legislation and regulation: legislation and regulation applicable to locations of Association members.

4. Policy Statement

The AAWHC adopts the *Five Domains Model* to assist members in assessing and achieving positive animal welfare, and for the Associations' Accreditation and Welfare assessment Programme.

The AAWHC promotes effective and progressive welfare research with a view to ensuring *ex-situ* animal welfare. Member organisations are encouraged to contribute to the knowledge of animal welfare science through participation in research projects and broad dissemination of project findings.

AAWHC requires members to develop their own position statements, policies, and procedures that align with this policy, and to maintain and improve welfare for all animals in their care with an in-house welfare assessment programme through appropriate record keeping.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 Compliance

5.1.1 AAWHC's Welfare Assessment Programme shall ensure confirmation of Positive Welfare is occurring and supported within its assessment processes.

5.1.2 The Head of the AAWHC member or their delegate, shall ensure that animals under the care of their organisation can satisfy the requirements of this Policy, as well as the requirements of all relevant welfare legislation and regulation as per the country in which the facilities are situated.

5.1.3 The Head of the AAWHC member or their delegate is responsible for addressing situations of welfare compromise when they are identified.

5.1.4 The Head of the AAWHC member or their delegate aim to prevent poor welfare and shall ensure their organisation identifies all current situations of potential welfare compromise and implements plans to address these.

5.1.5 Plans to address poor welfare should be targeted at returning the animal to a state that is in the animal's best interests.

5.1.6 Plans to support an animal during a temporary compromised state is generally considered acceptable. If an issue is of a more permanent nature and the animal's welfare is demonstrated to be significantly compromised, quality of life assessments are required to be conducted by qualified staff.

5.2 Monitoring and Reporting

Members are expected to do an annual self-assessment and submitted to AAWHC at the five (5) yearly assessment.

6. Related Documents

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following policies, procedures and guidelines of the Association:

- AAWHC Code of Ethics
- AAWHC Membership Policy
- AAWHC Welfare Assessment Manual
- AAWHC Welfare Assessment Tool
- WAZA strategies

7. Resources

Caring for Wildlife, The World Zoo and Aquarium Animal Welfare Strategy

Mellor, D.J. and Beausoleil, N.J. (2015). Extending the 'Five Domains' model for animal welfare assessment to incorporate positive welfare states. Animal Welfare 24:241-253