



ASSOCIATION
OF ZOOS &
AQUARIUMS

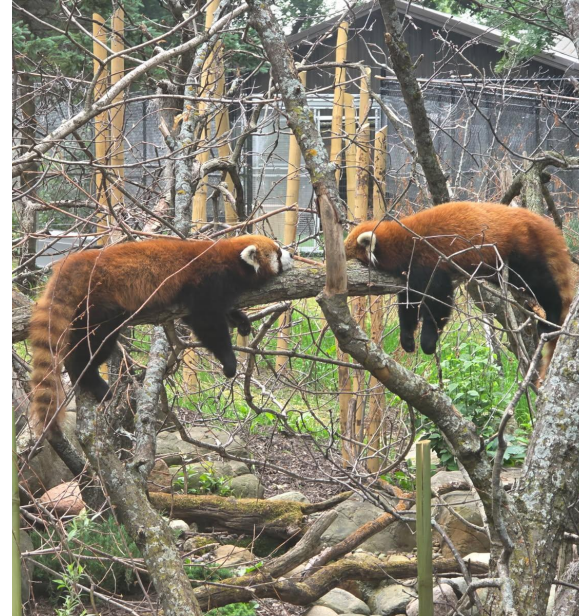
Welfare Webinar Wednesdays: Weaponizing Welfare

Presented on behalf of AZA Animal Welfare Committee

AZA | Learn

Monthly series

- Welfare Webinar Wednesdays: Defining Welfare and Wellbeing
 - Webinars will explore compelling and relevant topics in Animal Welfare and Wellbeing, feature subject matter and species experts, offer varied industry perspectives, and time for conversation in the community
 - Register here:
<https://www.pathlms.com/aza-learn/courses/56110/sections/119622>
- Second Wednesday of the month
 - Follow up the conversation the next day at Animal Welfare Committee virtual “Office Hours” which are the second Thursday of the month at 1pm EST (ongoing since 2022)
 - The Zoom link is
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82093090810?pwd=BVWrYSn29R8yCc5oa10sSSyz1DeR8o.1>
 - Meeting ID: 820 9309 0810
 - Passcode: 855950



Preview of upcoming webinars

<https://www.pathlms.com/aza-learn/courses/56110/sections/119622>

Month	Topic
April 8	Underrepresented taxa assessments
May 13	Mitigating undesirable behavior
June 10	Feeder animals
July 8	Preferences, cognitive bias, contrafreeloading
August 12	Establishing event parameters
September 9	Full spectrum lighting

Interested in a welfare/wellbeing topic?

- If you are interested in learning more about a topic, and/or sharing your knowledge and expertise about a topic (whether or not you see it on the calendar)– please get in touch!

Katie Hall, PhD

Director of Animal Behavior and Wellbeing
Minnesota Zoo

katie.hall@state.mn.us

Animal Welfare Committee

Behavior Scientific Advisory Group

Research and Technology Committee



Learning Outcomes



1

Introducing the
paper



David Powell, PhD
Director of Research
St Louis Zoo

2

Scenarios



Jason Watters, PhD
Associate Adjunct
Professor
UC Davis

3

Core values and
performance
evaluations



Nancy Kluge
President & CEO
Reid Park Zoo

Panelists

“Based on a true story” scenarios



Maggie Morse
Senior Director, Animal
Care
Philadelphia Zoo



Katie Hall, PhD
Director of Animal Behavior
& Wellbeing
Minnesota Zoo



Introducing the paper

David Powell, PhD

AZA | Learn

Why did we write this paper?

- Welfare is ingrained into our culture
- Welfare literacy is higher
- AZA accreditation standards exist
- Lots of resources available
- We are seeing growing pains as literacy becomes higher
- Increased understanding of a thing allows you to 'use' a thing
- We see conflicts that feel very real but are emotion-based rather than data-based
- We've seen attempts to derail population management

Welfare Weaponization often, but not always, takes the form of 'ghosts'

Ghosts of Welfare



Why worry about WW?

- Risk aversion is increasing and some believe it is because of the welfare revolution and this risk aversion is contributing to a loss of critical animal husbandry skills
- Increasing institutional policy prohibiting certain kinds of activities “on welfare grounds” can harm managed populations and make population management nearly impossible
- Both of these trends actually decrease our ability to learn and shift decision making to reliance on old data, poor data, or no data

Psychological/sociological phenomena that contribute to WW

- Fear of the unknown, an aversion to ambiguity, risk aversion
 - these can stymie decision-making
 - ghost of welfare present
 - related to the 'mere exposure effect' where one's own experiences are considered the key reference of what is known even if other data are based on science but produced by others
- Dunning-Kruger effect - overestimation of own skill, blindness to skill of others, decreased awareness of one's own mistakes or minimization of one's own mistakes
 - ghost of welfare present
 - closely related to positive illusion bias which also includes overestimation of control over events and the future
 - at the group-level, this is called in-group/out-group bias
 - feeds our individual and group-level self-esteem
- Primacy effect - in gathering info to make a decision, our brain locks onto the first info we get, making it harder for later info to shift opinion or tempting us to stop looking for more info
 - all ghosts

Psychological/sociological phenomena that contribute to WW

- Negativity bias - the brain remembers and processes negative events better than positive ones, giving negative events a stronger influence
 - typically ghost of welfare past but this feeds the other ghosts
- Confirmation bias - only seeking/using data that support one's beliefs because one has a desire to reach a particular conclusion while appearing to be objective
 - typically an outcome of cognitive dissonance and motivated reasoning
 - this can be used to create any ghost, but typically the ghost of w past
- Bandwagon effect - can be related to in-group/out-group paradigm; here you just believe or do as others do
 - any ghost
- Discounting bias - prioritizing immediate over long-term reward
 - feeds ghosts of w present and future



Scenarios

Jason Watters, PhD

AZA | Learn

Common Scenarios

- Transfers
- Handling vs Chemical Restraint
- Introductions and Aggression
- Geriatrics and End of Life

Often involve ambiguity and risk



Core Values and Performance Evaluations

Nancy Kluge/Reid Park Zoo, Tucson AZ

AZA | Learn

Strategic Plan - Review Core Values

Core values reflect and help shape the culture of an organization; they are fundamental to how the organization views and treats its staff, Board, volunteers, members, and larger community. These shared values are a statement to the outside world of how the Reid Park Zoo views itself and what qualities leadership embraces.



Core Values



ANIMAL WELL-BEING

- Animal well-being has the **highest priority** in everything we do.
- We believe that animals are the best ambassadors for their species when they are **happy, healthy and comfortable**.
- We believe that **everyone has a part in animal well-being** and value any concerns brought forward, responding swiftly, thoughtfully, and compassionately.

CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Conservation and sustainability are the **guiding compass** of our work and actions.
- We **lead by example**, educating and inspiring others to be conservation ambassadors.
- We prioritize our conservation efforts within the Zoo, in the region and around the world to **help build a better future** for wildlife and our planet, communicating and celebrating successes.



KINDNESS

- We are welcoming and friendly, **creating an environment where everyone feels welcome**.
- We appreciate diversity, are **dedicated to inclusion**, and treat everyone with empathy and respect.
- We take the time to **think before we react**.
- We **view people as people**, not as things or obstacles.

INTEGRITY

- We are **ethical, transparent, straightforward, and accurate**.
- We represent the Zoo publicly in a manner that is both **affirmative and true**.
- We **acknowledge our mistakes** and fix them.
- We have the courage to **uphold our values**.



DEPENDABILITY

- We chip in and **help when needed**.
- We are **present, timely, accountable, and ready** to make things happen.
- We are **resourceful** in solving problems and meeting people's diverse



ANIMAL WELL-BEING

- Animal well-being has the **highest priority** in everything we do.
- We believe that animals are the best ambassadors for their species when they are **happy, healthy and comfortable**.
- We believe that **everyone has a part in animal well-being** and value any concerns brought forward, responding swiftly, thoughtfully, and compassionately.

Organizational Goals and Tactics

3.4 Animal Wellbeing: Provide the highest quality animal wellbeing, leading with best practices

- Complete design & construction of elephant barn canopy & heat project
- Install new heating at rhino
- Zebra irrigation renovation
- Organize how Asia animal areas will be managed & identify staffing needs
- Assist with training/handling of new ambassador animals in CLC exhibit & current ambassadors in the program



Performance Evaluations

Year 1 - Ease in - does not count towards score, intent is for each person to think about what they can do in their job.

Please share any actions have you taken over the past year to support animal well-being for the animals in the Zoo's care? What are your goals for next year related to supporting animal well-being?

Performance Evaluations - Training

All Reid Park Zoo Staff Contribute to Animal Well-Being

All Departments

- Let animal care staff know when something might be a concern
- Pick up litter on grounds
- Respond to emergencies - in the way that fits their roles and responsibilities
- Be aware of how your job may impact the animals (noise, smells, dust, movement, etc)
- Interact with visitors, vendors and contractors in a way that promotes animal well-being



Forever Fun. Forever Wild.

Events

- Planning events around animals needs
 - Locations, times of day, activities, noise levels
- Adjusting event plans based on in the moment animal needs
- Event participant conduct
- Event fees provide significant Zoo funding = increased ability to care for the animals

Guest Services

- Assisting with guest conduct
- Informing of items dropped in habitat
- Reminding guests not to feed the animals
- Answering guest questions about animals and their care
- Ensuring guests have a good experience = they may come back/continue to support the Zoo



Forever Fun. Forever Wild.



“Based on a true story” scenarios and panel discussion

“Based on a true story” Scenario 1: Discrepancy between assessment scores and animal outcomes

- High scores on indicators such as
 - Animal does not show inappropriate levels of aggression
 - Animal does not seem to have chronic stress
 - Animal moves freely and relaxes
- However, severe aggression leading to 2 euthanasias in short timeframe
- Declined to change environment, management, or behavioral modification



“Based on a true story” Scenario 1: Discrepancy between assessment scores and animal outcomes

- How can we create assessments that accurately reflect outcomes?
- How to promote accountability when decisions (or status quo) contradict welfare indicators?
- What should welfare coordinator do?



“Based on a true story” Scenario 2: Accountability for staff that don’t report to welfare coordinator

- Animal pacing; care team and welfare coordinator agree to try automated feeders
- Welfare coordinator purchases/delivers automated feeders
- Care team does not install automated feeders, pacing persists



“Based on a true story” Scenario 2: Accountability for staff that don’t report to welfare coordinator

- How can welfare coordinator hold care team accountable to agreed-upon plan, when they do not supervise the care staff?



“Based on a true story” Scenario 3: Anonymous concern reporting to accuse colleague

- Staff in one area uses anonymous welfare concern reporting process to accuse staff in another area, suggests care of animals should be transferred to someone else
- Reporting process automatically emails concerns to all committee members
 - This breaks down trust in future reporting



“Based on a true story” Scenario 3: Anonymous concern reporting to accuse colleague

- How can interpersonal disputes be resolved alongside welfare concerns?
What is the role of HR?
- How can the welfare coordinator rebuild trust in the concern reporting process, while protecting anonymous submissions?



“Based on a true story” Scenario 4: Empowering keepers to implement change

- Keeper does not enjoy working with group of animals, struggles with time management, prioritizing between cleaning, enrichment, etc.
- Submits welfare concern suggesting moving group to a larger habitat, in another area of the zoo where they don't work



“Based on a true story” Scenario 4: Empowering keepers to implement change

- How can staff feel empowered to make changes that impact efficiency (or other suggestions like more perching)
- What is the role of supervisors in performance management? How can keepers communicate to supervisors about improvements to SOPs?
- When is it a welfare concern?



“Based on a true story” Scenario 5: Mom & Dad

- Staff with concern follow chain of command within their department, don't get the answer they want, submit welfare concern, resolves
- Next time, staff come straight to welfare committee instead of exhausting existing channels



“Based on a true story” Scenario 5: Mom & Dad

- How can we encourage following communication protocols, with a welfare concern as the last resort?
- How can we encourage better collaboration at the start of the conversation?





Thank you!

NEXT STEPS

- Follow up the conversation at Animal Welfare Committee virtual “Office Hours” which are the second Thursday of the month, 1pm EST (ongoing since 2022)
 - The Zoom link is
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82093090810?pwd=BVWrYSn29R8yCc5oal0sSSyz1DeR8o.1>
 - Meeting ID: 820 9309 0810
 - Passcode: 855950
- Download the resources on the AZA Learn page (bibliography, links, etc)
- Please join us again on April 8!
 - Underrepresented taxa