Increasing animal welfare through environmental enrichment to secure genetically healthy populations

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2011
Importance of animal welfare

-Zoos not only show animals for the visitors: we show how we should keep them considering their welfare;

-Our message (conservation, protecting the environment) can only be authentic if we exhibit animals in good conditions;

-The species breeding programmes can only be efficient with healthy animals;

- The workers of zoos are also committed to animal welfare!
The roles of the zoos – according to the visitors

How important are the following goals in the zoos? (1 is the least, 5 is the best - 2011, N=396)

- Entertainment: 4.03
- Direct connection to animals (feeding, touching): 4.30
- Scientific education: 4.60
- Environmental education: 4.66
- Keeping and breeding endangered species: 4.71
- Wildlife sanctuary: 4.73
- Shelter of domestic and hobby animals: 3.96
First steps when we start to take part in a program

- Checking the Hungarian standards of housing – minimum sizes and basic features (pool, climbing etc);

- Considering the EEP/ESB standards and advices;

- Checking the financial background of keeping that species (building and maintenance) – responsibility;

- Calculating the time schedule

- Deciding!
Realization

- Planning: help of programmes and colleagues

- (Re-)constructing the facilities;

- Arranging the transport: very important! (way and time of transport, professional team, weather forecast, training animals);

- Training the keepers and curators;

- Transport

- Introduction of the animals (houses, enclosures, other group members);

- Importance of feedback – quick actions
Housing – it is not enrichment yet!

- It should fit the natural requirements of the animals;

- Large size is not enough!

- We should provide protected areas (from wind, rain, sun, other animals and visitors);

- Need objects for natural movement (climb, swim, run, jump etc.)

- It should be safe for both humans and animals;

- It should provide safe management of animals for vets and keepers.
Nice animals in good enclosure – is it enough?

-The natural behaviour is as important part of their entity as the body parts;

-We should provide the possibility of showing their natural behaviour;

-We have to substitute the natural stimulus (for example preying);

-Active animals: physical and mental health -> reproductive success
What should we consider?

- Safe enrichment!
- Aggressive interactions between animals;
- Variety;
- Veterinarian aspects (for example „faeces changes”);
- It shouldn’t be a circus attraction!
Education:
Encounters of Zoo Type
The role of the education

What do you think about the welfare of the fossa
(1 is the worst, 5 is the best)
Thanks for your attention!