

Editorial

EAZA Animal Welfare Special Issue

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Promoting positive animal welfare is a focus of the modern zoo and aquarium. By assessing animal welfare using a range of both input (resource-based) and output (animal-based) indicators, we can strive to improve the well-being of captive individuals.

The EAZA Animal Welfare Working Group comprises of a range of members including zoo and aquarium welfare specialists from EAZA collections along with academic advisors, and a common topic of conversation is around how to make academic welfare research accessible to the staff at EAZA zoos. In response, the EAZA Animal Welfare Coordinator Sally Binding and EAZA Animal Welfare Working Group Chair by myself and Vice-Chair Lisa Holmes, decided to hold a biennial EAZA Animal Welfare Forum, the first of which was held in March 2022 at Apenheul Primate Park in the Netherlands. The event featured a variety of activities, including workshops, presentations, and networking opportunities. The key objective was to “bridge the gap” between welfare research and practical application, promoting collaboration across sectors. Two hundred zoo professionals, academics, and representatives from welfare organisations attended the three day meeting, fostering collaboration to address current challenges in animal welfare. The forum also included a tour of the primate park and a visit to Stichting AAP, an organisation focused on animal rescue and rehabilitation. These hands-on experiences allowed attendees

to witness practical welfare applications in real-world settings.

A second EAZA Animal Welfare Research Forum was hosted by Parco Natura Viva in Italy in 2024. Again bringing together zoo professionals, academics and students, offering opportunities for all to learn from each other, during talks, workshops and some wonderful social gatherings.

What we present in this Animal Welfare Special Issue is some of the research presented at these events and submitted to JZAR. These articles provide reviews focusing on the importance of nutrition in behaviour management and what evidence-based animal welfare might be. There are also in-depth studies including observations of captive American bison behaviour, and an exploration of what interventions might be most rewarding for loggerhead turtles. There is also an article which outlines the use of Zoo Monitor to study animal welfare.

Thank you very much to all authors who have contributed to this issue, the reviewers and editors, and especially the JZAR team for helping us along the way. We hope you enjoy this collection of welfare research.

Many thanks,
Dr Holly Farmer

Chair, EAZA Animal Welfare Working Group
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