

CAZA Policy Re: Research and Scientific Study

Preamble

CAZA believes strongly that there are many benefits to be derived from research and scientific study based on animals in captive collections and that these benefits are often critical to the long-term survival of many species. Member institutions must participate in these types of programmes, either by initiation of them, or participation in existing ones.

The zoo community has advanced substantially to the point where it is no longer acceptable simply to keep animals in captivity for the sake of doing so, but to contribute to the standards and levels of husbandry for the benefit of the species as a whole, both in captivity and in their natural habitat.

The difficulties and restrictions posed by import or export of animals make it logical to encourage advances in husbandry techniques, animal health and population management. Zoological facilities must become involved in such activities.

Many facilities will not have the resources to establish bona-fide research and study programmes of their own. There are, however, many ways in which contributions to the store of knowledge can be achieved. Examples include, but are not limited to, partnerships with other institutions, participation and provision of support to research programs carried on by other accredited facilities and documentation of existing animal management practices, breeding and hatching techniques, diet and nutrition policies, making available facilities for animal study by university and school students, provision of carcasses for appropriate study and veterinary procedures.

The objective of this policy is to ensure that the store of usable knowledge for the benefit of zoological facilities and animal species is added to and distributed, rather than the pursuit of research projects and knowledge for its own sake.

Policy

As CAZA believes that an essential element in the conservation of wild animals includes research and study, CAZA member institutions are expected to participate in research programmes wherever practicable, and to publish their findings or have them included, if it is a joint study.

Definition

Research in zoos and aquariums is the systematic investigation of the living collections, facilities, or people related to it. While staff and collaborators generally focus on animals within the collection, especially those at risk, species may also be investigated and conserved in their natural range (e.g., ecology, reintroduction). People-related research often examines visitor, staff and non-user profiles, interests and evaluations.

A rigorous research process typically incorporates topic delineation and the gathering, analyzing and interpreting of data for the purpose of generating new (or confirming) information, concepts, or conclusions, often useful in planning programs (e.g., reproduction, husbandry, registration, exhibits) and contributing to scientific knowledge. Both applied and theoretical research that meet CAZA's ethical requirements are worthy of consideration.

The term research is also used for the process of preparing interpretive and promotional products (e.g., signs, talks, films, guides, magazines), which are important for putting forward key messages, ensuring accuracy of information, and stimulating public relationships.

Policy Specifications (Mandatory)

1. Member institutions are required to have a written research policy in place that will outline procedures, expectations and resources.
2. All institutions must have an Animal Use and Care Committee. This committee must have written terms of reference and must review all research activities prior to their being undertaken.
3. Results from research and study activities must be made available for dissemination.
4. Provision for use of facilities and resources by educational institutions or visiting researchers should always be considered.
5. A report outlining the activities of research and study programmes should be compiled annually. At the very least, this information must be available for inspection by CAZA during accreditation inspections.

Policy Recommendations (Discretionary)

1. Facilities are expected to contribute to studbooks, breeding programmes etc., and to respond to requests for information from the co-ordinators of

these programmes. This permits others to benefit from study and research by using information provided by any and all such facilities.

2. Research on live animals should be restricted to the non-invasive type, unless it can be considered part of an otherwise necessary surgical procedure.
3. Research and study can encompass many activities, some of them performed on a regular basis, sometimes without the realization that they fall into a research category.
4. Research will normally not be detrimental to the well-being of the animals concerned. There may be unique situations arise in which the well-being of the species may outweigh that of the individual animal. Highly stressful, invasive, or terminal procedures should only be approved if there is overriding benefit. Points to consider include:
 - a. Significant value to wild or captive populations,
 - b. Procedures applied as humanely as possible,
 - c. Compliance with the Standards of the Canadian Council of Animal Care,
 - d. Public sensitivities, and
 - e. Member and CAZA reputations.

Notes:

Several CAZA members have contributed examples of documents that they use to manage their science and research programs. These documents are available for downloading and use at http://www.caza.ca/en/conservation/conservation_science/