

Animal Wellbeing

Dear Colleagues,

In 2022, under the leadership of Dr. Scott Terrell, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums introduced a new initiative—our Strategic Framework for the Wellbeing of Animals. In that, we affirmed that the wellbeing of animals is both our moral responsibility and foundational to AZA's mission.

We are all familiar with the science of animal welfare; however, this relatively new strategic framework is designed to help us better articulate our emphasis on the wellbeing of the animals in our care. It helps us initiate conversations and foster understanding around our commitment to ensuring our animals are comfortable, healthy, and happy.

In this issue, we delve into the multifaceted aspects of animal wellbeing, exploring the new paradigms and practices that elevate our stewardship of the animals in our care. From expanded choice and control to innovative models of evaluating and ensuring wellbeing, each article provides insight into our pursuit of excellence in caring for the species entrusted to us.

We will look at how, through thoughtful enrichment and training techniques, as well as unique habitat design, our colleagues are empowering animals to express their innate behaviors.

As you read through the articles within, I encourage you to revisit and reflect on the strategic priorities that are outlined in AZA's wellbeing framework:

- Cultivate a common culture of commitment to the wellbeing of animals across all member facilities and partners.
- Enhance the lives of all animals in our care by focusing on applied animal welfare science and science-based staff training and education.
- Advance AZA accreditation standard and processes focused on the wellbeing of animals.
- Increase and diversify external collaboration and find more common ground to promote the wellbeing of animals.
- Promote awareness of and trust in AZA's commitment to and expertise in enhancing the wellbeing of animals.

And consider attending AZA's first Animal Wellbeing Summit, which is hosted by the Audubon Aquarium of Americas in New Orleans, La., on 11-13 November. It is designed to bring together thought leaders from across disciplines, from inside and outside AZA, to spark collaboration. I look forward to seeing and hearing about the ways you are all pushing the limits and defining new levels of care and wellbeing.



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