



BIAZA Close Contact Policy

For the purposes of this policy the term 'close contact' refers to the close proximity, with direct or indirect contact, of a member of the public to a live animal that is part of a collection, either in the absence of a safety barrier or through or over barriers. This may include but is not limited to: feeding experiences; touch pools; walk-throughs; drive-throughs; displays and presentations; work-experience opportunities; diving and other experiences; education sessions; free roaming animals and outreach.

In this policy the term 'Zoo' refers to all BIAZA institutions and as defined in the Secretary of State's Standards for Modern Zoo Practice (SSSMZP): zoological collections, aquariums, bird parks, farms, safari parks and reptile houses.

'Staff' refers to adequately trained employees and volunteers facilitating or supervising a session or area of close contact.

'Public' refers to learners, researchers, visitors, guests, guardians and any other persons that are present in a situation of close contact who are untrained and are not 'Staff' – i.e. those for whom the 'close contact' is designed.

This policy should be used in conjunction with other BIAZA policies and guidelines (e.g. the Ethical Acquisitions Policy, 2019 and Animal Transfer Policy, 2014).

Summary

Engaging the public with interactive animal experiences can be invaluable in achieving an institution's mission. In providing these experiences it is critical that these three aspects are addressed:

1. Animal Welfare: ensuring that the close contact experience does not impede on the general welfare of the animal.
2. Staff and Public Safety: ensuring that staff and public safety is considered and reasonable precautions are taken.
3. Ethical Considerations: ensuring that the close contact experience achieves clear outcomes for the organisation's mission and vision and manages public perceptions; i.e. is tailored to education.

In providing close contact experiences BIAZA member institutions:

- MUST comply with all relevant legislation (see reference list below);
- MUST have written policies and procedures, including a statement on ethical considerations of close contact and also risk assessments on using animals for close contact which address animal welfare and staff and public safety;
- MUST ensure that the message of each close contact situation is linked to education and public engagement and is not purely for entertainment/income generation;
- MUST ensure appropriate supervision of members of the public is in place in areas of close contact where necessary;
- MUST ensure that staff supervising close contact are trained and competent;
- MUST have measures in place to ensure individual animals have ample rest periods and off-show access to retire away from the public/vehicular traffic where applicable;
- MUST have ongoing monitoring in place to ensure individual animals are not used when it could be detrimental to their health (e.g. during vulnerable life stages, shedding, moulting or sickness);
- MUST ensure that travel times to outreach events with live animals are kept to a minimum, and that transport containers are appropriate for each individual and the animals are adequately habituated to them;
- MUST maintain accurate records for each animal or group of animals being used, to include date, time, type of contact, incidents and welfare concerns where applicable;
- MUST not permit surgical procedures solely in order to render them safe for handling (e.g. removal of stings, musk glands, venom glands or fangs etc.);
- MUST ensure that when EAZA ex-situ management programme animals participate in close contact situations, this does not interfere with breeding programme recommendations;
- MUST take appropriate precautions (e.g. adequate hand-washing facilities with clear instructions where appropriate) to prevent zoonotic disease transfer;
- MUST hold appropriate insurances that cover the activity;
- MUST ensure that each animal is kept in a suitable enclosure with high standards of welfare and in an appropriate social grouping for its species;
- SHOULD refer to and be guided by taxa-specific BIAZA and/or EAZA guidelines where these are available.

Legislative References

BALAI Directive (1992)

CITES import and export regulations (2018)

COSHH Regulations (1994)

Irish Standards of Modern Zoo Practice (Dept of Arts, Heritage & Gaeltacht, 2016)

Mutilations (Permitted Procedures) (England) Regulations (2007), The equivalent in Wales and the Procedures on Protected Animals (Exemptions) (Scotland) Regulations (2007)

Secretary of State's Standards of Modern Zoo Practice (Defra, 2012)

Welfare of Animals Act (Transport) (2006)

Zoo Licensing Act (1981) and any relevant local authority guidelines

June 2019