

# EAZA Felid TAG Demonstration Guidelines



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## Demonstration Guidelines for felid species used in public demonstrations

The 'Guidelines on the use of animals in public demonstrations' (September 2014) provides guidance on the use of exotic animals in public demonstrations at EAZA member institutions. The EAZA Felid TAG supports the use and implementation of the 'Guidelines on the use of animals in demonstrations' document and has, thus far, used this as the model in the absence of taxa specific guidelines. To best support our members on best practice guidance, the EAZA Felid TAG has in addition to EAZA Best Practice Guidelines produced this 'Demonstration guidelines for felids species used in demonstrations' document to provide species-specific guidance for institutions performing public demonstrations with felid species.

**Public demonstrations** are defined as any case where an animal is demonstrating behaviours, trained or natural, while under the supervision or control of a trainer in the view of guests, with the intention of educating, inspiring, and entertaining the visitors (EAZA, 2014). A public demonstration should be designed with animal welfare as the primary factor and the visitor experience as a secondary factor and should utilize the best practice standards. Following the definition of Good Practice in the 'EAZA position statement on circus membership of the association' (April 2017) Felid demonstration programmes should focus on behaviours that are demonstrations of an animals' natural intellectual or problem solving abilities and their physical attributes, showcasing as much behavioural diversity as possible. All public demonstration programmes with felids should reflect section 1.11.2 of the 'EAZA standards for the accommodation and care of animals in zoos and aquaria' document (2014) and serve to:

- Promote an understanding and raise awareness of wild felid species.
- Allow the visitors to see the cats active and showcase felid species natural behaviours.
- Educate visitors about their special adaptations and their role as predators in their ecosystem.
- Educate the visitors about the threats that most of these species face in the wild and the role of zoos in the conservation efforts of felid species and the role of zoos generally in the global effort to preserve animals and their habitats in the wild.
- Inspire guests to connect with felid species with the hope of conservation minded behaviour change.

The Felid TAG does not support the performance of any behaviours that when implemented poses a demonstrable or probable risk towards animal and / or human health or welfare, be it physical or psychological. These include:

- Any situation where an animal, a staff member or guests' safety is unnecessarily and knowingly placed at risk.
- Any situation that is demeaning or degrading to the animal
- Any practice that requires the physical disciplining of an animal to provide protection for a staff member who is in contact with that animal for any purpose other than the preservation or improvement of its health and wellbeing.

The Felid TAG recognises any kind of behaviours which could be utilized for medical training (e.g., body parts presentation, touching targets, holding for examination and blood draw training) as part of husbandry training. The behaviours can be performed as part of a public demonstration to serve to facilitate the inspection of the animal and (in special cases) also to the drawing of samples or the treatment of a trained individual. Actual medical procedures should not be on display but the Felid TAG recognises that desensitization (e.g. fake needle touches, the use of ultrasound wands) could be part of an educational talk about veterinary care and protected contact. For information on species-specific behaviours and recommended husbandry/safety procedures check the relevant EAZA Best Practice Guidelines or contact the programme leader (EEP/ESB) for further advice.

For the purpose of this document the Felid TAG considers the following grouping of cats:

- Large cats: species of the genera *Panthera* (incl. *P. uncia*), *Neofelis*, *Acinonyx jubatus*, *Puma concolor*;
- Medium Cats: species of the genera *Lynx*, *Caracal*, *Catopuma*, *Leptailurus*, *Leopardus pardalis*, *Prionailurus viverrinus*;
- Small Cats: *Felis* species, all other *Leopardus* sp., all other *Prionailurus* sp., *Otocolobus manul*, *Pardofelis marmorata*, *Herpailurus yagouaroundi*;

The species under the TAG's remit have been sorted into three categories (large/medium/small cats) for the following section to allow more specific guidance on e.g., guaranteeing safety, usage of props and training of the animals.

The following points are strongly recommended by the Felid TAG to be followed and should be taken into account prior to setting up a public demonstration with felid species:

### **Training of animals**

- 1) [*Large/ medium/ small cats*] The Felid TAG is strictly against any use of rearing techniques for demonstrations that directly affect the welfare and health of the animal, including the premature removal of an animal from the mother with the intention of hand-raising specifically for use in a demonstration. This could lead to unacceptable

imprinting on humans and a welfare issue in them not being entirely socialized to conspecifics. (Health of animal)

- 2) [*Large/ medium/ small cats*] Training techniques used for demonstrations must be positive reinforcement only to promote animal welfare.
- 3) [*Large/ medium/ small cats*] There should be an emphasis on the use of motivating operations whereby the animal is seeking out food in a natural way, not reliant on the hunger state. (This is referred to in the use of “weight control” in the EAZA animals in demonstrations guidelines).
- 4) [*Large/ medium/ small cats*] The cats should always be able to choose if they want to participate in the demonstration. There should be no repercussions in food, choice or enrichment if they choose not to participate.

### **Safety and housing**

The Felid TAG does not support placing cats in a performance environment that does not reflect the EAZA Standards for the Accommodation of Animals in Zoos and Aquaria (2014).

- 5) [*Large/ medium/ small cats*] The animals should not be moved outside their enclosure for the purpose of demonstrations because of animal welfare and safety reasons. Situations where animals need to be moved temporarily or permanently from their current enclosure to another enclosure / location (i.e. for veterinary purposes, crate training, socialising / reintegrating of one cat to another) should not be done as part of any public demonstration to ensure the upmost animal welfare. Situations with small cats that may have to go through rehabilitation with a keeper away from their enclosure / holding facility should always be done away from public view.
- 6) [*Large cats*] Full contact management must be excluded for all demonstrations purposes in the large cats due to safety considerations.
- 7) The Felid TAG recommends to not take members of the public into the same enclosure as where the cats are.

[*Large/ medium cats*] Members of the public should not be taken into the same enclosures that houses large or medium categorised cats as it can greatly compromise human safety and animal security.

[*Small cats*] The Felid TAG accepts that with small cat’s members of the public may be taken into the enclosures as part of demonstrations when the following conditions are met:

- Guests must always be accompanied by at least one animal keeper.
- Guests should be limited to a maximum of three at any one time.
- Guests must never attempt to touch the animals.
- The enclosures must be large enough and complex enough to offer privacy and security for the cats.
- The animal keeper must end all demonstrations if the animals show signs of stress, fear or excessive aggressive behaviour.
- Guests must not be taken in with kittens (0 – 6 months).

- The animal keeper must notify the guest of the correct behaviour inside the enclosure
- 8) [*Medium/ small cats*] For the smaller wild cat species the Felid TAG acknowledges the benefit for a keeper to perform husbandry training and/or feeding demonstrations, which would be best from outside, but may also according to in-house safety protocols be allowed from inside the animals' own enclosure.
  - 9) [*Large/ medium/ small cats*] The physical touching of animals by the public and the demonstrator is not accepted by the Felid TAG. (Human/Animal interaction). Situations where the demonstrator has to touch an animal as part of a veterinary/ medical training procedure i.e. touch the tail to condition for blood, that is visible by the public would be accepted however the purpose of such an activity should be made clear to public via signage or personal communication. It should be made clear that the touching of animals by public/guests in the company of an animal keeper could encourage other members of the public that are viewing this activity to attempt to touch cats through fences when no keeper is present and thus compromises public safety.

#### **Usage of props**

- 10) [*Large/ medium/ small cats*] The walking of animals on a leash is not accepted by the Felid TAG (Human/Animal interaction). It sends the wrong message to the public about these wild animal species (predators) being tame or even domesticated. This action also eliminates choice for the animal once on the leash and has the potential to increase risk of human/ animal injury should the animal break or pull free from the demonstrator.
- 11) [*Large/ medium/ small cats*] The Felid TAG does not accept the use of props (any item/ object used by the animal or trainer as part of animal demonstration or training program) that compromises animal welfare or promotes negative reinforcement. Props that are added to an enclosure or are permanently part of an enclosure that are used during animal demonstrations (i.e. feed poles, zip lines, keepers feeding poles, targets, weighing scales, boomer balls, pull ropes etc) must promote natural behaviours and positive animal welfare. It is encouraged that collections should do their utmost to explain the positive use of such items during demonstrations to the public.

*EAZA Felid TAG (Nov. 2017).*