



Introduction

The prime mission of the EAZA Research Committee is to encourage good quality research in zoos and to promote the zoological garden as a venue for academic research. The importance of research to the zoo community and the potential significance of zoological gardens as a research resource for academics is recognised and has clearly been summarised in EAZA's position paper on research in zoos. However, despite the recognised benefits deriving from zoo-based research and in spite of the initiatives of individual zoos and the activities of the Research Committee only limited progress has been made with regard to increasing and improving zoo research. A number of problems have been identified which frustrate the achievement of these goals. These include the comparative absence of long-term research programmes or to conduct their own research, the lack of funding to pay for the research required and the climate of distrust and non-co-operation which often exists between zoo-staff and academics.

In the Position Paper on Research, nine measures are identified, which could be taken by zoos to encourage the implementation of research in zoos. These include employing scientific staff, setting aside time and money for research, developing contacts with universities and academics and publishing results. These are all important and merit serious consideration. However, there are measures which the research committee could undertake on the one hand to support the initiatives listed above and on the other could support and promote zoo research in general.

The measures which will be suggested in this document are the following:

- the development of a standardised research proposal form and evaluation protocol.
- the development of a research agreement for use between zoos and outside researchers.

Research proposal and evaluation protocol

Promotion of research in zoos does not mean that zoos should encourage ANY research to be undertaken on their premises. In order to promote zoo based research as well as the zoo as research venue, a minimum quality of research project is required. Furthermore, any project accepted by a zoo should accord with the conservation and animal welfare aspirations of the zoo-community.

To this end, a standard Research Proposal Form and Evaluation Protocol have been drafted (example appended to this document).

It is suggested that the research Proposal Form presented here, or a similar one, should be used in all cases where an external institution wants to conduct research on the premises of an EAZA member. Such a proposal form is not only applicable to a university or college based project, but also that of another (EAZA) zoo trying to conduct a multi-zoo-project. In all cases such a research proposal should be properly evaluated using a protocol similar to the example provided here. The proposals should be evaluated by the zoo with support from members of the Research Committee if required.

Research agreement

In the introduction to this document mention was made of the problems which seem to exist between zoos and academia. In zoos there often seems to be a mistrust of academic researchers; staff often feel that they are patronised by academics who have no understanding of zoo-life, have unrealistic expectations of what is possible in a zoo-setting and make unreasonable demands. Academics on the other hand find that zoo-staff neither understand nor are fully co-operative with their needs. Even where this is not the case, failure to communicate a small detail, such as the imminent transfer of an animal, can destroy a long-term research protocol. These problems arise out of a failure in communication, above all as regards the wants and needs of both parties. This is important in that it leads not only to misunderstanding but also to the demotivation and frustration on both sides.

In order to alleviate this problem and to streamline requirements and expectations with reality, zoos and academics must agree upon what they expect from and can give to each other. To this end, it is suggested that all zoos adopt a research contract which outlines the rights and obligations of the parties and is signed by all participants. The wording of such a contract would vary depending on the facilities available in the zoo and the requirements of a particular project. A draft of such a contract is used in all instances where an external institution is involved in a research project in an EAZA zoo even in those cases where a project is being undertaken by a researcher at the request of that zoo.

Conclusion

In the long term, zoos and academics need each other and can be of benefit to each other. Zoos need help and support in the investigation and solution of a number of problems which vex the husbandry and management of exotic species. Academics need appropriate venues for their research particularly in these days when research budgets are being reduced even though the costs of field work and for maintaining research colonies are escalating. Zoological gardens have the potential of providing academics with excellent opportunities for both, pure and applied research.

In this document a strategy is suggested which will go some way to promoting zoos for research as well as for improving understanding between zoo staff and academics. It is hoped thereby to improve the quality and quantity of research which they urgently need. It must be emphasised that this approach should be adopted by all members of EAZA if this strategy is to succeed.

EAZA
Research Proposal



Title of project:

Principle investigator(s):

Supervisor (if student project):

Institution:

Contact person in the zoo:

Outline of project (Including research goal, material and methods. Please indicate if and how you think the results of your research are likely to contribute to the conservation, welfare and/or captive management of your subject species):

Duration of project:

Zoos/ other institutions involved:

Additional requests made of zoo / special requirements:

EAZA
Research Proposal Assessment



Title of project:

Principle investigator:

Is the project feasible ? If no, why not?

Is the project likely to contribute to the conservation, welfare and/or captive management of the species? If yes, please indicate in what way:

Is the project likely to contribute in any other area? If yes, please indicate how:

Are the methods proposed likely to cause any undue disturbance or distress to the species? If yes, please indicate in what way:

Are the methods proposed likely to impact on zoo visitors? If yes, please indicate in what way:

Is the proposed project likely to yield results acceptable for publication in a refereed journal?
Would you recommend the proposed research be:

supported reassessed subject to revision rejected

Any other comments:

Name assessor and date:



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EAZA
Zoo / Academic Institute Research Agreement



Title of the research project/reference number:

Principle investigator:

University/college supervisor:

University/college:

Start date/completion date:

..... on behalf of the Zoo, (henceforth called the Zoo),
(*name of zoo representative*) (*name of zoo*)

and on behalf of the Dept. of
(*name of researcher/supervisor*) (*Dept. name*) (*Institute name*)

College/University (henceforth called the Institute), agree to cooperate in the above mentioned research project.

In relation to this project the Zoo agrees to fulfil the following obligations:

- S** to keep requested conditions constant (e.g. not to change the study group(s) of animals unless this is part of the study). Where circumstance render this impossible, the Zoo will ensure that the researcher/Institute is informed as soon as possible.
- S** to carry out the manipulations of the enclosure/animal/group of animals as in accordance with the agreed experimental protocol. The Zoo will ensure that the animal keepers and all other relevant parties are informed about this project and will cooperate as required.
- S** to supply the investigators with the necessary support for their project in the form of (*circle as appropriate*): information about animal/exhibit/diet etc.; maps/diagrams of enclosure; history of animal/exhibit; work space/computer; photocopy facilities; supervision of staff biologists.
- S** other equipment (specify):

In relation to the same project, the Institute agrees to the following obligations:

- S** to ensure that the study is completed or to inform the Zoo as early as possible in the event that this is not possible.
- S** to inform and, where appropriate, discuss with the Zoo any changes to the study protocol which are deemed necessary on the basis of on-going results.
- S** to ensure that the Zoo is provided with at least one copy of the report and any other publications arising out of the project.
- S** to inform the Zoo if the results of the study are to be published and to allow the above named representative of the Zoo to see the manuscript prior to publication.
- S** to guarantee anonymity to the Zoo in any reports/publications if so requested.
- S** to acknowledge the Zoo in any publications resulting from the project (unless anonymity is requested) and, if appropriate, to include a zoo-representative as author to the publication.
- S** to ensure that its representative observed the dress and behaviour codes of the Zoo.

Date

Signed Signed
(Representative of the Zoo) (Representative of the Institute)