



Care For Us

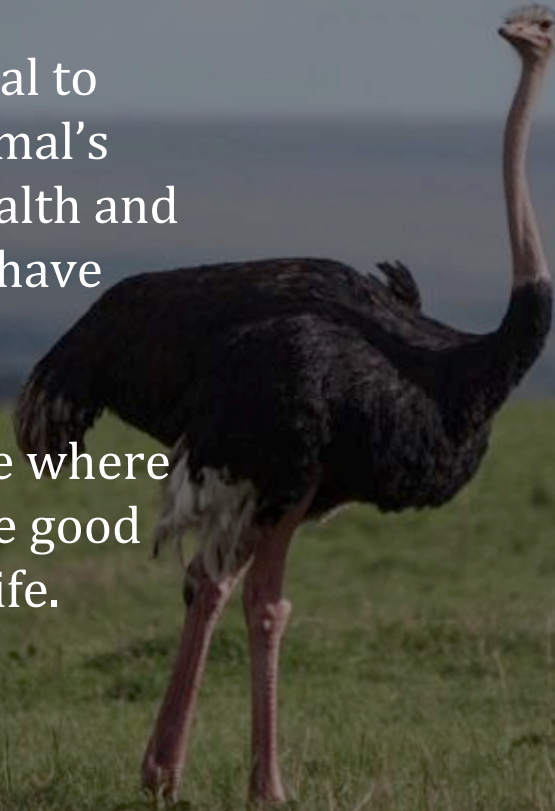
Common Ostrich (*Struthio camelus*)

Animal Welfare

Animal welfare refers to an animal's state or feelings. An animal's welfare state can be positive, neutral or negative.

An animal's welfare has the potential to differ on a daily basis. When an animal's needs - nutritional, behavioural, health and environmental - are met, they will have positive welfare.

A good life in captivity might be one where animals can consistently experience good welfare - throughout their entire life.





Understanding that animals have both sentient and cognitive abilities as well as pain perception, reinforces the need to provide appropriate husbandry provisions for all captive animals, to ensure positive welfare.

In captivity, the welfare of an animal is dependent on the environment provided for them and the daily care and veterinary treatment they receive.

Ostriches live throughout Africa's semiarid plains and woodlands and is either one or two species of large flightless birds native to Africa of the genus *Struthio*, which is in the ratite family.

Ostriches are large, flightless birds that have long legs and a long neck that protrudes from a round body. Males have bold black-and-white coloring that they use to attract females. Females are light brown.

The wild ostrich population has declined in the last 200 years, but IUCN list the common ostrich as Least Concern. Today ostriches are farmed and hunted for their skin, meat and eggs and humans are encroaching on ostrich habitats.



Ostriches Like Different Food

Ostriches are omnivores and grazers. They feed on grasses, shrubbery, berries, seeds, succulents and also insects and small reptiles. They will eat sand and pebbles to help grind up their food inside their gizzard. Ostriches can rely on the vegetation as a water source for a short time; however, for long-term survival, they need open-water sources.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Provide continuous grazing opportunities both day and night time, while offer other food options such as seeds in multi feeding stations that encourage foraging. Ostriches will pluck at their feathers if they do not have enough grazing opportunities. Always offer clean water in captivity in case they aren't getting enough from the foods provided.



Ostriches Like Company

Ostriches live in small flocks that typically contain less than a dozen birds. A male ostrich will escort a flock made up of one head female and a couple of subordinate females. Sometimes, flocks will mingle together and large groups will congregate at a water source. Sometimes, one flock will adopt the young of another, and sometimes, groups of sub adults will form.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Ensure that there is a large enough group and an appropriate sex demographic for positive species specific interactions. Provide large open spaces with lots of foraging opportunities to help will reduce inter-group aggression and negative or stereotypical behaviours that may result from stress.

Ostriches Are Polygamous

Courtship is very ritualized and synchronized. Alpha males maintain their flocks and mate with the group's dominant hen. The male sometimes mates with others in the group, and wandering males may also mate with lesser hens. All females lay their eggs in the same nest and the dominant male and hen will take turns to incubate. The male will help construct the nests, guard the eggs and raise the young chicks.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Maintain appropriate flock dynamics in captivity to encourage positive courtship behaviours between the alpha male and female and subordinates. Provide a choice of quiet areas for nesting opportunities and nesting materials that will encourage positive behaviours involved with incubation and raising young.



Ostriches Like to Run

Even though Ostriches have thin legs they can run up to 40 mph in open space with accurate maneuverability for sustained periods of time. They can run fast due to the elasticity in their joints. Not only are ostriches fast, they can also use their legs to kick any potential predators lion lions. Each two-toed foot has a long, sharp claw that can easily kill. They will fight by kicking forward with their feet to attack.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Provide plenty of open space for ostrich herds to live in, giving them options to run freely if they get spooked. Large open enclosures that also provide some access away from visitors at all times will encourage the ostriches to feel confident and safe within their environment, encouraging natural and normal behaviours.



Ostriches Like to (Dust) Bath

Dust baths are part of a bird's preening and plumage maintenance that keeps feathers in top condition. Ostriches do not have a uropygial gland and use dust bathing to keep their feathers healthy and dry. Ostrich wing feathers are particularly important to them for mating displays, shading chicks, covering naked skin to conserve heat and using them as "rudders" to help maneuverability while running.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Provide plenty of dust bathing opportunities in your enclosure so all ostriches can bath. Artificial dust baths can be created, or provide a large enough enclosure with natural substrate where ostriches can choose to create their own.



Ostriches Like To Communicate



The male ostrich has a booming warning call that can sound almost like a lion. They also communicate through body language, for example they will lie down with their heads on the ground if they feel threatened. Their wing and tail feathers are also used for display and courtship. To show dominance they raise them high in the air.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Provide an appropriate social structure, space and interesting environment that allow for constant foraging, bathing and exploration of an enclosure. This will encourage positive communication and interactions between individual birds.



Ostriches Like Warm Climates

Ostriches' feathers can get very wet as they don't have the same waterproofing as other birds. They are mainly used to warm weather and will fan their wings in especially hot temperatures, and cover their thighs with their wings in colder conditions.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Ostriches should be provided with shelter in cold temperatures and wet weather. Providing natural shade in their enclosures through trees or bushes will allow the birds to maintain a cooler temperature when it gets hot. Also make sure there are enough shade and shelter options and space for all individual birds

Ostriches Enjoy...

Having lots of space to run, dust bath and socialise in. They spend most of their day foraging, resting or raising chicks.

In captivity we should always try and replicate their natural and normal behaviours, so they are happy and healthy throughout their lives.

WILD
WELFARE

