



Care For Us
Lemurs (Lemuroidea)

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 a good standard of 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.

Lemurs can only be found on the Island of Madagascar, off the coast of south east Africa. There are over 100 different species of Lemur, all specialised to different parts of the island.

The largest species is the Indri and the smallest is a species of mouse lemur. Some species are nocturnal, and some are diurnal. They are classed as “prosimians.”

Most species eat fruit and many will also eat leaves from particular trees. They spend a lot of time foraging for food and are often very social primates.

Their numbers have declined rapidly in recent years and some species are classed as critically endangered by the IUCN, due to large-scale deforestation, habitat fragmentation, superstition and the demands of the pet trade



Lemurs like to climb

Lemurs are arboreal so they are very good at climbing through trees and jumping very far. They need lots of opportunities to do this. They have a long tail to help them balance but they cannot grip anything with it.

Lemurs should always have the opportunity to be moving around their enclosure and exploring new things.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

To make their enclosure more interesting for them, give them lots of climbing opportunities. Some branches that swing and move and some that stay still are a great way of making things different. Ropes and cargo nets which are often moved around can provide lots of opportunities to explore.



A Ring-tailed Lemur is shown hanging from a thick rope. The lemur is holding a red sock in its mouth and eating from it. The background is a blurred outdoor enclosure with a fence and some greenery.

Lemurs Like to Forage

Lemurs spend a lot of time foraging for food. They will browse leaves from trees and find fruit wherever it grows too. Some species such as Ring-Tailed Lemurs will also forage on the ground but will avoid areas with long grass where they might be susceptible to predators.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Chopping food into smaller pieces, scattering it around an enclosure and using enrichment devices such as puzzle feeders to make food harder to access are all great ways of encouraging lemurs to forage. Having established browsable trees is also recommended. Feed multiple times a day to encourage foraging

Lemurs are social

A group of lemurs is shown in a naturalistic enclosure. One lemur is prominently featured in the foreground on the right, sitting on the ground and looking towards the left. In the background, several other lemurs are visible, some sitting and some standing, amidst green grass and dry branches. The overall scene is dimly lit, suggesting a shaded or overcast environment.

Whilst there are a few subspecies of Lemur that demonstrate solitary behaviours, most are social. Social lemurs can live in groups as large as 30 individuals although some prefer smaller group sizes. Lemurs have a matriarchal society so the females are in charge. This is important to factor in when managing populations in captivity.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

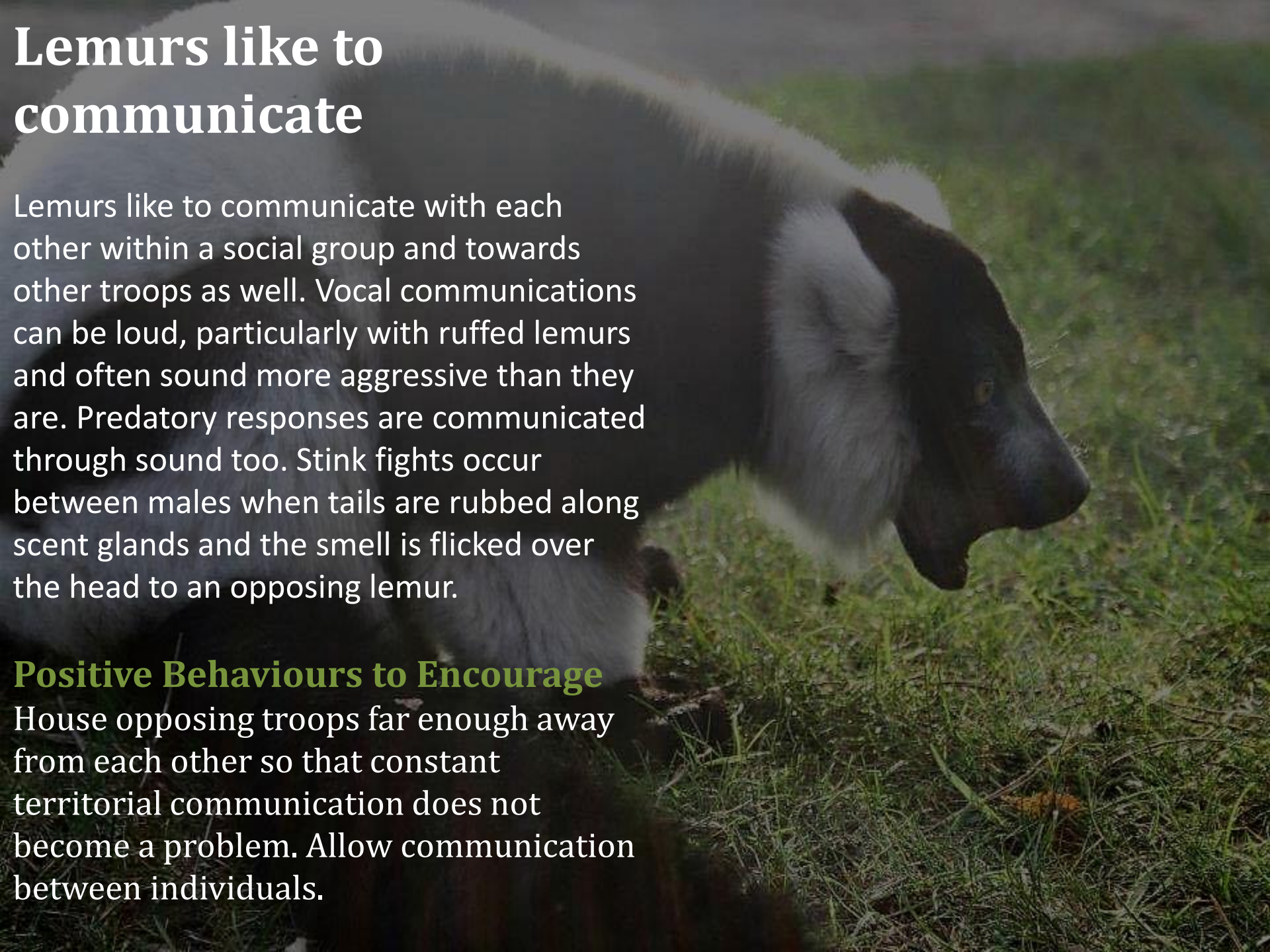
Ensure the enclosures have available resting places for the lemurs with the opportunity for the entire group to rest together. Ensure appropriate group numbers for different species. Multiple entrances and exits should be available within the enclosure for access to indoor housing. There should be ample resource provision to avoid resource competition amongst the group. Population management should consider social structure and hierarchy.

Lemurs like to communicate

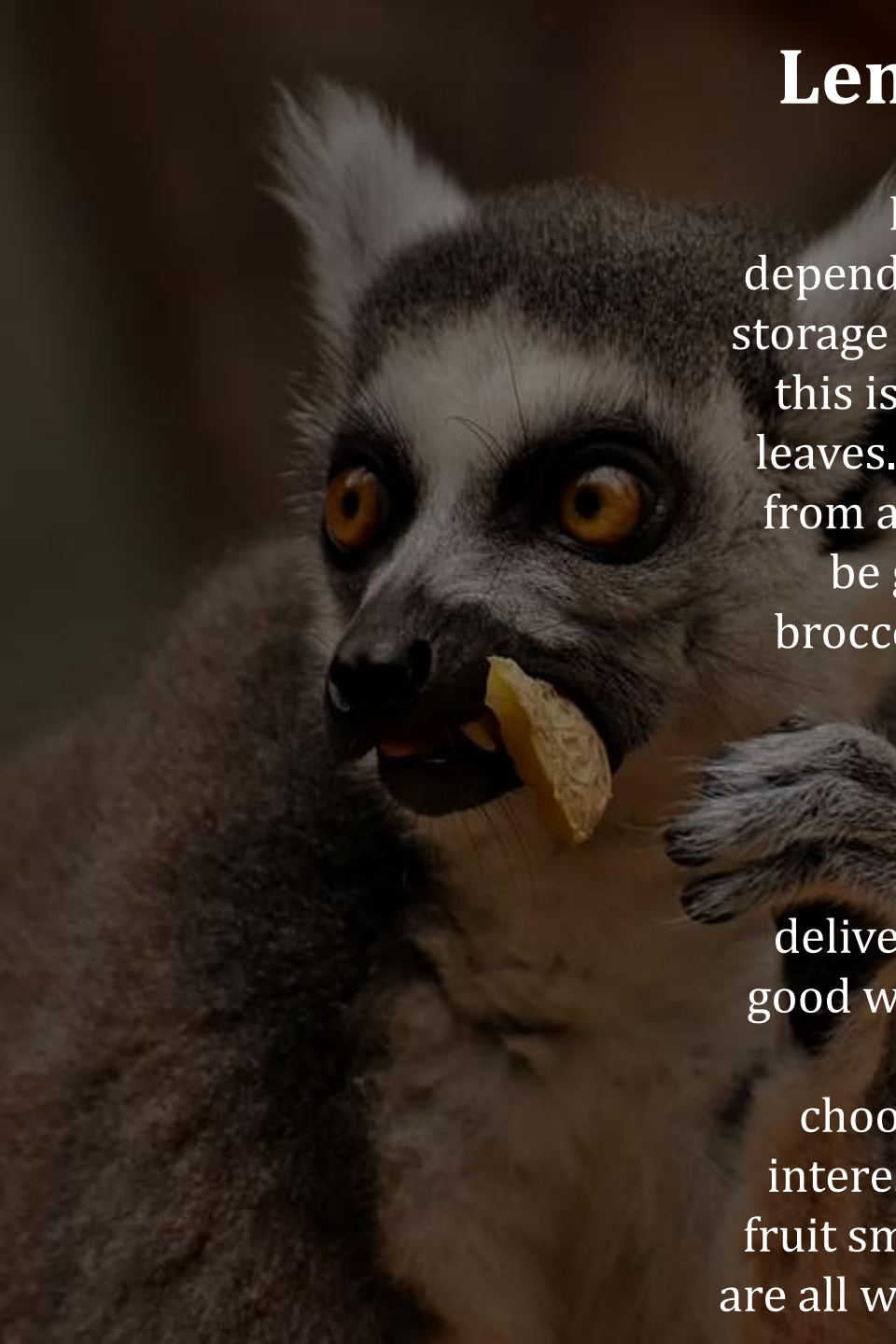
Lemurs like to communicate with each other within a social group and towards other troops as well. Vocal communications can be loud, particularly with ruffed lemurs and often sound more aggressive than they are. Predatory responses are communicated through sound too. Stink fights occur between males when tails are rubbed along scent glands and the smell is flicked over the head to an opposing lemur.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

House opposing troops far enough away from each other so that constant territorial communication does not become a problem. Allow communication between individuals.



Lemurs like to eat healthily




Lemurs are primarily fruit and leaf eaters, depending on the species. They are prone to iron storage disease if given an inappropriate diet, but this is also impacted by tannin availability from leaves. In captivity, lemurs can contract diabetes from a largely fruit-based diet so vegetables can be given but avoiding high iron types such as broccoli. Vegetables can be steamed to increase palatability.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Providing a diet with lots of variation and delivering it in lots of different ways can ensure good welfare for lemurs. Chopping up the diet so that everyone gets some is important but choosing different sizes can make things more interesting. Scattering feed around and creating fruit smoothies as well as freezing it in ice blocks are all ways to make lemur diets more interesting.

Lemurs like to reproduce



Depending on the species, lemurs will reproduce once a year. Twins are common in captivity. Some species such as ruffed lemurs require nest boxes to encourage reproductive behaviours. The whole troop will help to look after youngsters as they get older. Babies will spend the first month clinging on to the mum's stomach, then move on to her back and gradually start gaining independence at around 6 months old.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Lemurs should be allowed to reproduce naturally. Hand rearing should not be attempted unless as a last resort. The troop should be allowed to see and interact with youngsters.

Lemurs enjoy

Eating foods that are healthy for them and having to search for their food. They enjoy climbing, investigating new things and living together in a group, depending on the species.

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

