



# GLOSSARY

Definitions of words found within the **Wild About Welfare** digital education programme.

# KEY WORDS

**ANIMAL WELFARE** An animal's welfare is dependent on its physical environment and mental state. An animal can experience both good and bad emotions such as contentment or fear. An animal will express these feelings through its behaviour. Understanding species' natural behaviours can help you identify whether the animals in your care have good welfare or not.

**ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR** An animal's behaviour is a great indicator of its welfare. Monitoring and understanding specific species' behavioural needs is very important.

**ENRICHMENT** Environmental and behavioural enrichment can significantly improve a captive animal's welfare. Appropriate stimuli can be provided and be part of a daily care routine.

**ENCLOSURE DESIGN** An enclosure should always be appropriate for the species' behavioural and physical needs. There are many adaptations that animal care staff can undertake to provide for these needs.

**NUTRITION AND PRESENTATION** A diet should be species-appropriate to ensure good health. How food is presented can help encourage natural behaviours such as foraging or filter feeding. These natural behaviours lead to positive welfare.

**HEALTH CARE** Good health care is essential in an animal care facility. All staff can be involved. Health care can include medical procedures, medication administration, behavioural observations and even preventative care and training. Observational health checks and good communication with your manager and vet are very important.

**RECORDS AND MANAGEMENT** An animal carer can ensure their animals are happy and healthy by regularly recording their physical and behavioural health. Ensuring high standards of management practices are in place for all aspects of animal care is important and involves all staff at a captive animal facility.

**GOOD ANIMAL WELFARE IS IMPORTANT AND SHOULD BE A PRIORITY IN ALL FACILITIES.  
AS AN ANIMAL CARER YOU CAN SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE AN ANIMAL'S WELFARE  
THROUGH SIMPLE CHANGES TO YOUR DAILY CARE.**

# GLOSSARY

- Accreditation** – a process by which a facility is assessed and passes a threshold of accepted standards to become an accredited or certified member of a national or regional association.
- Acute stress** – a short-term event or stimulus which provokes a stress response. For example, a sudden loud noise which scares an animal and prompts it to run away from the area where the stimulus was heard.
- Adaptation/adapting/adapted/adaption** – changes made by an animal or species in order to be better suited to challenges within their environment.
- Ad libitum (or ad lib)** – free or continuous access to a resource, usually food items such as hay.
- Amygdala** – the section of the brain which helps to process emotions.
- Biosecurity** – a means of reducing the risk of disease occurring or being transmitted to other animals or between animal care staff and animals.
- Body condition** – the nutritional and health status of an individual, often indicated by weight, muscle tone and skin/scale/feather/coat appearance.
- Brachiation/brachiate** – the swinging movement of particular tree-dwelling species such as gibbons in which only the arms are utilised to move between branches.
- Captivity/captive** – A state where animals are kept in confinement by human beings, whereby the day-to-day needs, welfare and well-being of the animals are subject to the provision of human intervention and care.
- Chronic stress** – a situation or stimulus which provokes a long-term stress response. For example, continuous restricted movement from being in a cage.
- Cognition/cognitive** – the mental process of acquiring and storing knowledge through the senses, experience, understanding and thought. Cognition involves reasoning, perception, awareness, intuition and judgement.
- Competent** – describing a person who is capable of executing their duties effectively.
- Conservation** – actions that promote protection, restoration, preservation and care of ecosystems, and the animals and plants that live within them.
- Contamination/contaminated** – polluting or changing the purity of an object or area with something (often a chemical) which should not be present.
- Contra freeloadng** – animals choosing to actively work for resources despite them being freely available. For example choosing to extract food from a puzzle feeder when there is a freely accessible bowl of food nearby.
- Coprophagia** – the action of an animal ingesting their faecal matter in order to reabsorb nutrients. Not to be confused with an abnormal behaviour where faeces are ingested as a coping mechanism.
- Crepuscular** – describing animals which are most active at dusk and dawn.
- Deep litter** – a system of adding fresh layers of straw or other bedding on top of soiled bedding to create a deeper and more microbially active floor covering.
- Diurnal** – describing animals which are most active during the day.
- Duty of care** – a moral or legal requirement to ensure the well-being and safety of those who are reliant on you.
- Enrichment** – The provision of species-appropriate environmental, sensory, social, cognitive, and behavioural opportunities to promote the expression of normal and natural behaviours.

# GLOSSARY CONTINUED

**Ethics/ethical** – A moral philosophy or set of principles that determine how we should treat animals.

**Euthanasia** – the humane, painless and distress-free termination of an animal's life using a method which produces simultaneous loss of consciousness and central nervous system functioning.

**Ex situ** – in a situation outside of the wild, for example, in captivity.

**Genetics/genetically/genes** – the biological properties and characteristics inherited from parents.

**Geriatric** – Elderly animals and the management of them relating to their care.

**Habitat (in this context)** – the area in which an animal lives and the components of that area, for example, dense vegetation, a small lake in a mountainous region (in situ) or all aspects of an animal's enclosure (ex situ).

**Husbandry** – the actions involved in the daily care of animals including feeding, cleaning and environmental factors.

**Hypothalamus** – a section of the brain which controls body temperature, thirst, hunger, sleep and emotional activity.

**Informal learning** – educational opportunities which occur away from a structured or formal learning environment such as a classroom.

**Infrastructure (in this context)** – the components that make up an animal's enclosure such as furniture and safety features, or the components that make up an entire zoological facility.

**In situ** – in a situation within nature (often termed 'the wild').

**Life expectancy** – The expected duration of life which differs according to each species and is often higher in captivity.

**Morphology** – the biological structure and make-up of an organism.

**Musth** – When bull elephants experience a change in reproductive hormones which can lead to increased aggression, decreased feeding, and secretions on the side of the head.

**Natural behavioural repertoire** – every behavioural activity a species will demonstrate in situ.

**Nocturnal** – describing animals which are most active at night.

**Objective** – unbiased judgement, using scientific facts to influence decisions or thoughts.

**Olfactory/olfaction** – the perception of smell.

**Palpation/palpated** – An examination of the body or organ using the hands to feel and check for problems in order to diagnose a disease or illness.

**Parameter** – a critical or measurable characteristic, in this context often an element of an environment that is essential to a species' survival e.g. reptiles needing particular temperatures.

**Parasite** – an organism that requires another organism (or host) to survive, and utilises the host's resources at detriment to the host.

**Pathogen** – A disease-carrying organism that can infect a host.

**Perinatal** – relating to the time surrounding birth (usually a few weeks before and after the event).

**Photoperiod** – length of time which natural light is available to an organism, usually on a daily cycle.

**Physiological/physiology** – relating to the ordinary biological functions of an organism.

**Pinioning** – surgically removing a section of a bird's wing to prevent flight.

**Positive reinforcement training (PRT)** – an animal training technique using a reward system which creates a positive association between a behaviour and something the animal likes, therefore increasing the likelihood of that behaviour being demonstrated again when asked.

# GLOSSARY CONTINUED

**Psychological** – relating to the mental and emotional state of an organism.

**Quarantine** – a place of isolation to prevent disease transmission and enable assessment of disease over a period of time, often when an individual arrives at a new facility.

**Races** – tunnels or enclosed spaces which connect dens or other indoor areas to each other.

**Rewarding (behaviour/experience)** – a behaviour or experience which solicits the release of chemicals which promote positive emotions in an animal, therefore they will feel motivated to express that behaviour or experience again.

**Scatter feed** – feeding food rations in a stimulating way by spreading food around an enclosure and promoting foraging behaviours.

**Sentience** – the capacity to experience and perceive emotions such as pain and pleasure. It implies a level of conscious awareness and the ability to suffer.

**Social hierarchy** – the organisation of individuals within a social group where individuals are ranked in order of importance to the whole group. For example, a dominant group leader.

**Standard(s)** – a level of quality or attainment to be achieved. It is used as a measure, norm or model in comparative evaluations.

**State** (as in welfare state or mental state) – a particular condition that an organism experiences. It can be positive, neutral or negative.

**Stereotypy/stereotypical** – a repetitive behaviour with no apparent function or goal which is the result of an abnormal behaviour being developed as a way of coping with frustrations and limitations.

**Subjective** – using personal opinions to influence decisions or thoughts on a subject.

**Substrates** – a substance creating a layer of flooring which the animal can interact with. For example, soil, sand, bark chips, straw etc.

**Suffering/suffer** – an adverse mental state that negatively affects the welfare of an animal and is associated with negative experiences such as pain, distress, extreme boredom, injury and disease.

**Supplements** – a nutritional addition to the regular diet which promotes an increased intake of a particular nutritional component. For example calcium powder for bone growth and development.

**Taxa/taxonomic** – a classification of a group of organisms. For example, mammals, fish, birds, amphibians, reptiles.

**Veterinary care** – advanced levels of health care given by appropriately trained personnel, sometimes involving surgery and the provision of medication. **Proactive** care is where preventative steps are taken to ensure an animal does not become ill. **Reactive** care occurs after an animal has become ill and measures are taken to improve the health of that animal, for example through medication or surgery.

**Welfare** – Animal welfare may be defined as how an animal is coping with the conditions in which it lives. It considers actual feelings and sensations that an animal experiences and refers to the psychological well-being of the individual. When talking about animal welfare, we often refer to the state of the animal - how it is feeling which is often called an emotion or mood. Welfare concerns the state of the animal not the husbandry practices used to manage the animal or the care it receives.

**Well-being** – a state of harmony between the animal's physical and psychological functioning.

**Zoonosis** – a disease that is communicable between vertebrate animals and humans.