



Captive Animal Welfare

The issue

Animals in China's zoos and safari parks suffer a range of abuses. In many places, terrified cows, pigs and chickens are fed to lions and tigers as live prey for entertainment. Captive wild animals are often cruelly mutilated with their teeth and claws cut back. They may also be chained and used as photographic props or forced to entertain the crowds with unnatural, degrading and stressful circus-style performances.

The techniques used to force the animals to perform are often cruel and abusive and the conditions in which they are kept generally fall far below acceptable welfare standards for animals in captivity. Many display severe stereotypic behavior, such as pacing and swaying, due to neglect and poor management. Most receive no medical care and many suffer from injuries and diseases that are left untreated.

Focus areas

Animals Asia's work to improve the welfare of animals in zoos and safari parks focuses on five key areas:

1 Investigations

We conduct investigations at zoos and safari parks across China to identify animal welfare concerns and report these to the management of the facilities and government authorities.

We use the evidence collected during our investigations to influence positive regulatory change. In 2010, following our investigation into animal performances, the government ministry responsible for the management of Chinese zoos issued a directive to ban the use of wild animals in such performances.

We work with zoo managers to offer feedback and suggestions for recommended animal welfare improvements, and have established a positive relationship with the China Association of Zoological Gardens, the government authority responsible for regulating zoos in China.

2 Improving welfare

We provide educational workshops for animal management staff at China's zoos and safari parks on meeting the health and welfare needs of captive animals. We promote and campaign for changes in the way captive animals are cared for in public facilities throughout the country.

We demonstrate how enrichment programmes can be used to stimulate captive animals, encourage natural behavior patterns and prevent stereotypic behavior. We also run practical workshops on how to create simple enrichment toys and outdoor furnishings, and how to rotate enrichment programs to increase animal welfare.

3 Training vets

We run workshops for Chinese zoo-based vets to improve their clinical skills and introduce them to the latest animal welfare concepts and specialist veterinary techniques.

We offer veterinary workshops in collaboration with The Jeanne Marchig International Centre for Animal Welfare Education at the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies at the University of Edinburgh, and the China Association of Zoological Gardens.

4 Public awareness

We give presentations and workshops on animal welfare and animal emotions to Chinese school children and university students to generate empathy and raise awareness of the types of practices that cause suffering at zoos and safari parks.

To promote the belief that knowledge is the key to change, our animal welfare officers speak with students from primary age to university level across the country, delivering the message that all animals have physical needs and feelings just like us, and that it is wrong to force them to perform for our entertainment.



5 Government and policy

We engage with government authorities, public representatives and policy-makers in China to encourage them to protect animals in China's zoos and safari parks from neglect and abuse.

We advise government authorities such as the China Association of Zoological Gardens and the China Wildlife Conservation Association on animal welfare regulations and work with them to provide training in animal welfare concepts for animal management staff.

Through this partnership, we deliver animal welfare presentations and workshops to animal managers and vets at Chinese facilities. The positive dialogue with these authorities has resulted in a number of opportunities to propose new initiatives and encourage sharing of best practice from zoos around the world.

