

Anteater demonstration guidelines

June 2019



Demonstration Guidelines for Anteaters used in public demonstrations

The EAZA 'Guidelines on the use of animals in public demonstrations' (updated in April 2018) provide guidance on the use of exotic animals in public demonstrations at EAZA member institutions. The Giant Anteater EEP and Tamandua ESB (hereafter referred to as anteater programmes) support the use and implementations of that document and has produced these 'Demonstration guidelines for Anteaters used in public demonstrations' to provide species-specific guidance for institutions performing public demonstrations with anteaters.

Public demonstrations are defined as any case where an animal is demonstrating behaviors, trained or natural, while under the supervision or control of a trainer (or keeper) in the view of guests, with the intention of educating, inspiring, and entertaining the visitors (according to the above mentioned EAZA document), as well as enriching the daily life of the animal. A public demonstration should be designed with animal welfare as the primary factor and the visitor experience as a secondary factor and should utilize the best practice standards.

Animal demonstration programs should focus on behaviors that are demonstrations of the animals' natural intellectual or problem solving abilities and their physical attributes, showcasing as much behavioral diversity as possible.

All public demonstration programs with anteaters should serve to:

- Promote an understanding and raising awareness of wild anteaters.
- Allow the visitors to see the animals active and showcase anteaters' natural behaviors.
- Educate visitors about their special adaptations and their role in their ecosystem.
- Educate visitors about the threats that these species face in the wild and the role of zoos in the conservation efforts of anteater species and the role of zoos generally in the global effort to preserve animals and their habitats in the wild.
- Inspire visitors through conservation education to connect with anteaters.

The anteater programmes do not support the performance of any behaviors that when implemented pose a demonstrable or probable risk towards animal and / or human health or welfare, be it physical or psychological. These include:

- Any situation where an animal, a staff member or visitors' safety is unnecessarily and knowingly placed at risk.
- Any situation that is demeaning or degrading to the animal.
- Any practice that requires the physical disciplining of an animal to provide protection for a staff member who is in contact with that animal for any purpose other than the preservation or improvement of its health and wellbeing.

The anteater programmes recognize any kind of behaviors which could be utilized for medical training (e.g., body parts presentation, holding for examination and blood draw training) as part of husbandry training. The behaviours can be performed as part of a public demonstration to serve to facilitate the inspection of the animal and also to the drawing of samples or the treatment of a trained individual. Actual medical procedures should not be conducted on display.

For the purpose of this document we consider the following grouping of anteaters:

- Giant Anteaters (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla* and all other species of the suborder)
- Medium sized anteaters (both *Tamandua* – species)
- Small anteaters (*Cyclopes* – species)

The following points are recommended to be followed and should be taken into account prior to setting up a public demonstration with anteaters:

Training of animals

- 1) The anteater programmes are strictly against any use of rearing techniques for demonstrations that directly affect the welfare and health of the animal, including the premature removal of an animal from the mother with the intention of hand-raising specifically for use in a demonstration. This could lead to unacceptable imprinting on humans and the welfare issue of not being entirely socialized to conspecifics. It could also lead to health problems.
- 2) Training with anteaters should begin at an early age (at least after weaning time).

- 2) Training techniques used for demonstrations must be positive reinforcement only.
- 3) There should be an emphasis on the use of motivating operations whereby the animal is seeking out food in a natural way, not reliant on the hunger state.
- 4) The animals should always be able to choose if they want to participate in the demonstration. There should be no repercussions in food, choice or enrichment if they choose not to participate.

Safety and housing

The anteater programmes do not support placing animals in a performance environment that does not reflect the EAZA 'Standards for the Accomodation and Care of Animals in Zoos and Aquaria' (2014).

Giant Anteaters:

- 1) Great care should be taken when the Giant Anteater is still asleep. They have a deep sleep and a sudden touch by hand or a loud noise close to the sleeping animal could result in abrupt raising and negative behavior towards the intruder. The anteater should be touched slightly and given enough time to wake up. Besides that, Giant Anteaters are prone to stress due to loud and sudden noises in their vicinity.
- 2) It is recommended to not take members of the public into the same enclosure as where the animals are as it can compromise human safety and animal security. For public demonstration a separate off show facility should be used that is neither accessible nor viewable from other public areas of the zoo. This is to avoid unpleasant noises or action disturbing the animals while demonstration is on the way.

Medium sized anteaters:

It is accepted that with medium sized anteater like tamanduas members of the public may be taken into the enclosures as part of demonstrations when the following conditions are met:

- Guests must always be accompanied by at least one animal keeper or zoologist.
- Guests should be limited to a maximum of two to three at any one time.
- Guests must never attempt to touch the animals if not explicitly allowed to do so.
- The enclosure must be large enough and complex enough to offer privacy and security for the animals; giving it the possibility to retreat.
- The staff member must end all demonstrations if the animals show signs of stress, fear or aggressive behavior.
- Guests must not be taken in when (newborn) offspring is around (up to three months of age).

- The staff member must inform the guests of the correct behavior inside the enclosure.

Small anteaters:

It is recommended to refrain from using the Silky Anteaters (*Cyclopes sp.*) in public demonstrations. So far they have rarely been kept successfully and their management has to be further elaborated before allowing for them to be trained for demonstration purposes.

All species:

- 3) The animals should not necessarily be handled outside the off-show facility/demonstration area for the purpose of animal welfare and safety reasons. Situations where animals need to be moved temporarily or permanently from their current enclosure to another location should not be done as part of any public demonstration to ensure the upmost animal welfare.
- 4) Performing husbandry training by animal keepers must be according to in-house safety protocols.
- 5) The physical touching of animals by the public is only accepted with staff members explicitly giving their okay to do so. Situations where the demonstrator has to touch an animal as part of a training procedure that is visible to the public must be made clear to the public that this is not acceptable by any other person at any given time. It should also be made clear that the touching of animals by public/guests even in the company of an animal keeper or other staff member could encourage other members of the public that are viewing this activity to attempt to touch the animals through fences when no keeper is present and thus compromise public safety.

Usage of props

The use of props that compromise animal welfare or promotes negative reinforcement is not accepted. Props that are added to an enclosure or are permanently part of an enclosure that are used during animal demonstrations must promote natural behaviors and positive animal welfare. It is encouraged that institutions should do their upmost to explain the positive use of such items during demonstrations to the public.

Approved by

EEP Committee (September 2019)

Giant Anteater EEP (April 2019) and Tamandua ESB (April 2019)

Supported by the EAZA Small Mammal TAG (April 2019)