

WAZA COVID-19 Reopening Recommendations

Last updated: 5 June 2020

The following recommendations are a compilation of reopening recommendations made by different WAZA recognised national and regional associations. Considering the diversity of territories and respective legislation under which WAZA member zoos and aquariums operate, these guidelines are merely general recommendations. Some suggestions might not be applicable for your region and/or particular institutions. Many WAZA recognised national/regional zoo and aquarium associations have further detailed recommendations that includes specific elements of respective local/national regulations. For additional details, we encourage you to explore those resources that are listed in the reference section.

Elements to consider regarding reopening zoos and aquariums:

1) Relevant to visitors:

- Number of visitors: Establish maximum capacity per day considering authorities' indications that apply to the area of your zoo and/or aquarium. Might be beneficial to assess if the number of visitors allowed is worth the costs of reopening at this time.
- Date of reopening: Reopening on a weekday rather than a weekend might help to limit the pressure on staff, allow for testing and re-adjustment if required.
- Communicating the reopening: Consider communicating the conditions under which you are reopening. Inform visitors in advance of the limit to prevent all unnecessary travel and queuing. Place clear notices on the website and on social media about the reopening, especially about admission restrictions and limited operation.
- Sale of tickets and other sales: If available, promote online selling of tickets for specific timeslots instead of ticket sales at physical ticket counters. Offering the opportunity to reschedule time of visit might be useful. If online booking is not an option, consider taking card payments only (preferably contactless payment). Consider updating ticket sale terms and conditions and your privacy policy so you can request contact details to aid government contact tracing should it be necessary.

- In countries/regions with travel restrictions, consider limiting access to visitors only from your region/state/province.
- Monitoring visitor behaviour to ensure compliance with government distancing requirements between individuals or families.
- Refer to your relevant health authority's advice on kids' playgrounds, play equipment and other tactile learning equipment (i.e. interactive interp) to reduce risk, you may decide to keep them closed during initial stages of reopening.
- Ensure visitors follow directions and stay home if unwell.

2) Relevant to both visitors and staff:

- Check recommendations made by the relevant government health authority to make sure you are in compliance with local regulations. Look for details on what the recommendations are for personal protective equipment (PPE).
- In some countries, temperature checking of visitors at entrance is a common practice.
- Maintain strict physical distancing in accordance with those recommendations. This might include clearly marking spaces on the ground to indicate safe distance where queues might form e.g. food access, bathroom access, tight flow areas in the park; blocking out seats or rows of seats to give visitors further guidance in how to keep distance correctly; separating essential animal care staff from other staff and visitors; making sure that the rules are clearly communicated, that you can enforce them, and that you have the right to intervene if the rules are not complied with.
- Have a regular and thorough cleaning schedule in place, paying extra attention to high contact areas (door handles, counters, railings, locks, taps, food prep areas etc.) Ensure adequate cleaning supplies are available.
- Practice good hygiene – ensure hand sanitiser and hand washing facilities are readily available and maintained around the site for visitors and staff. Promote good hygiene practices to visitors and ensure they are followed by staff.

- Clearly communicate the plan to staff and expectations around physical distancing requirements, hand hygiene, cough/sneeze behaviour to all.
- Ensure workers follow directions and stay home if unwell
- If a worker or visitor is suspected to have COVID-19, follow your health authorities' recommendations.
- Throughout critical points at the facility install signs indicating the minimum distances and safety rules. These can also be included on apps and website.
- Consider whether indoor venues (nocturnal houses, reptile houses etc.) can operate within the physical distancing requirements. If not, keep these types of locations closed to visitors.
- Use a one-way system where path or corridor space does not allow visitors to pass each other within 1.5m distance.
- Maintain split shifts for staff teams and reduce the use of communal kitchens or lunch rooms where possible.
- If required, consider hiring additional mobile security units to ensure that the rules are observed on the large premises. In the event of non-compliance, explore if a reprimand may be issued.

3) Relevant to animals:

- Practice the same physical distancing protocols with animals as is recommended between humans unless necessary for animal care, health or welfare reasons.
- Carefully evaluate all visitor animal interactions to assess whether physical distancing with the animals and between people can be complied with.
- Ensure your veterinary team has access to the latest technical information and can seek advice from other zoo vets if required.
- Ensure your general biosecurity practices are of the highest standards possible (check what guidelines are available for your city, state, country).

- Minimise the number of people working with animals, or inside enclosed spaces housing animals, or where food is prepared, to the minimum necessary for safety and welfare.
- Contact your vet as soon as possible if you notice any signs of disease in your animals.
- During the COVID-19 closures, many animals may have become used to a new environment and experience change as routines return to normal operations:
 - a. Consider the potential changes to the animal's environment and their routine and implement a plan to allow the animal to gradually accustom to any significant changes.
 - b. Consider implementing a monitoring programme to observe the animals' behaviour during reopening. If a person is monitoring the animals, they may also assist with supervising visitors.
 - c. It is plausible that some animals may find increased visitation more rewarding compared to their experiences over the last few months. Be aware where this may be the case and support this opportunity where appropriate and physically distanced.

Additional resources and references used for this document

**Please note that your national/ regional association of zoos and aquariums might have additional resources available for members. If you would like to suggest additional resources for an upcoming update of this document, please write to secretariat@waza.org*

Global

- 1) [COVID-19 reopening guidance - Considerations for the Global Attractions Industry](#)
- 2) [WAZA webinars and lessons on COVID-19](#)

Africa

- 1) [PAAZA COVID-19 Daily Updates & Survival](#)
- 2) [PAAZA Recommendations for workplace](#)

Asia

- 1) [SEAZA board letter on COVID-19](#)
- 2) [India Central Zoo Authority notes on COVID-19](#)
- 3) [JAZA Coronavirus guidelines](#)

Europe

- 1) [EAZA Reopening a zoo or aquarium after lockdown: Good practice guidance](#)
- 2) [EAZA Reopening a zoo or aquarium after lockdown - communications guidance:](#)
- 3) [Notes on exist strategies and reopenings of zoo. Verband der Zoologischen Gärten](#)
- 4) [BIAZA Covid-19 guidance for zoos and aquariums \(includes re-opening guidelines\)](#)
- 5) [DTG letter on COVID-19](#)

North America

- 1) [AZA COVID-19 resources](#)
- 2) [CAZA Newsroom on COVID-19 response](#)

South America

- 1) [ALPZA tools for COVID-19](#)
- 2) [COVID-19 recommendations from the Brazilian Zoos and Aquariums Association](#)

Oceania

- 1) [ZAA COVID-19 response](#)