



Population Management During the COVID-19 Crisis Updated March 2021

The purpose of this document is to provide Animal Program participants (e.g., AZA Program Leaders, Program participating facilities) with general information and guidance regarding AZA's Animal Programs, and to reassure the community that flexibility is warranted during this time. As events during this global health crisis continue to unfold, this document may be updated.

Animal Program Accountability

Many Program Leaders and Animal Program participants and staff are working with reduced staffing at their facilities and have less time or resources to devote to Animal Programs. The AZA Animal Population Management (APM) Committee, Population Management Center (PMC) staff, and Adjunct Population Biologists will be flexible to accommodate new schedules and are shifting all upcoming in-person planning meetings to virtual meetings. Given our uncertain schedules and availability, rescheduling planning meetings may be challenging. The APM Committee will be flexible and accommodating regarding deadline extensions for documents and other Program Leader requirements. Please communicate early with your Taxon Advisory Group (TAG) Chair, Population Biologist, the PMC (pmc@lpzoo.org), and the AZA office (animalprograms@aza.org) if you have obstacles or restrictions preventing you from completing the work and you need an extension.

Recognizing the present uncertain job market in our professional community, the APM Committee has reviewed and revised the current grace period for Program Leaders who experience loss of employment due to issues arising from the pandemic. Program Leaders who have been furloughed or lost their employment prior to May 1, 2021, may now retain their roles for up to one year before gaining employment at an AZA member facility. After May 1, 2021, we will return to the standard grace period of 6 months as outlined by the Animal Program Handbooks. All Program Leaders affected MUST communicate with their TAG Chairs to ensure the circumstances are understood by those involved. Please consult with your facility about the legality of working on your Animal Program(s) during a furlough.

The APM Committee will continue to review and approve TAG Regional Collection Plans (RCPs) and Sustainability Partner applications during this time. The Committee is also continuing to hold monthly conference calls to assure that all of our hard work and strategic planning initiatives are moving forward.

Population Management

SSP Breeding and Transfer Plans typically make recommendations and strategies for two to three years. Therefore, this disruption may only be a short-term issue within the population's long-term plan. Everyone is doing the best that they can given their current situations. Strategies and recommendations may change due to facilities making the best decisions for their animals based on their available resources and changing priorities.

Some facilities do not currently have the room or resources to continue breeding, and other facilities are encouraging breeding of their animals to continue. SSPs are discouraged from issuing breeding moratoriums. Rather, strategies and recommendations may need to be adjusted or extended. Program Leaders are encouraged to reach out to facilities to check in and better understand their needs and

priorities in order to be adaptive and get the best outcomes for the animals and facilities involved. If a facility determines that it needs to place SSP animals, it should contact the SSP Coordinator to discuss options. If a facility needs to place non-SSP animals, it should consult the AZA Policy on Responsible Population Management (<https://www.aza.org/board-approved-policies-and-position-statements>) and its acquisition/transfer/management policies for all transfer decisions during this time.

As a reminder, draft SSP Breeding and Transfer Plans are sent out for a 30-day IR review, and the IR should provide feedback and address any questions/concerns about the recommendations with the SSP Coordinator. The IR is expected to communicate any recommendations affecting their facility's population to their Institutional Liaison (IL) and Director. If a Director has any questions regarding an SSP Breeding and Transfer Plan or related communications, we encourage them to speak with their IRs or have their IRs reach out to the SSP Coordinator. See pages 38-39 of the SSP Handbook (<https://www.aza.org/animal-program-handbooks>) for more details.

Animal Transfers and Transports

While the transportation of animals is crucial to the success of our Animal Programs, domestic and international options, especially by air, are extremely limited at the moment. It is possible that even as businesses normalize, transport by air will be significantly limited, and it will likely be at least several months before traditional routes are re-established. It is almost certain that animal transport via commercial air carriers and air cargo shippers will be close to non-existent in the near future as airlines struggle to re-establish their routes and passenger relationships, implement social distancing protocols, etc.

It appears that over-the-road transports are still functional and may be the most viable alternative over the next few months. Additional animal testing and permitting protocols at the state, national, and international levels, which could significantly impact all animal transports, may be initiated in the longer term. Quarantine space, food/staples supplies, and facility staffing may also be limited once animal transfers begin again and could impact facility readiness to send or receive animals.

Some recent SSP Breeding and Transfer Plans have been adding contingency recommendations with both short-term and long-term strategies and recommendations. Program Leaders are encouraged to work with their Population Biologists and IRs to consider coming up with contingency strategies for your own Animal Program(s) in anticipation of breeding and transfer issues.

Facilities are encouraged to continue processing all necessary paperwork for the transfer of animals so that everything is ready when the transfer and transport of animals are feasible again. Permitting at both the Federal and State levels may be delayed due to significant paperwork backlogs. As the agencies return to full in-office work schedules, a longer lead time may be required for permits. As the country begins to re-open, Programs Leaders must reach out to their facilities to understand what the challenges might be and where they can assist.

AZA Professional Development Courses

The AZA professional development course for Population Management 1 (PM1) is being offered in a virtual format April 15 – June 17, 2021, Thursdays from 3-5pm ET. For more information visit <https://www.aza.org/PM1-virtual>. Registration for this virtual course is now closed and priority was given to Studbook Keepers that need PM1 this year or who had registered for the 2020 course that was canceled due to COVID-19. Another virtual and/or in-person course may be offered in the summer/fall.

Free virtual webinars for the AZA professional development course Population Management 2 (PM2) are being planned monthly from April through August 2021. These courses are not meant as a substitute for the in-person course, but as a way for the AZA community to learn about these topics. Dates and more information to come.

In-person courses for Population Management 1 (PM1) and Population Management 2 (PM2) are under discussion for November 2021 in Saint Louis, MO. If you need to take the PM1 course and your facility has restricted travel for this year, or if other priorities have shifted and you are unable to attend the course, please contact the AZA office (animalprograms@aza.org).

AZA Reproductive Management Center (RMC)

The RMC is still operational and responding to reproductive management inquiries and contraceptive orders. The RMC is not encountering any supply issues of contraceptives at this time but will be monitoring the situation in Australia closely as this is where Deslorelin implants are produced. Please contact Monica McDonald (contraception@stlzoo.org), RMC Program Coordinator, with any questions.

More COVID-19 Resources

The Zoo and Aquarium All Hazards Preparedness, Response, and Recovery (ZAHP) Fusion Center works with key players in emergency management across the country. ZAHP connects the managed wildlife community with information on the five critical National Preparedness mission areas: Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery. Information on general considerations of non-domestic species in human care, as well as many other resources for zoos and aquariums, can be found on the ZAHP Fusion Center website (<https://zahp.org/covid-19-animal-care/>).

The AZA website (<https://www.aza.org/covid-19-resources>) has a list of AZA member resources and links to important information, including communications, legislative updates, and federal agency resources.

Join the COVID-19 Resource Group on the AZA Network (<https://network.aza.org/home>). This community is open to all members and non-members of AZA to encourage the sharing of resources during this crisis.

Contact Information

Please do not hesitate to contact members of the APM Committee, the AZA staff, the PMC staff, Adjunct Population Biologists, or RMC staff with any questions or concerns. We are all here for you, and we are all in this together.

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