

# Lake Superior Zoo

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## Ambassador Animal Policy & Animal Handling Handbook



Welcome to the Lake Superior Zoo Animal Handling Program! We are excited to have you join our team of dedicated and knowledgeable animal handlers. The protocols outlined in this handbook will help you understand how to work safely with our ambassador animal collection. Ambassador animals are any animals the public may come in direct physical contact with, usually during an educational presentation. Occasionally there are different policies for animals in the barn contact yard; some of those are included in this handbook but more specifics can be found in the Barnyard Attendant Manual. Animal handling is a privilege and certified individuals accept responsibility for the well-being and safety of the animals, the guests, and themselves while handling the animals. Following our Ambassador Animal Policy (pages 2-12) and handling protocols (pages 13-35) in this handbook will help ensure safe and professional animal presentations.

## Ambassador Animal Policy

### **I. Philosophy**

The Lake Superior Zoo (LSZ) acknowledges the importance of live animals as ambassadors that provide our guests with stimulating and educational experiences that can positively impact attitudes towards wildlife and conservation. The use of appropriate ambassador animals is one of the most effective ways to endear wildlife to the public through close-proximity interaction. These up-close encounters also encourage preservation of wild places and inspire participation in conservation initiatives from the local to global level. LSZ has established specific guidelines to ensure the safety and welfare of the animals, the public, and handlers during both onsite and offsite programming. LSZ believes that the appropriate, respectful, and safe use of animals for programs is of incredible value to our mission “to provide close-up animal experiences that inspire connections to wildlife and action toward conservation.”

The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) is dedicated to excellence in animal care, welfare, conservation, education, research, and the presentation of animals in ways that inspire respect for wildlife and nature. As an AZA-accredited facility, LSZ abides by the AZA’s position that animals should always be presented in adherence to the following principles:

- 1) Animal and human health, safety, and welfare are never compromised.
- 2) Education and a meaningful conservation message are integral components of the presentation.
- 3) The individual animals involved are consistently maintained in a manner that meets their social, physical, behavioral, and nutritional needs.

### **II. Appropriate Settings**

Ambassador animals may be handled in settings both onsite (at the zoo) and offsite (not at the zoo). Onsite program settings include informal interactions for guests in the Griggs Learning Center, Main Building hallways, Onsgard Classroom, or shaded outside areas nearby. Onsite programs also include formal presentations in our classroom for school groups, camps, overnights, birthday parties, or special events. Ambassador animals may be brought offsite for formal and informal presentations at schools, libraries, nursing homes, festivals, community organizations, fundraisers, or media settings. To limit stress and potential disease exposure, ambassador animals cannot have contact with or be near other non-zoo animals, whether offsite or onsite.

Barn animals are not to leave zoo grounds. Barn animals may be walked on lead on zoo grounds under the close supervision of animal care staff. Otherwise, they should always remain in the contact yard.

Ambassador animals and barn contact yard animals must be carefully monitored for signs of stress. The animal handler should remove the animal from any situation they deem stressful for the animal or the public at any time or stop a program in the interest of safety for the animal, public, and/or handler.

### **III. Compliance with Regulations**

The Lake Superior Zoo is guided by and must comply with the following agencies' regulations, standards, and recommendations. Following is a list of these agencies:

- Association of Zoos and Aquariums – AZA Code of Professional Ethics, AZA Ambassador Animal Policy, AZA Standards for Contact with the General Public, CEC Ambassador Animal Position Statement, TAG or SSP Animal Policies
- USDA – Animal Welfare Act
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Compendium Measures to Prevent Disease Associated with Animals in Public Settings, regulations regarding bats
- Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection – regulations for animals that travel into Wisconsin
- City of Duluth Public Health Regulations

In accordance with USDA guidelines:

- Animals are not permitted inside establishments that serve food or near areas where food and drinks are being prepared, served, or consumed.
- Food and drinks are not to be consumed in the contact yard area or by the handler or the public while human-animal contact is occurring.
- Handling of animals shall be done expeditiously and carefully in a way so as not to cause unnecessary discomfort, behavioral stress, or physical harm to the animal.
- Care needs to be exercised to avoid harm to the handler.
- Animals to which the public is afforded direct contact shall only be displayed for periods of time under conditions consistent with the animals' health and not leading to their discomfort.
- During public display, the animals must be handled so there is minimal risk of harm to the public with sufficient distance allowed between animal presentations and the viewing public to assure safety to both the public and the animal.
- Animals participating in program activities shall be allowed a rest period between events that is at least equivalent to the use time.
- When sunlight is likely to cause overheating or discomfort, sufficient shade will be provided to protect the live animals from the direct rays of the sun.

### **IV. Collection Planning**

The acquisition of ambassador animals is considered carefully by multiple parties including directors, animal care staff, vet staff, and education staff and is part of the overall LSZ collection process conducted annually. When considering a new species, the Ambassador Animal Evaluation Tool developed by the Ambassador Animal SAG is used to determine if that animal will be a good fit for use in programming. Selection criteria in that tool include the zoo's ability to meet husbandry and welfare requirements, staff training and expertise, potential risk of injury or disease transmission, and the educational value and intended

conservation message of the species. The temperament and suitability of individual animals is also considered when determining use for programs and in the contact yard.

Other considerations for ambassador and contact yard collections shall be made in accordance with AZA policies and LSZ's Responsible Population Management Plan. These include, but are not limited to: animal acquisitions, donations, purchases, loans, transfers, reintroductions, contraception, euthanasia, necropsy, carcass disposal, and record keeping.

### **Ambassador Animals Housed in Lower Main:**

#### Reptiles

- Three-toed box turtle 1.0
- Eastern box turtle 1.1
- Painted turtle 0.1
- Red-eared slider 1.2
- Bull snake 1.0
- Ball python 1.0
- Rainbow boa 0.1
- Western hognose snake 1.0
- Burmese python 1.0
- Red-footed tortoise 1.1
- Leopard gecko 0.0.2
- Bearded dragon 0.1
- Corn snake 0.0.1
- Blue-tongue skink 1.0

#### Birds

- Double yellow-headed amazon 0.1
- Black-headed caique 1.0

#### Mammals

- Domestic rabbit 0.2
- Domestic guinea pig 0.3
- African pygmy hedgehog 0.3
- European ferret 3.0
- Three-banded armadillo 1.0

#### Invertebrates

- Madagascar hissing cockroaches group
- Chilean rose hair tarantula 0.1
- Giant stick insect group

#### Amphibians

- Tiger salamander 0.0.2
- African bullfrog 0.0.1
- Red-eyed tree frog 0.0.2

### **Ambassador Animals Housed in T2 & Raptor Mews:**

#### Reptiles

- Kenyan sand boa 0.1
- Desert tortoise 1.0

#### Invertebrates

- Giant African millipede group

#### Birds

- American kestrel 1.0
- Red-tailed hawk 0.1
- Eastern screech owl 0.0.1

## **Contact Yard Animals**

Currently the barn contact yard only consists of domesticated livestock animals and does not fall under any AZA TAG or SSP guidelines. Species currently in the barn habitat include:

- Shetland sheep 0.2
- Pygora goat 2.0
- Pygmy goat 2.0
- Nigerian dwarf goat 3.0
- Baby doll sheep 1.0
- Kunekune Pigs 0.2

## **V. Conservation Education Messages**

LSZ is dedicated to the promotion of conservation and the stewardship of wild places and animals. Using live ambassador animals, biofacts, and educational information, the zoo makes every effort to impart the importance of conservation to the public.

Animal handlers strive to incorporate age-appropriate conservation messages into all presentations. These messages can be found in LSZ's Conservation Messages document. We developed these messages based on AZA Conservation Messages, the themes/topics of our programs, the animals in our care, and current conservation issues each species faces in the wild.

The zoo does not promote any animals in our collection as pets and tries to avoid leaving that impression on the public when allowing them to touch an animal. We measure the effectiveness of the conservation messages and scientific information presented during ambassador animal programs through our education program evaluation process.

## **VI. Human Health & Safety**

The safety of zoo staff, interns, volunteers, and the public is of the utmost importance to the Lake Superior Zoo. To reduce possible health and safety concerns to humans in contact with ambassador and contact yard animals, the following safety measures are in place:

- Sinks with soap and water are available in the Griggs Learning Center, Main Building restrooms, and Primate Conservation Center restrooms.
- Hand sanitizer dispensers are available just outside the contact yard, in the Onsgard classroom, in all restrooms, and in other locations in the Main Building.
- Animal handlers conducting offsite programs provide hand sanitizer to any individuals that do not have immediate access to hand washing.
- First aid kits are available in multiple locations around the zoo, including the education office and main office. The zoomobile vans also have first aid kits.
- All zoo staff, interns, and volunteers that want animal handling privileges must first complete training on appropriate animal handling and personal behaviors when working with ambassador animals and the public.
- Zoo staff, interns, and volunteers are required to follow the zoo uniform policy, which includes removing any jewelry, accessories, cologne/perfume, food, or beverage that may cause a safety hazard for that individual, animals, or other people.

**Quarantine:** Upon initial arrival at the zoo, animals are quarantined for 30 days (mammals, amphibians, birds, most reptiles, and invertebrates), 60 days (primates), or 90 days (snakes, to monitor for paramyxovirus). In quarantine, all ambassador animals are required to have three negative fecal samples and a fecal culture (except for reptiles,

amphibians, and birds as they are assumed to be carriers of salmonella and are treated as such). Routine fecal parasite checks are done twice a year after the initial quarantine period. Mammals susceptible to rabies, such as ferrets and barn animals, get routine vaccinations for rabies every 1-3 years depending on species guidelines and manufacturer recommendations. All barn animals and primates are tested for TB while in quarantine and must have negative results before release.

**COVID-19:** See SARS-CoV-2 Veterinary Protocols, located in the appendices to the Veterinary Policy and Procedure Manual under the Disease Outbreaks heading.

**Zoonoses Prevention:** Zoonotic diseases are illnesses that are communicable between animals and humans, and vice versa. These diseases can be spread by direct contact, through the air, or through contact with contaminated surfaces.

To reduce the transmission of zoonotic diseases, LSZ follows recommendations made by multiple scientific and veterinary organizations including:

- The 2010 Compendium of Veterinary Standard Precautions for Zoonotic Disease Prevention in Veterinary Personnel as prepared by the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians' Veterinary Infection Control Committee
- The Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control
- The AZA Policy for Animal Contact with the General Public
- Occupational Health and Safety Information from the University of Minnesota's Research Animal Resources department
- AVMA zoonoses updates
- Information from the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians, Association of Reptile and Amphibian Veterinarians, Centers for Disease Control, and other relevant groups

The most common zoonotic diseases that could be present in the zoo's animal population are:

- Rabbits, guinea pigs, chinchillas: tetanus, ringworm
- Cats: rabies, toxoplasmosis, tetanus, ringworm, salmonella
- Ferrets: rabies, tetanus, ringworm, salmonella
- Primates: tuberculosis, rabies, herpes virus, tetanus, ringworm, salmonella, campylobacter
- Sheep and goats: tetanus, orf, ringworm, Q fever, salmonella
- Birds: tetanus, ringworm, salmonella, campylobacter, psittacosis
- Reptiles and amphibians: salmonella
- Wild carnivores: rabies, tetanus, ringworm
- Wild ungulates: tetanus, ringworm

Animal handlers are subject to annual tuberculosis testing and are strongly encouraged to vaccinate against Covid-19. The zoo recommends that all animal handlers receive a tetanus shot, but it is not required.

### Hand Hygiene

The number one method to avoid transmission of disease is thorough, frequent hand hygiene. Hand washing with soap and running water for a minimum of 20 seconds is preferred, but alcohol hand rubs may be used in areas where running water is not available.

Gloves should be worn when:

- Handling exotic species, or animals with suspected infectious disease.
- There could be contact with feces, body fluids, vomitus, or exudates.
- When the hands have non-intact skin.
- When performing dental, obstetrical, resuscitation or necropsy procedures.
- When handling diagnostic specimens.
- When cleaning cage, litter boxes, feeding dishes.
- When cleaning contaminated equipment or dirty laundry.

Gloves should be changed between examinations of individual animals or animal groups, between dirty and clean procedures performed on a single patient, and if torn. Wearing gloves is NOT substitute for hand washing and hands should be washed immediately after removing gloves.

When working with ambassador animals, all handlers must wash or sanitize hands before they begin and when switching to another animal.

If ambassador animals are in contact with the public, handlers should verbally remind the audience to wash or sanitize their hands. Hand sanitizer should always be available for the public during onsite and offsite programs.

### Facial Protection

Facial protection should be used when exposure to splashes or sprays is likely (lancing abscesses, dentistry procedures, flushing wounds, suctioning, performing necropsies, and any cleaning that involves moving water). Facial protection includes goggles, surgical mask, face shield.

### Protective Outerwear

Clothing worn to perform zoo duties should not be worn outside the workplace and should be cleaned and laundered daily (coats and heavy outerwear are exceptions to daily cleaning). Closed toed shoes and boots that can be easily cleaned should be worn. In some cases (e.g. quarantine of primates) shoe covers are required.

### Environment

Equipment and surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected between uses. Spills and splashes of body fluids or potentially infective substances should be contained with paper towels or cat litter, then bagged in plastic and placed in the waste.

Needles and other sharps are to be disposed of in approved sharps containers, available in every animal care area.

Control of rodents and pests is essential to decrease vector transmission of disease. Details of how this is carried out can be found in the zoo's Pest Control Policy.

### Employee/Volunteer/Intern Health

Employees and volunteers who are ill should contact the zoo's safety officer (Amy Gallagher) and Director of Animal Management to determine if they should wear protective barriers to protect the animal population or be excused from work while ill. Employees and volunteers are required to complete safety training and report any incidents of injury while at the zoo.

### Animal Surveillance

All animals in the Lake Superior Zoo collection that could be potential rabies carriers are immunized against rabies on a regular basis. Barn contact animals and ambassador animals require additional testing for zoonotic diseases as listed in the Veterinary Preventive Health Care Manual. Additional testing is required for nonhuman primates. The public is not allowed contact with any nonhuman primate.

Ill animals will not be available for handling or program use.

Staff and trained volunteers always monitor guest contact with animals. Any contact with reptiles is strictly supervised and followed by hand washing. Reptiles and amphibians will NOT be tested for salmonella as they are assumed to be carriers and may intermittently shed the organism. Animals carrying salmonella will not be treated for the bacteria as this may lead to antimicrobial resistance.

### Animal Transport Carriers

After handling an animal, its carrier must be cleaned before returning it to storage. If there is urine or fecal matter in the carrier, put on gloves, clean it out using soap and water, spray Rescue (hydrogen peroxide) sanitizer, and allow it to sit one minute. Rinse and dry the carrier thoroughly before returning it to storage.

## **VII. Animal Health and Welfare**

The housing and husbandry of all LSZ ambassador animals meets or exceeds the AZA standards required for each species. The needs of each ambassador animal, including enrichment, husbandry, space, and contact with conspecifics, are assessed and accommodated by animal care staff. Ambassador animals receive enrichment in accordance with the zoo's enrichment program, which includes a calendar of enrichment categories and an evaluation/record keeping process. To ensure ambassador animals are receiving adequate rest between programs, all animals are checked out on a white board with the date they were last used. During periods of downtime education staff maintain a schedule to ensure animals are given the choice to exit their habitat and interact with education staff weekly.

Contact yard animals receive a level of care that is consistent with the rest of the collection at LSZ. The animals are maintained in appropriate environmental conditions (e.g. shade is available, animals have access to water, temperature extremes are avoided, they are able to seek shelter during weather extremes) and in such a way that safety of both animal staff/volunteers and the public is addressed. Guest access to the contact yard is granted only under the supervision of trained staff, interns, or volunteers. Contact yard animals can retreat from the petting area to their stalls whenever they want, and a chain discourages guests from entering the stalls.

**Temperature Guidelines:** All ambassador animals should have covers on their carriers for privacy, warmth, and shade. These are found in the plastic bins in the carrier/enrichment room. When temperatures are between 60°F and 90°F, animals must have a lightweight navy-blue carrier cover. When temperatures are below 60°F, animals must have a heavy green quilted carrier cover. Reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, and hedgehogs should also have a pink cozy heat disc. These discs can be found in the Education Office in the cabinet to the right of the microwave. Discs should be microwaved for 4

minutes. If animals are away from the zoo for more than 4 hours, heat discs must be reheated for 4 minutes before the animal is transported outside to the vehicle. Heat discs should be placed between the carrier cover and the outside of the carrier. Each carrier should only have one heat disc.

If the temperature is over 90°F, mammals can only go on a program if the program location is indoors and air conditioned. The van must be turned on and allowed to cool for 45-60 minutes before departure. If the temperature is below 32°F the van must be turned on and allowed to warm- up for 45-60 minutes before departure. Animals may not leave the zoo if the air temperature is below 0°F.

**Transportation Guidelines:** Carriers must be secured in the van with straps in case of an accident.

**Presentation Guidelines:** Staff, interns, and volunteers are trained in the appropriate methods of safely handling and professionally presenting ambassador animals to minimize any potential injury to the public, the animals, or themselves. All animal handlers have the right to remove an animal from a situation if the welfare or well-being of the animal is in question. Any concerns regarding the health and welfare of an ambassador animal while being handled by a volunteer or intern are immediately addressed and corrected by education staff or animal care staff.

Training plans for choice and control exist for each ambassador animal (except snakes, amphibians, and invertebrates). The Education Programs Manager is the primary trainer for the ambassador animals. Once an animal completes all steps in the training plan, it will become available for other animal handlers to become certified to bring that animal out for programs. Training goals include animals voluntarily approaching handlers, stations, or carriers while in their habitats, exiting carriers voluntarily, and/or stationing during programs. Ambassador animals should never be forced into or out of their carriers when packing up or during a presentation.

Animal handlers are trained to present animals with minimal or no restraint and give them opportunities to explore during presentations. They are also taught to explain to guests how this provides increased choice and control for the animals. Many animals that are safe for guests to touch are given the choice whether they would like to be touched. **See pages 19-20 for more information about choice and control.**

Animal handlers also receive training on how to monitor guest contact with animals. In situations where the animal is being held (e.g. reptiles, invertebrates), the animal will be presented with the back facing the audience and the handler protecting the head. Handlers learn which animals are designated as appropriate for touching and how to determine each animal's level of comfort when being touched. The animal handler must stop the animal from being touched if it exhibits behaviors associated with stress. Zoo guests are not allowed to hold ambassador animals except cockroaches and millipedes on occasion. Guests may be allowed to feed an animal an approved food item from the animal's training diet to demonstrate a natural behavior. In circumstances where the animal may not be touched by the public, handlers are encouraged to explain why.

**Animal Welfare Process:** LSZ has an animal welfare process that includes a policy, concern reporting form, regular welfare assessments, and committee meetings. For concerns

regarding animal welfare, any staff member or volunteer may complete an Animal Welfare Concern Form and bring it directly to any member of the Animal Welfare Committee, their immediate supervisor, an animal keeper, or return the form anonymously to the administration office. Reporting of an animal welfare concern can be made verbally as well. Follow up with the individual(s) reporting will take place without retribution. For more information about this process, see the LSZ Safety Manual.

**Retirement:** Retirement of ambassador animals is determined on a case-by-case basis. Animal care staff, educators, and veterinary staff should decide this together after discussing any changes to the animal's behavior, feeding habits, medications, etc. Staff will determine if the ambassador animal can be retired from handling and still be housed in its habitat, or if it needs to be housed out of public view. Decisions regarding deacquisition (e.g. retiring the animal at a staff person's home) and euthanasia will be made in accordance with the zoo's Responsible Population Management Plan.

### **VIII. Logistics: Managing the Program**

Ambassador animals may be handled in settings both onsite and offsite, but ambassador animals are the only animals in the zoo's collection that can be used for an offsite program. Ambassador animals are all housed either in the Griggs Learning Center, lower Main, the T2 room, or raptor mews and do not have contact with non-ambassador animals. Contact yard animals are also kept separate from other animals in the zoo's collection. Contact yard animals may not leave the zoo premises. Cleaning tools used for ambassador animals are kept separate from non-ambassador animals, and cleaning tools used for contact yard animals are kept separate from non-contact yard animals.

When scheduling an offsite program, staff inform the customer that our animals cannot have contact with or be close to other non-zoo animals. To protect the remainder of the ambassador animal collection from any unknown infectious agents, provisions are implemented to minimize transmission potential using venue assessment, dedicated travel carriers, hand washing, and thorough disinfection procedures.

Animals should never be left unattended. If an animal handler is on a program with a long break and the handler would like to leave the location, they must take the animals with them. Animal handlers should always ensure carriers are in the shade and within reach. If a handler must leave animals in the van to get gas or use the restroom then they must use the remote start feature and return within 10 minutes.

Any ambassador animal with a health or behavior concern needs to be reported to the Ambassador Animal Care Specialist and any contact yard animal concerns reported to the Barn Animal Care Specialist. If they are not available, the report should be made to Education staff who can then pass it on to the Lead Animal Care Specialist or Assistant Director or Director of Animal Care. Should a handler involved in offsite programming feel that an animal in their care has been exposed to a potential contaminant or an unplanned association with other animals that is of concern, they should immediately advise their supervisor or the Director of Animal Care (who will subsequently inform veterinary staff) for further consultation and instructions. If a contamination has been deemed to have occurred, the animal will go the Animal Care Center (Veterinary Clinic) rather than be returned to their home space. It will then be the responsibility of the veterinarian to determine a quarantine period and, if necessary, a course of treatment. During this defined period, the

animal will be taken “off handling” and will not be allowed to participate in any previously scheduled programming.

The selection of individual animals for programs is based on the consideration of the following factors: program location, temperature (see temperature guidelines above), temperament and health of the animal, educational goal of the program, proximity of people and other animals, prior use of the animal (i.e. length of rest period), and assurance that the safety of handlers, animals, and the public will be maintained.

**Animal Rest Policy:** All animals included in LSZ’s Ambassador Animal Policy are subject to the following rest period guidelines:

- Ambassador animals may be handled for the maximum length of 30 consecutive minutes with varying times of lesser durations based upon species specific needs and the discretion of animal care staff and the animal handler.
- Ambassador animal use and exposure is to be documented on the check-out board for communication with other zoo staff, interns, and volunteers with animal handling privileges.
- Ambassador animals must have a rest period equal to or longer than the length of exposure time immediately following all programming/presentations. This includes:
  - Informal/formal programs both onsite and offsite
  - Exercising in the exercise yard/Onsgard room
  - Handling in the Griggs Learning Center
  - Walking the contact yard animals on lead

**Animal Rotation Policy:** Species of ambassador animals of which there is more than one individual in a non-group setting may be rotated on/off habitat. Rotation of individual animals is monitored and determined by the ambassador animal care staff and barn animal care staff. Staff, interns, and volunteers with animal handling privileges must adhere to the following guidelines:

- Any animals removed from a habitat for programming/presentation must be returned to the same habitat and are not to be rotated on or off habitat.
- Rotation of animals on/off habitat is determined by animal care staff only.

**Check-Out Board:** To ensure that ambassador animals are not overused in programs, animal handlers and animal care staff utilize a check-out board to document their use. The check-out board is located on the back wall of the terrarium room (T1).

Before handling an animal, animal handlers must refer to the check-out board to see which animals have been used recently. In cases where there are duplicate animals, handlers will use the individual who has the oldest date of when they were last handled. Handlers will record the individual being used, where the program is located, their initials, and update the date last used with the current date.

The check-out board is also used to communicate between handlers about the status of the zoo’s various ambassador animals. Animal care staff and education staff may take an animal off handling by marking them as “out” and adding a comment in the “notes” section of the board. Reasons that an animal is taken off handling include a snake that is opaque or shedding, a snake that has eaten and is digesting, an animal undergoing training to be used

in programs, an animal undergoing medical treatment, outside temperature being too hot for animals to be handled, or a behavior concern that warrants rest.

### **IX. Review of Institutional Policies**

The Ambassador Animal Policy and Animal Handling Handbook (this document) is reviewed and maintained on an annual basis by the Education Programs Manager, Director of Education, Director of Animal Care, and animal care staff responsible for care of the ambassador and contact yard animals. Animal handlers should review ambassador animal policies at least once a year. Ramifications for policy violations are stated in the Volunteer Handbook.

# Animal Handler Training

The Lake Superior Zoo has specific protocols for staff, interns, and volunteers that work with ambassador animals and contact yard animals. The goal of animal handler training is to allow handlers to gain experience handling the ambassador animal collection. Handlers need to feel comfortable and confident with these methods before handling animals for guests. The training also allows handlers to reduce the stress of the animals by using consistent techniques for handling and presenting. Although one may keep the same animal as a pet at home or have experience handling a similar animal at another facility, handlers must follow the protocols outlined in this handbook. All those who work with ambassador animals are trained by the Education Programs Manager with assistance from other education department staff and animal care staff. Individuals who have completed animal handler training at LSZ are the only people authorized to handle the zoo's ambassador animals.

Those who work with contact yard animals are trained by the Guest Experience Managers and Barn Animal Care Specialist. Contact yard training protocols are in the Barnyard Attendant Manual.

Animal care staff and education staff are the only people authorized to train ambassador animals. Staff who train animals attend regularly scheduled training meetings and keep current with all protocols and guidelines in the Lake Superior Zoo Training Manual.

Those interested in becoming certified animal handlers must attend a one-hour introduction to interpretation training, a one-hour empathy for animals training, a one-hour ambassador animal training seminar, and a 5-hour animal handler training workshop. Animal handlers receive this handbook during the training, as well as a link to a website with natural history information and relevant conservation messages for all zoo animals:

<https://lszoovolunteer.weebly.com/>

Ambassador animals are placed in groups based on the degree of handling difficulty and the temperament of individual animals, with Group A1 being the easiest and Staff Only being the most challenging. During the workshop, handlers begin training on Group A1 animals. Following the workshop, animal handlers must schedule a "certification" appointment with the Education Programs Manager. Handlers must be certified on each animal before working with that animal unsupervised. During the certification process, handlers must properly demonstrate with **no assistance** that they can:

- 1) Properly use the animal check-out board in T1 to check the animal's availability
- 2) Locate and prepare the animal's transport carrier with the proper lining and cover
- 3) Use either the station or carrier to appropriately give the animal a choice to leave its habitat
- 4) Properly load the animal into its transport carrier, including properly securing the carrier
- 5) Properly secure the animal's habitat
- 6) Check the animal out on the check-out board
- 7) Properly remove the animal or allow the animal to exit from its transport carrier, depending on that animal's protocols
- 8) Give an informal presentation to guests while allowing the animal to exhibit as much choice and control as possible

- 9) Present the animal with the health and safety of the animal, presenter, and guests in mind
- 10) Answer these questions regarding the animal's natural history:
  - Common name of animal
  - Habitat and geographic location in the wild
  - Diet in the wild
  - Captive lifespan
  - House name and age of individual being handled
  - Appropriate conservation messages
- 11) Recognize signs of stress in the animal
- 12) Properly return the animal to its habitat and secure the habitat
- 13) Check the animal in on the board and return cleaned transport carrier to the correct location

Handlers must complete 6 hours of handling time on three separate days with each group before being trained on the next group. For example, handlers must be certified on Group A1 animals and spend 6 hours handling group A1 before being trained on Group A2. Groups A through C are trained in letter order. Handlers are required to spend 4 hours per month working with ambassador animals. Hours can be acquired through onsite programs, outreach programs, or by exercising animals. If a handler needs a leave of absence from animal handling, they may request up to the three months by e-mailing the Education Programs Manager. Animal handlers must get re-certified on animal handling if they go longer than three months without handling animals with an approved leave of absence request, or one month without an approved leave of absence request.

Volunteer animal handlers are informally evaluated by a zoo educator during their shifts and must attend an annual re-certification meeting with the Education Programs Manager. Volunteers are provided with multiple opportunities for continuing animal handling education throughout the year.

Below is the list of ambassador animal groups, based on the degree of handling difficulty and the temperament of individual animals, with Group A1 being the easiest and Staff Only being the most challenging. Animals that must stay in a terrarium or carrier during a presentation are marked with an asterisk (\*). Other animals that cannot be touched by the public are marked with a circle (●).

#### **Group A1**

- Guinea Pig
- Box Turtle
- Desert Tortoise
- Red-footed Tortoise
- Bearded Dragon
- Ball Python

#### **Group B**

- European Ferret
- Domestic Rabbit
- African Pygmy Hedgehog
- Brazilian Rainbow Boa
- Corn Snake
- Kenyan Sand Boa

#### **Group A2**

- Madagascar Hissing Cockroach
- Giant African Millipede
- Leopard Gecko
- Pond Turtle

#### **Group C**

- Bull Snake
- Western Hognose Snake

## **Staff Only**

- Burmese Python
- Giant Stick Insect\*
- Red-eyed Tree frog\*
- African Bullfrog\*
- Tiger Salamander\*
- Rose Hair Tarantula\*
- Eastern Screech Owl ●
- American Kestrel ●
- Red-tailed Hawk ●
- Double Yellow Headed Amazon ●
- Black-headed Caique ●
- Three-banded Armadillo
- Blue-tongue Skink

## **Guest Management**

Guests to the Lake Superior Zoo are typically respectful of animals, however there are occasions when individuals may demonstrate poor behavior around the zoo's ambassador animals. Please ask guests to refrain from:

- Eating or drinking while touching an ambassador animal.
- Feeding any of the animals.
- Grabbing or poking at an ambassador animal on any part of its body.
- Making any movements near the ambassador animal that may cause it distress.
- Making loud noises to or around the ambassador animal that may cause it distress.

Hand sanitizer should always be available for the public during onsite and offsite programs. When a guest touches an animal, handlers should verbally remind them to wash or sanitize their hands. When presenting a reptile to very young children who tend to put their hands in their mouths, do not invite them to touch the reptile.

## **Reporting Injuries**

Every preventative measure to avoid an injury to an ambassador animal, handler, or member of the public should be made, however, incidents may still occur. Follow these procedures:

- If an employee or volunteer is injured by an animal, they should request first aid from a zoo employee. They must then report the incident to a supervisor and fill out an incident report found in the first aid kit.
- If a member of the public is injured by an animal, volunteers/interns should direct them to an employee. The employee will then assist the guest with first aid and filling out an incident report found in the first aid kit.
- If an animal is injured, the chain of command is:
  1. Animal Care Specialist (if unavailable, make the report to your supervisor)
  2. Director of Animal Care
  3. Veterinary Technician or Veterinarian

More detailed information can be found in the Safety Manual.

## **Reporting Noncompliance**

Protocols must be always followed to ensure the safety of humans and animals. If you witness an animal handler not following proper protocols and it's an imminent safety hazard (e.g. a habitat left unsecured with an animal inside), you should intervene. Otherwise, report any protocol violation you witness to education staff. They will immediately intervene or schedule a time with the handler to review proper protocols. If protocols continue to be disregarded, further action will be taken, which may include removal of animal handling privileges. Safety protocols include proper handling techniques, securing animals in carriers/habitat, signing animals out, etc.

# Animal Exercising Protocols

## Outdoors

- Check with animal care staff or education staff before taking an animal outside.
- Transport animals outside using the appropriate carrier.
- Handlers may only exercise one animal at a time unless the animals are housed together.
- If multiple handlers are using the exercise yard, animals that are not housed together must be separated by a secondary fence (e.g. pen).
- Animals should never be left unattended when exercising unless approved by animal care staff or education staff in advance.
- Make sure the pen is secured before putting animals into it.
- Invite guests to come over and observe the animals while they are in the pen, and explain what is going on and why they are outside, e.g. exercise, fresh air, UV light.
- Animals must be placed in the shade or provided a shade option. Training/protocol must be clear that the animals will not always choose the shade and need to be constantly monitored for temperature stress whenever being handled indoors or outdoors.

The following animals may go in the fenced in exercise yard outside:

- Rabbits
- Guinea Pigs – Place in a smaller pen within the yard
- Hedgehogs – Place in a smaller pen within the yard
- Armadillo
- Bearded Dragon
- Box Turtles
- Desert Tortoise
- Red-footed Tortoises
- Snakes
- Leopard Gecko – Place in an exploration bin or smaller pen within the yard
- Blue-tongue Skink

These animals can also be exercised outside in a pen. When setting up a pen always make sure the area is safe. If grass is present, make sure it is untreated and free of toxic plants. Pens should always be set up in the shade.

- Rabbits – 3' tall pen or taller
- Guinea Pigs
- Hedgehogs
- Armadillo
- Bearded Dragon – 1' tall pen only
- Leopard Gecko – 1' tall pen or exploration bin
- Snakes – 1' tall pen only
- Blue-tongue skink

These animals can be exercised outside in an un-fenced area. Animal handlers must be within arm's reach of these animals.

- Box Turtles
- Desert Tortoise
- Red-footed Tortoises

## Indoors

- Check with animal care staff or education staff before exercising an animal indoors.
- Transport animals using the appropriate carrier.
- Handlers may only exercise one animal at a time unless the animals are housed together.
- Animals that are not housed together must be separated by a secondary fence (e.g. pen).
- Animals should never be left unattended when exercising unless approved by animal care staff or education staff in advance.
- Make sure the pen/Onsgard room is secured before putting animals into it.
- Invite guests to come over and observe the animals while they are in the pen, and explain what is going on and why they are out of their habitat (e.g. exercise).

The following animals may be exercised in the Onsgard classroom:

- Rabbits
- Guinea Pigs – Place into a smaller pen
- Hedgehogs – Place into a smaller pen
- Armadillo
- Bearded Dragon
- Box Turtles
- Desert Tortoise
- Red-footed Tortoises
- Snakes
- Leopard Gecko – Place into an exploration bin or smaller pen
- Blue-tongued Skink

These animals can also be exercised indoors in a pen. When setting up a pen always make sure the area is safe and out of main pathways.

- Rabbits – 3' tall pen or taller
- Guinea Pigs
- Hedgehogs
- Armadillo
- Bearded Dragon – 1' tall pen only
- Leopard Gecko- 1' tall pen or exploration bin
- Snakes – 1' tall pen only
- Blue-tongue Skink

These animals can be exercised indoors in an un-fenced area. Animal handlers must be within arm's reach of these animals.

- Box Turtles
- Desert Tortoise
- Red-footed Tortoises

**IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR NEED ASSISTANCE,  
ALWAYS ASK FOR HELP!**

# Animal Handling Signature Form

I have read, understand, and accept all animal handling policies and procedures set by the Lake Superior Zoo. I also understand that signing this document makes me responsible for all information provided within this handbook. Failure to abide by animal handling policies will result in disciplinary action and potential loss of animal handling privileges or termination of my volunteer position. If at any point in time I require clarification of an animal handling policy or procedure, I am responsible for requesting assistance from the Education Programs Manager or other trained zoo staff.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer/Intern Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer/Intern Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor Signature

# Animal Handling Protocols

Animal handlers will be trained to follow taxon- and species-specific handling protocols using pages 19-35 of this document during multiple training sessions. The Lake Superior Zoo will make every effort to comply with the taxon-specific TAG and SSP recommendations for handling, found at <https://www.aza.org/ambassador-animal-guidelines>. TAG and SSP recommendations will be reviewed annually during the policy review process and will be incorporated in blue font color within the protocols below. *As of January 2022, no TAG or SSP recommendations have been developed for the species in our ambassador animal collection.*

**Transport of Animals off Zoo Grounds:** Animal handlers may only transport animals off zoo grounds if they've been trained on the appropriate packing methods by education staff. Animal care staff and education staff may remove specific animals from handling due to weather/temperature, health, or behavioral concerns at any time.

**Choice and Control Guidelines:** Animal handlers should strive to give ambassador animals as much choice and control as possible during education programs. This applies especially to mammals, birds, lizards, turtles, and tortoises. These animals have training protocols that help handlers determine whether they want to be removed from their habitat. The behaviors of animals in other groups (snakes, amphibians, invertebrates) are continually monitored during programs and are not removed from their habitat/carrier if they exhibit signs of stress.

**Choice:** The mechanism by which an animal controls its outcomes. Choice is taken away when an animal is forced to do something.

**Control:** An animal has control of its environment when it can use its behavior for desired outcomes.

- Give the animal the choice to leave their habitat to participate in a program. Present the animal with either a station or a carrier and only remove the animal if it voluntarily stations or enters the carrier. Give animals reinforcement after stationing or entering their carrier. Just because an animal chooses to leave its habitat does not mean it is choosing to participate in a program. Continue to give animals choices during the program.
- During the program, give animals the choice to exit their carrier. After they have exited, they should receive reinforcement. The carrier should remain available to them throughout the program so they can choose to re-enter.
- Animal handlers should always watch for signs of stress. If an animal exhibits signs of stress it should have the choice to return to its carrier and the animal should be done with the program.
- When beginning a program tell the audience that the animals are allowed to choose to come out and return to their carrier at any time. Encourage audience members to behave in a way that is comfortable for the animal (i.e., staying still and quiet).
- Give animals the opportunity to exhibit natural behaviors during programs. To do this, animal handlers should avoid restraining or holding animals for most or all of the program. Items that allow animals to exhibit natural behaviors include tunnels, hides, water dishes, dig bins, rocks, sand, or parts of their diet. These items can be in the pen on top of the shower curtain, in an exploration bin, or in the exercise yard.

- During the program, animal handlers should describe the behaviors the animal is exhibiting using interpretive techniques and empathy messages.
- For animals that are allowed to be touched, the animal should be given a choice to be touched. Follow touching protocols in the species-specific protocols of the Animal Handling Handbook. If an animal exhibits signs of stress, touching should be stopped.

## Taxon Specific Protocols

### INVERTEBRATES

**Misting:** Only de-chlorinated water will be used on invertebrates.

**Cold Weather Transport:** If the outside temperature is below 60°F invertebrates must have a cover over the carrier and heat disc pad next to the carrier during transport.

**Hot Weather Transport:** Avoid putting invertebrates in direct sunlight and provide a hide in carrier when possible.

**Temperature Requirements:** Prefer 70°F or warmer, can be at 65°F for no longer than 2 hours while on an outdoor program.

**Carrier Cleaning:** If feces or urine is in the carrier after use, empty substrate and clean with soap and water, then spray rescue solution and left sit for 1 minute before rinsing. Rescue solution can be found in T1 next to the sink.

### AMPHIBIANS

**Misting:** Only de-chlorinated will be used on amphibians. Always mist gloves before handling.

**Cold Weather Transport:** If the outside temperature is below 60°F amphibians must have a cover over the carrier and a heat disc next to the carrier during transport. Do not mist the animal prior to leaving grounds. Mist upon return to primary habitat.

**Hot Weather Transport:** Mist regularly throughout the program and upon return to primary habitat. Provide a shade option when in sunny weather.

**Temperature Requirements:** Prefer 70°F or warmer, can be at 65°F for no longer than 2 hours while on an outdoor program.

**Special instructions:** Nitrile or vinyl gloves should always be worn while handling amphibians. Amphibians have permeable skin that can absorb various liquids and materials that may harm them. This is why program participants may not touch amphibians.

**Carrier Cleaning:** If feces or urine is in the carrier after use, empty substrate and clean with soap and water, then spray rescue solution and left sit for 1 minute before rinsing. Rescue can be found in T1 next to the sink.

### REPTILES

**Misting:** Only de-chlorinated water will be used on reptiles.

**Cold Weather Transport:** If the outside temperature is below 60°F reptiles must have a cover over the carrier and a heat disc next to the carrier during transport. Do not mist the animal prior to leaving grounds. Mist upon return to primary habitat.

**Hot Weather Transport:** Provide a shade option if there is steady exposure to sunlight.

**Temperature Requirements:** Prefer 70°F or warmer, can be at 65°F for no longer than 2 hours while on an outside program.

**Access to water:** Once animal is out of its carrier it should be provided a bowl of water until it is returned to its carrier.

**Center for Disease Control Recommendation:** individuals under the age of 5 or individuals with a compromised immune system do not have direct contact with reptiles.

**Carrier Cleaning:** If feces or urine is in the carrier after use, empty substrate and clean with soap and water, then spray rescue solution and left sit for 1 minute before rinsing. Rescue can be found in T1 next to the sink.

**Health Considerations:** It is possible for reptiles to carry salmonella and it is very important that people who touch reptiles wash their hands and/or use hand sanitizer afterwards. Young children who tend to put their hands on their mouth should not touch the reptile. Again, encourage those people (including yourself) who touched the reptile to wash their hands after the program.

## **SNAKE SPECIFIC PROTOCOLS**

Handling restrictions: Snakes are off handling for 2 days post-feeding and when going through a shed cycle.

Handling guidelines: Handlers are to keep the snake in their hands and on forearms. *Remove jewelry, watches, etc. that may hurt the snake or be a safety hazard.*

Length Guidelines: There must be one handler for every 3 feet of snake length for safety when a snake is over 6 feet in length.

## **MAMMALS**

**Cold Weather Transport:** All mammals must have covers over the carriers prior to leaving the building. If the outside temperature is below 60°F hedgehogs must have a heating disc.

**Hot Weather Transport:** Always provide a shade option and water on hot days. Keep handling to a minimum to avoid overheating. Hot weather use of mammals is determined by the ambassador animal care staff or education staff.

**Access to water:** When not in a moving vehicle mammals should have a water bottle attached to the door of their carrier. Once they are out of their carrier they should be provided with a bowl of water.

**Handling guidelines:** Handlers should always avoid grabbing tails or limbs when removing mammals from primary habitats or while handling.

**Carrier Cleaning:** If feces or urine is in the carrier after use, empty substrate and clean with soap and water, then spray rescue solution and left sit for 1 minute before rinsing. Rescue can be found in T1 next to the sink.

# Group A1 Animals

## **Desert Tortoise (T2): Ozzie**

**Training Status for Removal from Habitat:** In Progress

**Transportation:** Handlers line the inside of the carrier with non-glossy newspaper and then place the animal in the plastic carrier making sure the lid is secure. Ozzie has a carrier labeled “tortoise.”

**Signs of Stress:** Urination, open mouth breathing, constant hiding in the shell and jerking head back into the shell.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Check for location of tortoise. Wake Ozzie up by gently scratching his shell. Place the station in the habitat in front of Ozzie. Cue “Ozzie Station” while pointing to the target. When he has placed one foot on the station, bridge with a clicker and give a reinforcement. Then cue “Ozzie up” and firmly grasp both sides of the shell between front and rear legs to lift and carry the tortoise out of the habitat. Place on the ground or in the carrier, bridge, and reinforce. Secure the carrier and place a “this animal is away” sign in the habitat.

**Handling:** Ozzie should be presented on the ground. If indoors place shower curtain labeled “Ozzie” on the ground. Program participants can sit in a half circle and Ozzie can walk around the circle. If it is necessary to lift Ozzie, firmly grip both sides of the shell between the front and back legs. Always keep the tortoise level. A firm grip on the shell is necessary to prevent falls while handling the tortoise.

**Grazing:** When outside and under handler supervision, the tortoise may be allowed to graze on lawns that have not been treated with any chemicals. Tortoise may eat grasses, dandelion, and clover. Do not allow near any planted gardens or buttercups as those may be toxic.

**Public Contact:** The public is allowed to gently touch the shell and rear leg of the tortoise under handler supervision. Do not allow people to poke their fingers inside the shell at any time, and always keep the head facing away from the public during contact.

## **Red-footed Tortoises (Griggs): Milton and Sammy Sue**

**Training Status for Removal from Habitat:** Complete

**Transportation:** Handlers line the inside of the carrier with non-glossy newspaper and then place the animal in the plastic carrier making sure the lid is secure. Milton has a carrier labeled “Milton” and Sammy Sue has a carrier labeled “Sammy Sue”.

**Signs of Stress:** Urination, open mouth breathing, constant hiding in the shell and jerking head back into the shell.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Unlock the top lock and unlatch both bolts. Place the station in the habitat in front of the door. Cue “Sammie Sue Station” while pointing to the target. When she has placed one foot on the station, bridge with a clicker and give a reinforcement. Then cue “Sammie Sue up” and firmly grasp both sides of the shell between front and rear legs to lift and carry the tortoise out of the habitat. Place on the ground or in the carrier, bridge, and reinforce. If you are taking Milton, use his name instead of Sammie Sue and use the same steps. Place a “this animal is away” sign if removing the second tortoise and secure the habitat.

**Handling:** Tortoises should be presented on the ground. If indoors place the tarp labeled Red-Footed Tortoise on the ground. Program participants can sit in a half circle and the tortoise can walk around the circle. If it is necessary to lift the tortoise firmly grip both sides of the shell between the front and back legs. Always keep the tortoise level. A firm grip on the shell is necessary to prevent falls while handling the tortoise.

**Grazing:** When outside and under handler supervision, the tortoise may be allowed to graze on lawns that have not been treated with any chemicals. Tortoise may eat grasses, dandelion, and clover. Do not allow near any planted gardens or buttercups as those may be toxic.

**Public Contact:** The public is allowed to gently touch the shell and rear leg of the tortoise under handler supervision. Do not allow people to poke their fingers inside the shell at any time, and always keep the head facing away from the public during contact.

**Box Turtles (Griggs): Patch (concrete patch on shell), Helmut (solid brown with brown eyes), and Nate (patterned shell with red eyes)**

**Training Status for Removal from Habitat:** In Progress

**Transportation:** Handlers line carrier labeled “box turtle” with non-glossy newspaper and place the turtle in the carrier, making sure the lid is latched.

**Signs of Stress:** Urination, open mouth breathing, constant hiding in the shell, jerking head back into the shell, shell clamping.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Use target poles to cue box turtles.

Nate – Blue target pole

Patch – Green target pole

Helmet – Red target pole

Cue the turtle you are asking to come out by saying their name and “target.” Once they are targeted, bridge with a clicker and reinforce. Then place the corresponding color station for that turtle and cue their name and “station” while pointing to the station. Once they have one foot on the station, bridge and reinforce. Then cue “(Name) up” and firmly grasp both sides of the shell between front and rear legs to lift and carry the turtle out of the habitat. Place on the ground or in the carrier, bridge, and reinforce.

Handlers should only remove turtles that are within arm’s reach of the habitat door. Do not climb into the habitat to retrieve a turtle.

**Handling:** Turtles should be presented on the ground. If indoors place the shower curtain labeled Box Turtle on the ground. Program participants can sit in a half circle and the turtle can walk around the circle. If it is necessary to lift the turtle firmly grip both sides of the shell between the front and back legs. Always keep the turtle level. A firm grip on the shell is necessary to prevent falls while handling the turtle. Never put your fingers inside their shell because they can fully close their shell when stressed.

**Public Contact:** The public is allowed to gently touch the shell of the turtle under handler supervision. Do not allow people to poke their fingers inside the shell at any time, and always keep the head facing away from the public during contact. This is a fully hinged turtle which can completely close its shell and cause a serious pinch if a finger is inside.

**Bearded Dragon (Griggs): Cloud Jumper**

**Training Status for Removal from Habitat:** In Progress

**Transportation:** Handlers line the carrier labeled “bearded dragon” with non-glossy newspaper and place animal in the carrier, making sure the lid is secure.

**Signs of Stress:** Open-mouth breathing, biting, inflating the throat, constant movement.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Unlock the door labeled “Bearded Dragon.” Place the carrier in the habitat and cue “kennel” and allow 5 minutes for the bearded dragon to enter. Once they have entered say “door” and close the door. Give one mealworm as reinforcement for entering the carrier. Place a “This animal is away” sign in the habitat.

**Handling:** Bearded dragons should be presented either in an exploration bin or in a 1’ tall pen on the ground. If presenting on the ground place the shower curtain labeled “bearded dragon” under the pen. Place the carrier inside the area set up for the lizard. Open the door

and cue “exit”. Once she has exited you can reinforce with one mealworm. If it’s necessary to handle the bearded dragon, slide your hand under the lizard and support the body of the lizard with your palm. The lizard’s head should be between your fingers and the tail towards your wrist. Wrap fingers around lizard to secure hold. If necessary, place your other hand over the back of the lizard for extra security.

**Public Contact:** Present the back of the animal to the audience. Allow people to gently touch using two fingers. Be sure to keep all hands away from the lizard’s head.

### **Ball Python (T1): Oliver**

**Transportation:** Use the clear plastic carrier labeled “snake” for transportation; it should have wood shavings in the bottom; if it doesn’t, you will need to add some. Make sure that no part of the snake will be caught in the lid once you secure and lock the top down.

**Signs of Stress:** Jerking head movements, holding the mouth open, hissing, closed or open mouth striking.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Check the location of the snake prior to opening habitat. If removing a heat lamp make sure to never set it on a wooden surface or on another animal’s habitat. Gently touch the back of the snake away from the head to avoid startling the animal. Using one or both hands to support the majority of the snake’s body weight, lift it from the habitat. Be careful of the snake’s head, making sure it does not hit anything while you remove the snake. When securing the habitat make sure to put everything back exactly as you found it. Place a “This animal is away” sign in the habitat.

**Handling:** Handlers must keep head away from the public. The snake needs to remain on the forearms and in hands of handler at all times. A majority of the snake’s body must be in control of the handler. Do not let the head or body dangle while handling. When holding the snake be sure not to squeeze the body too hard as it may fracture ribs.

**Public Contact:** The public is allowed to gently touch the snake on the lower half of body. Handlers are to instruct the public to touch gently in direction with the scales using two fingers.

### **Guinea Pig (Griggs): Dandelion (Brown and black), Clover (Light and dark brown), Alfie (Tri-colored)**

**Training Status for Removal from Habitat:** Complete

**Transportation:** Handlers place non-glossy newspaper into the carrier labeled “guinea pig” and then place animal in the carrier, making sure the door is secure.

**Signs of Stress:** Biting, constant motion, open mouth breathing, non-stop squeaking.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Enter the island and locate the door marked guinea pig. Unlock the door and open it carefully while you locate the guinea pig. Place the carrier inside and give the cue “kennel”. Give them 2 minutes to enter the carrier. Once one has entered the carrier say “door” and then the carrier door can be closed and the carrier can be removed from the habitat. Guinea pigs can be given 3.3g of fruit/vegetables from their diet each day. Once the door is closed give some produce as reinforcement. If removing all the guinea pigs place a “this animal is away” sign in the habitat, return any items you removed from the habitat, and lock the door.

**Handling:** Place the carrier in a secure pen and open the door. Cue “exit” and give reinforcement if they choose to exit their carrier. They should have access to their carrier at all times in case they choose to re-enter. If they need to be removed from their carrier secure the animal by cupping one hand over the back of the guinea pig. Use the second hand to cup around the sides and lift out of the carrier. Always use two hands when handling the guinea pig. One hand should support the body and serve to secure the animal by holding it between

the forelegs. The other hand should form a seat for the rear legs. The handler should always have hands around the guinea pig.

You can also place the guinea pig in a secure pen in the Griggs learning Center or outside. If bringing the Guinea pigs outside, make sure to place them in the shade. Their carrier should always be available to the guinea pigs to return to if they feel unsafe. Guinea pigs can graze on untreated grass, dandelions, plantain and clover. Do not allow near any planted gardens or buttercups as those may be toxic.

**Public Contact:** The public can touch the guinea pigs if they are standing on their station. If they leave the station they should not be touched. The public can feed pieces of lettuce to the guinea pigs under the handler's discretion. Volunteers must have permission from a zoo educator or animal care staff before doing this activity.

## Group A2 Animals

### **Leopard Geckos (T1): Kristoff (spots) and Sven**

**Transportation:** Trained handlers place animal in the plastic carrier labeled "leopard gecko," making sure the lid is secure.

**Signs of Stress:** Constant movement, repeated attempts to get away from the handler and biting.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Remove the lid and visually locate all geckos in the habitat. Place the Tupperware humidity box in the habitat. If the leopard gecko chooses to enter the small humidity box within 10 minutes the leopard gecko will then be taken on a program. Remove the humidity box with the gecko inside and place it into the carrier. Secure the lid of the habitat. If taking both geckos place a "this animal is away" sign in the habitat.

**Handling:** Using the "grabber claw" method described in training, gently wrap fingers around the gecko and pick up the entire animal. Never grab the tail, it can drop off, or limbs. Secure the door of the habitat. Allow the gecko to sit on the palm of the hand with the thumb resting gently on the gecko's back. If the animal begins to walk, allow it to move by offering it another hand to walk on, like a treadmill. If the animal continues to be restless, return it to its carrier until it has calmed down.

**Public Contact:** The public is allowed to gently touch the gecko on the lower half of its body. Never allow the public to touch the tail. Leopard Geckos can drop their tail when they feel threatened. Handlers are to instruct the public to touch gently in the direction of the scales using two fingers.

### **Pond Turtles (Griggs): Painted Turtle and Red-eared Sliders (3)**

**Training Status for Removal from Habitat:** In Progress

**Transportation:** Handlers line the carrier labeled "pond turtles" with a clean, non-stringy towel and then place the turtle in the carrier, making sure to secure the lid.

**Signs of Stress:** Urination, open mouth breathing, constant hiding in the shell and jerking head back into the shell.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Use target poles to cue pond turtles.

Painted Turtle Leonardo – Yellow target pole

Largest Red-eared slider Donnatello– Green target pole

Medium red-eared Slider Raphael– Red target pole

Smallest red-eared slider Michelleangelo – Purple target pole

Cue the turtle you are asking to come out by saying their name and “target.” Once they are targeted, bridge with a clicker and reinforce. Then cue “(Name) up” and firmly grasp both sides of the shell between front and rear legs to lift and carry the turtle out of the habitat. Place on the ground or in the carrier, bridge, and reinforce.

Handlers should only remove turtles that are within arm’s reach of the habitat door. Do not climb into the habitat to retrieve a turtle.

**Handling:** Turtles should be presented on the ground or in a bin with water. If indoors place the shower curtain labeled pond turtle on the ground. Program participants can sit in a half circle and the turtle can walk around the circle or swim in a bin of water. If it is necessary to lift the turtle firmly grip both sides of the shell between the front and back legs. Always keep the turtle level. A firm grip on the shell is necessary to prevent falls while handling the turtle.

**Public Contact:** The public is allowed to gently touch the shell of the turtle under handler supervision. Do not allow people to poke their fingers inside the shell at any time, and always keep the head facing away from the public during contact.

### **Madagascar Hissing Cockroaches (T1)**

**Transportation:** Trained handlers place one or more cockroaches in carrier labeled “cockroaches,” making sure the lid is firmly secured. Cockroaches can climb the sides of the carrier, so handlers should never leave the carrier lid off.

**Signs of Stress:** Constant motion and “spitting.”

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** After accessing the cockroach habitat, using a slightly cupped hand, reach in and scoop up one cockroach at a time using the “grabber claw” method described in training. The cockroach can then be placed in carrier or taken out in Griggs.

**Handling:** Handlers may place a cockroach in the palm of an observer if it remains under constant supervision. If the cockroach becomes too active, it can be cupped in either hand until it can be returned to a carrier.

**Public Contact:** The audience may carefully touch the back of the cockroach with one finger while it sits on the handler’s palm or while it is in its carrier under handler supervision.

### **African Giant Millipedes (T2)**

**Transportation:** Trained handlers place one or more millipedes in the carrier labeled “millipede.” Mist carrier with dechlorinated water. Make sure to bring dechlorinated water in case substrate dries out.

**Signs of Stress:** Remaining rolled up in a ball while being handled.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Millipedes burrow in their substrate and can be several inches under the surface. Be gentle when digging them up so they are not injured in the process. Once you have found one, gently scoop it into your slightly cupped hand and place in carrier. Before replacing the habitat lid check to make sure millipedes are clear of the lid.

**Handling:** Place a millipede in the palm of your hand. When a millipede is first brought out, it tends to remain curled up in a ball which is a defense mechanism. After a minute, it will mostly likely become more active. You may let it walk on your hands using the conveyer belt method. *To reduce stress, only handle millipedes for a maximum of 15 minutes.*

**Public Contact:** Millipedes may only be taken out of their carrier for the public in **an indoor location**. The audience may carefully touch the back of the millipede with one finger while it sits on the handler’s palm. Prevent guests from grabbing the body (small children especially are prone to grabbing).

# Group B Animals

## European Ferret (Griggs): Igor (light brown), Mozart (dark), Beethoven (white)

**Training Status for Removal from Habitat:** Off handling due to COVID-19

**Transportation:** Handlers should line the carrier labeled “ferret” with non-glossy newspaper and place animal in the carrier, making sure the door is secure.

**Signs of Stress:** Biting and open-mouth breathing.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** When you enter the island place the “Animals Inside” sign on the outside handle. Unlock the ferret door and wait for ferrets to come up to the Plexiglas. Reach over the barrier and grasp the ferret behind forelegs and gently lift from the habitat. As soon as possible, add support behind the rear legs. Secure the ferret in the carrier. If the habitat is empty make sure to place a “this animal is away” sign in the habitat before you secure the habitat. Make sure to move the “Animals Inside” sign back to the inside door handle.

**Handling:** One hand to be placed directly behind forelegs for proper restraint. The other hand can be used for additional support of the rear legs. Handlers should not restrain too tightly and should allow for the animal’s movement. Ferrets should be kept away from the handlers’ face and neck to avoid biting when stressed.

Ferrets may be brought into the Onsgard classroom by trained handlers. Trained handlers may also present the ferrets in a blue play container in the Griggs Learning Center.

**Public Contact:** Present the back of the animal to the audience. The public is allowed to gently touch the back with two fingers. Keep the ferrets head away from the hands of the public to avoid any bites.

## Domestic Rabbit (Griggs): Anna (brown and white Lionhead mix) and Elsa (white mini-rex mix)

**Training Status for Removal from Habitat:** In progress

**Transportation:** Handlers should line the carrier labeled “rabbit” with non-glossy newspaper and place animal in the carrier, making sure the door is secure.

**Signs of Stress:** Biting, constant motion, panting, and thumping.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Enter the island and unlock the door labeled “rabbit” and place the carrier inside and give the cue “kennel.” Give them 2 minutes to enter the carrier. Once one has entered the carrier say “door” and then the carrier door can be closed. Rabbits can receive up to 5g of produce from their diet each day for reinforcement. When the door is closed give reinforcement from diet. If rabbits must be picked up, use one hand to support the weight of the rabbit behind the front legs, and one hand on the back for restraint, then place hind feet against handler’s body until the handler is comfortably seated with the rabbit.

If both rabbits are gone, make sure to place a “this animal is away” sign in the habitat before you secure the door.

**Handling:** When being presented to the public place the carrier into a travel pen and allow rabbits to choose to exit their carrier into a fenced in pen. The carrier should always be available to them so they can choose to re-enter. If rabbits need to be removed from their carrier use one hand to support the weight of the rabbit behind the front legs, and one hand on the back for restraint. Place hind feet against handler’s body until the handler is comfortably seated with the rabbit. Always use two hands when handling the rabbit. One hand should support the body and serve to secure the rabbit by holding behind the front legs. The rabbit is most comfortable on a level, stable surface and can be held on the

handler's lap. When returning the rabbit to their habitat place the carrier inside and open the carrier door. The rabbit will exit into their habitat.

If bringing the rabbit outside, make sure to place them in the shade. Rabbits can graze on untreated grass, dandelions, plantain, and clover. Do not allow near any planted gardens or buttercups as those may be toxic.

**Public Contact:** If the rabbit is out of its carrier, allow guests to gently touch the rabbit with two fingers on its back. If the rabbit is in its carrier, it does not want to be touched. Keep the rabbit's head away from the hands of the public to avoid any bites.

When educators are presenting a zoo program with less than 20 participants, zoo educators can instruct the participants to sit in a circle knee to knee. They can place the carrier in the middle of the circle and allow the rabbit to exit. The rabbit may approach the participants, but the participants cannot touch the rabbit. The rabbit may choose to go back to its carrier at any point during the program.

### **African Pygmy Hedgehog (Griggs): Charlotte (pink spot), Piper (green spot), Butterball (purple spot)**

**Training Status for Removal from Habitat:** Complete

**Transportation:** Line the "Hedgehog" carrier with non-glossy newspaper before placing the hedgehog inside, making sure to secure the lid.

**Signs of Stress:** Hissing, biting, barking, panting, and refusing to uncurl or move.

**Gloves:** Hedgehog handling gloves are recommended. People occasionally have allergic reactions to hedgehogs that cause a rash and/or itching. If a handler is inexperienced with handling hedgehogs, they may need to start with wearing gloves. If they aren't used to being "poked" by hedgehog spines, it can be startling, and the safety of the hedgehog needs to be ensured (i.e. so they are not dropped).

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Enter the island and unlock the door labeled "hedgehog." Place the carrier in the habitat and cue "kennel" when a hedgehog enters the carrier and say "door" before shutting the door. The hedgehog can get one mealworm as a reinforcement for entering the carrier. If the habitat is empty, make sure to place a "this animal is away" sign in the habitat before you secure the habitat. *Hedgehogs have a special "away" sign located on the back of their door. The sign has hedgehog clip art on the back.*

**Handling:** Place the carrier inside of a pen and open the door. Cue "exit" and when the hedgehog exits the carrier, they can receive a mealworm as reinforcement. The carrier should stay open in the pen to give the hedgehog the option to return. At the end of the program cue "kennel" and once the hedgehog has entered the carrier say "door" and shut the door. The hedgehog can receive a mealworm as reinforcement.

If a hedgehog needs to be picked up support the full weight of the hedgehog's body in one hand and carefully use the other to restrain by holding the hedgehog around the middle. There is a plastic bin labeled "hedgehog" in the carrier room. This bin should be used whenever possible when bringing out hedgehogs.

When bringing the hedgehog outside make sure to place it in the shade. Hedgehogs can graze on untreated grass, dandelions, plantain and clover. Do not allow near any planted gardens or buttercups as those may be toxic.

**Public Contact:** Present the back of the animal to the audience. Instruct the public to gently touch the spines with two fingers in the direction of the hair (head to tail). The hedgehog may jump in response to contact and handlers should warn the audience in advance that this may occur.

**Health Considerations:** It is possible for hedgehogs to carry salmonella and it is very important that people who touch hedgehogs wash their hands and/or use hand sanitizer afterwards. If you are in an educational program or animal encounter with multiple species

that include reptiles or amphibians, the hedgehog must be presented first to prevent the hedgehog from contracting salmonella. Young children who tend to put their hands on their mouth should not touch the hedgehog. Again, encourage those people (including yourself) who touched the hedgehog to wash their hands after the program.

### **Corn Snake (T1): Oscar**

**Transportation:** Use the plastic Tupperware box labeled “Snake” for transportation; it should have wood shavings in the bottom; if it doesn’t, you will need to add some. Make sure that no part of the snake will be caught in the lid once you secure and lock the top down.

**Signs of Stress:** Jerking head movements, holding the mouth open, frozen and not sticking tongue out, hissing, closed or open mouth striking.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Check the location of the snake prior to opening habitat. Gently touch back of the snake away from the head to avoid startling the animal. Using one or both hands to support the majority of the snake’s body weight, lift it from the habitat. Be careful of the snake’s head, making sure it does not hit anything while you remove the snake. Secure the habitat and return the heat lamp. If the heat lamp was on turn it back on, if the heat lamp was off when you found it keep it off. Take a “this animal is away sign” from the top plastic drawer and place it in the habitat.

**Handling:** Handlers must keep head away from the public. Snake needs to remain on the forearms and in hands of handler at all times. A majority of the snake’s body must be in control of the handler. Do not let the head or body dangle while handling. Corn snakes are very active and require constant attention. When holding the snake, be sure not to squeeze the body too hard as it may fracture ribs.

**Public Contact:** The public is allowed to gently touch the snake on the lower half of body. Handlers are to instruct the public to touch gently in direction with the scales using two fingers.

### **Rainbow Boa (T1): Skittles**

**Transportation:** Trained handlers should mist a carrier labeled “snake” and then place the snake inside the carrier and secure the lid. It should have wood shavings in the bottom; if it doesn’t, you will need to add some. Make sure that no part of the snake will be caught in the lid once you secure and lock the top down.

**Signs of Stress:** Jerking head movements, holding the mouth open, hissing, closed or open mouth striking.

**Temperature:** Skittles requires a consistent temp of 75°F but may be kept at 70°F for no more than 2 hours for a program. See transport specific instructions on the snake carriers.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Check the location of the snake prior to opening habitat. Gently touch back of the snake away from the head to avoid startling the animal. Using one or both hands to support the majority of the snake’s body weight, lift it from the habitat. Be careful of the snake’s head, making sure it does not hit anything while you remove the snake. Place a “this animal is away” sign and make sure to secure all latches on the habitat.

**Handling:** Handlers must keep head away from the public. Snake needs to remain on the forearms and in hands of handler at all times. A majority of the snake’s body must be in control of the handler. Do not let the head or body dangle while handling. When holding the snake be sure not to squeeze the body too hard as it may fracture ribs.

**Public Contact:** The public is allowed to gently touch the snake on the lower half of body. Handlers are to instruct the public to touch gently in direction with the scales using two fingers.

**Kenyan Sand Boa (T2): Lydia**

**Transportation:** Use the plastic terrarium found next to the snake's habitat in T2 for transportation; it should have sand in the bottom. Make sure that no part of the snake will be caught in the lid once you secure and lock the top down.

**Signs of Stress:** Jerking head movements, holding the mouth open, hissing, closed or open mouth striking.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Check the location of the snake prior to opening the habitat. The sand boa buries itself in the sand and will most often just have their eyes showing, so locating the snake will be more difficult. Once you have located the general location of the snake, remove all items from the habitat. Use a small snake hook to gently search the sand for the boa's body. Then use the snake hook to support the snakes head while gently scooping her body up with your hand. Using one or both hands to support the majority of the snake's body weight, lift it from the habitat. Be careful of the snake's head, making sure it does not hit anything while you remove the snake. Place all items back into the habitat, secure the lid, and place a "this animal is away" sign next to the habitat.

**Handling:** Handlers must keep head away from the public. The snake needs to remain on the forearms and in the hands of the handler at all times. A majority of the snake's body must be in control of the handler. Do not let the head or body dangle while handling. When holding the snake, be sure not to squeeze the body too hard as it may fracture ribs.

**Public Contact:** The public is allowed to gently touch the snake on the lower half of body. Handlers are to instruct the public to touch gently in direction with the scales using two fingers.

## Group C Animals

**Bull Snake (Griggs): Mr. Burns**

**Transportation:** Trained handlers place the snake inside one of the labeled snake carriers and secure the lid.

**Signs of Stress:** Jerking head movements, holding the mouth open, hissing, closed or open mouth striking.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Check the location of the snake prior to opening the habitat. The bull snake can be very active and defensive while in his habitat. Use of a snake hook is recommended to ease transition from habitat to carrier. All handlers must be trained on the use of a snake hook before using it on the bull snake. Gently touch the back of the snake away from the head with the snake hook to avoid startling the animal. Using the snake hook and one hand to support the majority of the snake's body weight, lift it from the habitat. Be careful of the snake's head, making sure it does not hit anything while you remove the snake. If the snake is exhibiting any signs of stress or aggression, do not remove it from the primary habitat. Place a "this animal is away" sign in the habitat and secure the habitat.

**Handling:** Handlers must keep head away from the public. Snake needs to remain on the forearms and in hands of handler at all times. A majority of the snake's body must be in control of the handler. Do not let the head or body dangle while handling. When holding the snake be sure not to squeeze the body too hard as it may fracture ribs.

**Public Contact:** The public is allowed to gently touch the snake on the lower half of body. Handlers are to instruct the public to touch gently in direction with the scales using two fingers.

### **Western Hognose Snake (T1): Wilbur**

**Transportation:** Trained handlers place the snake inside one of the labeled snake carriers and secure the lid.

**Signs of Stress:** Jerking head movements, holding the mouth open, hissing, closed or open mouth striking, “rattling” tail on the ground.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** If the heat lamp is on, turn the heat lamp off and place it on the floor. If the heat lamp is off, keep it off and place it on the floor. Never place a heat lamp on a wooden surface or onto of another habitat. Check the location of the snake prior to opening habitat. Gently touch back of the snake away from the head to avoid startling the animal. Using one or both hands to support the majority of the snake’s body weight, lift it from the habitat. Be careful of the snake’s head, making sure it does not hit anything while you remove the snake. Take a “this animal is away sign” from the top plastic drawer and place it in the habitat. Secure the habitat and return the heat lamp. If the heat lamp was on turn it back on, if the heat lamp was off when you found it keep it off.

**Handling:** Handlers must keep head away from the public. Snake needs to remain on the forearms and in hands of handler at all times. A majority of the snake’s body must be in control of the handler. Do not let the head or body dangle while handling. The hognose snake is very active and requires constant attention. When holding the snake be sure not to squeeze the body too hard as it may fracture ribs.

**Public Contact:** The public is allowed to gently touch the snake on the lower half of body. Handlers are to instruct the public to touch gently in direction with the scales using two fingers.

## Staff Only Animals

### **Giant Stick Insects**

**Transportation:** Trained handlers place one or more sticks in the carrier labeled “Walking Sticks,” making sure the lid is firmly secured. Sticks can climb the sides of the carrier.

**Signs of Stress:** N/A

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Using a stick, gently scoop up the insect and place in the carrier. Avoid grabbing the sticks by hand as they are fragile and legs can be easily damaged. The stick and stick insect can be gently placed inside of the small animal carrier for transport.

**Handling:** Walking sticks can only be handled when being transported from their primary habitat to their travel carrier and back again.

**Public Contact:** Walking sticks must remain in their travel carrier.

### **Double Yellow Headed Amazon: Korbelt**

**Training Status for Removal from Habitat:** Complete

**Transportation:** Use the designated parrot travel carrier. When temperatures are cold, use a carrier cover.

**Signs of Stress:** Biting, lack of vocalization, crouching down and slightly opening wings as if to fly away.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Hold carrier up to Korbelt and she will step into it. You can put some sunflower seeds or a peanut in the carrier as reinforcement. Otherwise, trained

handlers can reach into the habitat and present a hand in front of her feet with the cue “step up.” Once she has stepped up, take her out of her habitat being careful to not let any part of her body, feathers included, touch or bump into the various perches and toys in her habitat. You may need to lightly press on her toes with your fingers since she has poor balance. If Korbrel does not enter her carrier or step up, she should not be removed from her habitat.

**Handling:** During programs, Korbrel stands flat-footed on a horizontal music stand and can walk around on the stand at will. Korbrel does not like to perch on a handler’s hand or a bird perch due to her poor balance.

**Public Contact:** This is a viewing only animal.

### **Black-headed Caique: Cricket**

**Training Status for Removal from Habitat:** In Progress

**Transportation:** Cricket is currently not trained to be transported in a carrier. He can be brought to programs in the Onsgard classroom by walking him through the hallway while he is perched on the handler’s hand.

**Signs of Stress:** Biting, lack of vocalization, crouching down and slightly opening wings as if to fly away.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Reach into habitat and present hand in front of parrot’s feet with the cue “step up.” Another option is to present a stick and ask him to step up on the stick. Once he has stepped up, take him out of his habitat being careful to not let any part of his body, feathers included, touch or bump into the various perches and toys in his habitat. If Cricket does not step up, he should not be removed from his habitat.

**Handling:** During programs, place the bird stand from the Education Office on a table in the classroom. Cricket can perch on the bird stand during the program and move around at will. Cricket may also stand on a handler’s index finger supported by the other 3 fingers on that hand for part of the program.

**Public Contact:** This is a viewing only animal.

### **Eastern Screech Owl: Bu**

*Note: This bird is retired from programs but still cared for by the Education Department.*

**Transportation:** Use the designated “Eastern screech owl” travel carrier with a cover.

**Signs of Stress:** Holding wings out, bating, gular fluttering, vocalizing, and biting.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Place a gloved hand above the feet of the owl with the cue “step up.” Once he is on the glove, thread the jesses under your thumb and then through the middle and ring fingers. Attach the swivel and leash to the jesses. When placing the owl in the carrier, lower him onto the perch, making sure not to bump or brush the tail feathers on the perch.

**Handling:** The owl rests on the handler’s gloved left hand. Handlers need to make sure the jesses and leash are threaded through their fingers.

**Public Contact:** This is a viewing only animal.

### **American Kestrel: Aries**

**Training Status for Removal from Habitat:** Complete

**Transportation:** Use the designated “American kestrel” travel carrier with a cover.

**Signs of Stress:** Vocalization, bating, turning around on glove, and biting.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Place a gloved hand above the feet of the kestrel with the cue “step up.” Once he is on the glove, thread the jesses under your thumb and then through the middle and ring fingers. Attach the swivel and leash to the jesses. When placing the kestrel in the carrier, back him into the carrier and then adjust your hand so that he is facing the perch and he will hop onto the perch.

**Handling:** During programs the kestrel rests on the handler's gloved left hand. Handlers need to make sure the jesses and leash are threaded through their fingers.

**Public Contact:** This is a viewing only animal.

### **Red-tailed Hawk: Lady**

**Training Status for Removal from Habitat:** Complete

**Transportation:** Use the designated "red-tailed hawk" travel carrier. When the temperatures are cold, place a towel or blanket over the carrier.

**Signs of Stress:** Bating, constantly looking around, and crouching down with wings out.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Place gloved hand left above the feet of the hawk with the cue "step up." Once she is on the glove, thread the jesses under your thumb and then through the middle and ring fingers. Attach the swivel and leash to the jesses. When placing the hawk in the carrier, lower her onto the perch, making sure not to bump or brush the tail feathers on the perch.

**Handling:** During programs the hawk rests on the handler's gloved left hand. Handlers need to make sure the jesses and leash are threaded through their fingers.

**Public Contact:** This is a viewing only animal.

### **Rose Hair Tarantula: Rosie**

**Transportation:** Trained handlers place the tarantula in the small plastic carrier labeled "tarantula." Bring a cover or hide to provide a shade option in sunny weather. Tarantulas can climb the sides of the carrier.

**Signs of Stress:** Rearing of the front legs, unfurling or displaying of fangs, kicking hairs off abdomen, rapid movements away from the handler. If any of these signs of stress are observed, do not use the tarantula in a program. If out on a program while observing stress signs, set the tarantula in a quiet area for the duration of the program.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Staff may remove tarantula using a plastic container. Nudge the plastic container against the tarantula's feet and allow her to walk in. Once she is in, lift the container with the opening tipped up at an angle so that the tarantula does not fall out, and then place the container in the carrier with the container opening tipped down so that the tarantula can walk out. Make sure to secure the carrier with a lid.

**Handling:** There is no direct contact with the tarantula.

**Public Contact:** This is a viewing animal only and may not leave the carrier.

### **Red-eyed tree Frog**

**Transportation:** Trained staff place frog into the carrier labeled "red-eyed tree frog," making sure the top is secure. Frog can climb the sides of the carrier.

**Signs of Stress:** Heavy breathing, excessive movement, irregular color change.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Wearing nitrile gloves, staff carefully remove frog by cupping hands and gently using fingers to remove the frog from the side of the habitat. After the frog is completely cupped in the hand and unable to jump away, it can be moved to the carrier.

**Handling:** Only handled by staff while removing from primary habitat.

**Public Contact:** This is a viewing only animal and may not leave the carrier.

### **Three-banded Armadillo (Griggs): Eddy**

**Training Status for Removal from Habitat:** Complete

**Transportation:** Cover the "armadillo" carrier with softwood shavings.

**Signs of Stress:** Rolling into a ball and refusing to uncurl or move.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Enter the island and unlock the door labeled “armadillo.” Place the carrier in the habitat and cue “kennel.” When he enters the carrier say “door” and shut the door. The armadillo can receive up to 3 mealworms as a reinforcement for entering the carrier. Place a “this animal is away” sign in the habitat before you secure the habitat.

**Handling:** Place the carrier inside of a pen and open the door. Cue “exit” and when he exits the carrier, he can receive a mealworm as reinforcement. The carrier should stay open in the pen to give him the option to return. At the end of the program cue “kennel” and once he has entered the carrier say “door” and shut the door. Then he can receive a mealworm as reinforcement.

If the armadillo needs to be picked up, support the full weight of his body in both hands. Do not place hands under the carapace in case he closes up. If the armadillo goes into a ball while being held, he should be put down immediately.

If bringing the armadillo outside, make sure to place him in the shade. Armadillos can graze on untreated grass, dandelions, plantain, and clover. Do not allow near any planted gardens or buttercups as those may be toxic.

**Public Contact:** Guests can touch with two fingers on the back when the armadillo approaches them at the edge of the fence.

### **Blue-tongue Skink (Griggs): Flick**

**Training Status for Removal from Habitat:** In Progress

**Transportation:** Handlers line the carrier labeled “blue-tongued skink” with non-glossy newspaper and place animal in the carrier, making sure the lid is secure.

**Signs of Stress:** Open mouth breathing, biting, inflating the throat, constant movement, tongue displayed outside of mouth.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Unlock the door labeled “blue-tongue skink.” Place the carrier in the habitat and cue “kennel” and allow 5 minutes for the skink to enter. Once they have entered say “door” and close the door. Give 2g fruit as reinforcement for entering the carrier.

**Handling:** Blue-tongue skink should be presented either in an exploration bin or in a 1’ tall pen on the ground. If presenting on the ground place the shower curtain labeled “skink” under the pen. Place the carrier inside the area set up for the lizard. Open the door and cue “exit.” Once he has exited you can reinforce with fruit or mealworm. If it is necessary to handle the skink, slide your hand under the lizard and support the body of the lizard with your palm. The lizard’s head should be between your fingers and the tail towards your wrist. Wrap fingers around lizard to secure hold. If necessary, place your other hand over the back of the lizard for extra security.

**Public Contact:** Present the back of the animal to the audience. Allow people to gently touch using two fingers. Be sure to keep all hands away from the lizard’s head.

### **Burmese Python: Monty**

**Snake length guidelines apply to this snake:** *A minimum of one trained staff person and two additional trained handlers (staff, interns, or docents) are required to handle the Burmese python.*

**Transportation:** Snake will be transported in large, latching container labeled “Burmese python” and will always be packed up by a staff person and trained handlers.

**Signs of Stress:** Extended periods of hissing, tongue partially out but not moving, jerking head movements, holding the mouth open, closed or open mouth striking.

**Removal from Primary Habitat:** Using a snake hook, trained staff may open the habitat and move a coil of the snake to assess behavior and alert the snake to a handler’s presence. If

the snake appears calm, the handler may use the hook to move the snake out, and slowly move it from the habitat to the carrier. *Three handlers must be present to remove the snake from the habitat.*

**Handling:** Handlers must keep head away from the public. Snake needs to remain on the forearms, hands, and/or laps of the handlers at all times. *A staff member must be in control of the head at all times when near visitors.* Snake may be set on the ground for exercise.

**Public Contact:** The public is allowed to gently touch the snake on the body in the area designated by the handler. Handlers are to instruct the public to touch gently in direction of the scales.

# Barn Animal Walking Protocols

Education staff and interns may be trained to walk barn animals on a case-by-case basis. This activity must always be supervised by the Barn Animal Care Specialist.

## **Barn Animals able to be walked:**

- Pygmy goats 2.0 by animal care specialists and other trained staff.
- Nigerian dwarf goats 3.0 by animal care specialists and other trained staff.
- Shetland sheep 0.1 (Ruby) by animal care specialists and other trained staff.

## **Goats:**

**Harnessing:** Approach the goat with medium sized dog collar in hand. Slip the collar gently around the neck, fasten with buckle, and tighten as necessary. Collar should move freely, but not have too much slack. Horns will help keep the collar on in case they pull. Attach the lead rope to the steel ring on the collar.

**Walking:** Walk the goats on their left side. Hold the lead rope firmly in both hands. Never wrap the rope around your hands or other body parts as this could cause you harm if the goat suddenly runs. The goats are normally well behaved and should walk next to the handler. The goats are strong and sometimes they pull hard if spooked or want to get grass or other food items. You must be able to keep control of the animal in case it pulls by planting your feet firmly and holding them strongly. Goats should only be allowed to walk on paved pathways to minimize distractions and should not be allowed to eat during walks but can be allowed to graze at the end of the walk as a reward.

**Behavioral Considerations:** Goats may become agitated and continue to pull hard on their lead, head-butt the handler, or bite. If they become agitated and unwilling to walk properly, the handler should consider shortening the length of the walk.

## **Sheep (Ruby):**

**Harnessing:** Separate sheep into a porch or stall before placing halters on. Once they are separated from the other barn animals, allow sheep to approach you and sniff halter. Slowly slide the halter's nose piece into place and secure the crown piece around the back of the head and behind their ears. Make sure halter is secure and tighten as needed. Attach the lead rope to the steel ring on the halter below the animal's chin.

**Walking:** Never wrap the rope around your hand or other body parts as this could cause you harm if the sheep suddenly runs. Although they may begin to walk behind you, walk the sheep from their left side as they get more comfortable. The sheep should only be allowed to walk on paved pathways to minimize distractions and should not be allowed to eat during walks but can be allowed to graze at the end of the walk as a reward.

**Behavioral Considerations:** The sheep may become agitated and not want to walk properly; if this happens the handler should consider shortening the length of the walk.