

# **Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries**



Global Federation of  
Animal Sanctuaries

## **Standards For Felid Sanctuaries**

**Version:**

**December, 2019**

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# INTRODUCTION

## GFAS PRINCIPLES

The Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) will designate an organization as “verified” or “accredited” based upon its substantial compliance with the standards listed below. GFAS recognizes that some organizations under consideration will operate valid rescue and rehabilitation programs with a goal of releasing wildlife to the wild pursuant to IUCN and/or other international or national standards. For those animals, lifetime sanctuary care may not be part of the organization’s mission. While the care for these animals may be provided on an interim basis only, the organization is still expected to meet the standards below with regard to all animals in its care and for purposes of these standards it will be identified as a “sanctuary.”

Consistent with GFAS’ philosophy and the standards below, it is expected that a sanctuary does not adopt policy positions that are in opposition to the welfare of the species of animals in the care of the sanctuary (for example, while it is not required that a primate sanctuary affirmatively promote a policy against laboratory research using primates, it should not promote a policy in favor of such research).

Note: Several standards make reference to a sanctuary’s “Director.” GFAS recognizes that a sanctuary may use a different title, and the term “Director” is intended to reference the sanctuary’s Sanctuary Director, who may be called an Executive Director or Chief Executive Officer, etc.

GFAS also recognizes that sanctuaries may rely on volunteers for certain functions, including some aspects of animal care (such as food preparation). Standards referencing “staff” may take into account appropriately qualified and trained volunteers as well as employees.

Appendix I of this document provides further guidance/suggestions on facility design and felid care. These are not requirements but rather provide sanctuaries with access to knowledge gained from experience at other sanctuaries/felid care facilities.

## ANIMALS COVERED BY THESE STANDARDS

### Family / Genus

This taxonomic group is represented in sanctuaries by native and exotic cat species and includes first generation hybrids at the size of the largest parent.

The Felid family definitions for the purpose of this document:

- Small felids (adult weight under 20 lbs (9.1 kg)).
- Medium felids (adult weight 20 lbs (9.1k) to 60 lbs (27.2 kg)).
- Large felids (adult weight over 60 lbs (27.2 kg)).

<b>Genus</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>Common names</b>	<b>Taxonomic Synonym(s)</b>	<b>GFAS size</b>
<i>Acinonyx</i>	<i>jubatus</i>	Cheetah, hunting leopard		L
<i>Caracal</i>	<i>aurata</i>	African golden cat	<i>Felis aurata</i> <i>Profelis aurata</i>	M
<i>Caracal</i>	<i>caracal</i>	Caracal, desert lynx	<i>Lynx caracal</i> <i>Felis caracal</i>	M
<i>Felis</i>	<i>chaus</i>	Jungle cat, reed cat, swamp cat		S
<i>Felis</i>	<i>margarita</i>	Sand cat		S

<b>Genus</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>Common names</b>	<b>Taxonomic Synonym(s)</b>	<b>GFAS size</b>
<i>Felis</i>	<i>nigripes</i>	Black-footed cat, small spotted cat		S
<i>Felis</i>	<i>silvestris</i>	Wild cat		S
<i>Leopardus</i>	<i>colocolo</i>	Pampas cat	<i>Lynchailurus colocolo</i> <i>Oncifelis colocolo</i>	S
<i>Leopardus</i>	<i>geoffroyi</i>	Geoffroy's cat	<i>Oncifelis geoffroyi</i>	S
<i>Leopardus</i>	<i>guigna</i>	Guíña, Chilean cat, Kodkod	<i>Oncifelis guigna</i>	S
<i>Leopardus</i>	<i>jacobita</i>	Andean cat, mountain cat	<i>Felis jacobita</i> <i>Oreailurus jacobita</i> <i>Oreailurus jacobitus</i>	S
<i>Leopardus</i>	<i>pardalis</i>	Ocelot		M
<i>Leopardus</i>	<i>tigrinus</i>	Oncilla, little spotted cat		S
<i>Leopardus</i>	<i>Wiedii</i>	Margay, tree ocelot		S
<i>Leptailurus</i>	<i>Serval</i>	Serval	<i>Caracal serval</i>	M
<i>Lynx</i>	<i>canadensis</i>	North American lynx Canada lynx		M
<i>Lynx</i>	<i>lynx</i>	Eurasian lynx		M
<i>Lynx</i>	<i>pardinus</i>	Iberian lynx, Spanish lynx		M
<i>Lynx</i>	<i>rufus</i>	Bobcat, bay lynx		S
<i>Neofelis</i>	<i>diardi</i>	Sunda clouded leopard		M
<i>Neofelis</i>	<i>nebulosa</i>	Clouded leopard		M
<i>Otocolobus</i>	<i>manul</i>	Pallas' cat, Manul		S
<i>Panthera</i>	<i>leo</i>	Lion		L
<i>Panthera</i>	<i>tigris</i>	Tiger		L
<i>Panthera</i>	<i>onca</i>	Jaguar		L
<i>Panthera</i>	<i>pardus</i>	Leopard		L
<i>Panthera</i>	<i>uncial</i>	Snow leopard, Ounce	<i>Uncia uncia</i>	L
<i>Pardofelis</i>	<i>badia</i>	Bay cat, Borneo bay cat, Bornean marbled cat		S
<i>Pardofelis</i>	<i>marmorata</i>	Marbled cat		S
<i>Pardofelis</i>	<i>temminckii</i>	Asiatic golden cat, Temminck's cat	<i>Catopuma temminckii</i>	S
<i>Prionailurus</i>	<i>bengalensis</i>	Leopard cat		S
<i>Prionailurus</i>	<i>planiceps</i>	Flat-headed cat		S
<i>Prionailurus</i>	<i>rubiginosis</i>	Rusty-spotted cat		S
<i>Prionailurus</i>	<i>viverrinus</i>	Fishing cat		S
<i>Puma</i>	<i>concolor</i>	Puma, cougar, mountain lion		L
<i>Puma</i>	<i>yagouaroundi</i>	Jaguarundi, Eyra cat	<i>Herpailurus yagouaroundi</i>	S

### Version Updates:

New and Updated content released on February 2015

- G-1 Nonprofit/ Non-Commercial Status, P-3 Disposition Ethics and Responsibility, P-4 Disposition of Live Felids, P-5 Euthanasia

New and Changed content released on July 2015

- V-7 Breeding/Contraception – section a.



New and amended content released April, 2025

- W-7 Animal Transport

# FELID STANDARDS

GFAS notes that there may be other acceptable ways of meeting the intent of each standard, aside from those detailed below, and that in some instances there may be legal, cultural or other significant barriers to meeting GFAS requirements. The standards are considered mandatory, but GFAS will consider specific exceptions to some of the listed requirements (e.g., exact enclosure size, manner of record keeping, legal requirements that impact a sanctuary's acquisition policy, etc.). GFAS encourages sanctuaries to offer feedback on the standards and to explain any reasons why it believes it cannot meet a particular standard, or why the standard is not applicable and/or appropriate to its situation. Sanctuaries are also welcome to indicate a timeline for meeting a standard if the standard is not yet met at the time of application for accreditation or for verification.

The exceeding of the standards is encouraged. In addition to meeting these standards, an organization is expected to comply with all applicable international, national, state/province, and local laws and regulations.

## FELID HOUSING

### **H-1 Types of Space and Size**

**Unless otherwise directed by a veterinarian, felids are provided sufficient opportunity and space to move about freely and rapidly, and to exercise choice in location so as to reduce stress and maintain good physical condition.**

#### **General**

- a. The habitat and living conditions are species appropriate and replicate, in as much as possible, the felids' wild habitat with a balance between hygiene and the species' physiological and psychological needs. This includes adequate space, both vertical and horizontal, and appropriate space, in terms of diversity and complexity.
- b. The physical space provides varied opportunities for the felids to interact with the environment and key elements are changed often, resulting in a dynamic living space.
- c. Housing requirements all include a double entry system so that there are two doors/barriers between the (animals) and escape at all times. The two doors/barriers are never open at the same time for the protection of sanctuary animals and the safety of staff and the public when dangerous animals are housed. (See S-6 for additional safety requirements.)
- d. Felids are provided access to as many areas of the enclosures as possible, except during staff maintenance activities, unless security concerns dictate otherwise. All enclosures interconnect without creating 'dead ends' to allow for freedom of movement of subordinate individuals.
- e. Outdoor enclosures are either covered, with minimum height to allow for natural behaviors, or open roofed, with cantilever angle, hotwire or sufficient height to prevent escape (see Housing Dimensions for appropriate measurements).
- f. The habitat provides appropriate visual, olfactory, and acoustic barriers.
- g. The habitat provides security from predators and unauthorized human access.

**Open Space Settings**

- h. Open space settings have enough acreage per animal to accommodate natural individual and group activities. Particular attention is paid to vertical aspects of the environment of arboreal species, allowing for more natural behaviors.
- i. Where open space settings are the primary enclosure, two other areas may also be provided:
  - Indoor day/night rooms or other means of providing night housing and secure shelter during inclement and extreme weather. This space also provides alternate housing for sick or injured individuals while in close proximity to the social group.
  - Shift yards for use while the primary enclosure is serviced and/or for animal management needs including introduction of new individuals to a group, or temporary separation for health or social reasons. Shift yards should be accessible from indoor housing with a minimum of one door to the main enclosure.

**Controlled access settings**

- j. While not as extensive as an open space setting, in controlled access areas ideally three enclosures are also provided: outdoor enclosures as the primary living space; indoor day/night rooms; and a shift yard or lock out.

**Dimensions**

- k. Many factors influence the minimum space required for a group or pair of felids, including, but not limited to: group size, group composition, and enclosure complexity. The following guidelines are minimum recommendations. Facilities should provide as much space as is possible and/or practical. Sanctuaries meeting only the minimum requirements for enclosure space employ additional environmental enrichment, focusing on physical and mental exercise rather than food, to compensate for reduced space and complexity.
- l. Outdoor enclosure for felids should have a minimum of 600 sq. ft. (55.7 sq. m) per pair of compatible small felids, 900 sq. ft. (83.6 sq. m) per pair of compatible medium sized felids and 1,200 sq. ft. (111.5 sq. m) per pair of compatible large felids.
  - For each additional felid add 50% more floor space.
  - Solitary species enclosures meet the minimum for a pair of similar sized felids.
  - Minimum height of 8 ft. (2.4 m) for small felids and 12 ft. (3.7 m) for medium and large felids.
    - Top is covered with mesh of the same strength as cage walls.
      - If sufficiently high (i.e. 16 ft. (4.9m) for lion and tiger or 8ft. (2.4m) for cheetah) above the nearest footfall, and constructed in such a way as to prevent escape (i.e. using an overhang or hotwire) a roof is not needed for these species.
  - Enclosure shape may be variable to take in natural features in the landscape such as rock formations, hills and trees.
  - Space includes a minimum of one (1) animal transfer door leading to the indoor enclosure.
- m. Indoor enclosures for felids have a minimum floor space of 10 ft. x 24 ft. (3.05 m X 7.3 m) for large felids and 6 ft. x 12 ft. (1.8 m X 3.7 m) for small to medium felids with a minimum vertical dimension of 8 ft. (2.4 m).
  - If indoor areas are used only for medical recovery, the felids are transported in secure crates between the hospital and their home cage

- For cats under the direct care and supervision of the attending veterinarian, temporary housing that is smaller, in order to accommodate healing or treatment, may be permissible but vet records reflect this need on a case by case basis.
  - Where multiple rooms are used, these rooms interconnect without creating 'dead ends' to allow for freedom of movement for subordinate individuals.
  - Include a minimum of one transfer door to an outdoor enclosure.
- n. Shift yards for felids are a minimum of 400 sq. ft. (37.2 sq. m) for small and medium felids and 600 sq. ft. (55.7 sq. m) for large felids.
- A minimum vertical dimension of 8 ft. (2.4 m) for small to medium felids and 12 ft. (3.7 m) for large felids.
    - Top is covered with mesh of the same strength as cage walls.
    - If sufficiently high (i.e. 16 ft. (4.9m) for lion and tiger or 8ft. (2.4m) for cheetah) above the nearest footfall, and constructed in such a way as to prevent escape (i.e. using an overhang or hotwire) a roof is not needed for these species.
    - It is recommended that this include a minimum of two (2) doors to indoor enclosures to prevent dominant individuals from blocking access to shade, sun, food, other desired space, social partners or enrichment items.

**Indoor Housing** provides year-round protection from the elements. For sanctuaries located in northern climates (where freezing temperatures occur regularly during any part of the year and temperate or tropical species are housed), indoor space is insulated and is large enough to allow for all forms of species-specific behavior (running, climbing, etc.).

## **H-2 Containment**

### **Felids are safely contained.**

#### **General**

- a. Other than when being transported or for medical reasons, felids are kept at all times in secure enclosures or other appropriate areas.
- b. Enclosures are designed to allow for felids' normal defense reactions and appropriate 'flight' or escape distances.
- c. All enclosures are designed, constructed and maintained to securely contain felids and to present no likelihood of harm to them.
- d. Distance or barriers between felids and between enclosures and personnel is sufficient to minimize stress to the felids, as well as reduce the risk of disease transmission.
- e. Enclosures are designed to allow for proper, safe cleaning and drainage.
- f. Materials are appropriate for their particular application and are maintained in good repair.
- g. A regular program of sanctuary maintenance is in place.

#### **Outdoor Enclosures**

- h. Perimeter containment of outdoor areas is constructed so as to prevent digging under the barrier by native wildlife, domestic species and the enclosure residents.

- i. Fences and enclosures are inspected daily for signs of digging. Where fencing meets hard surfaces such as rock or concrete, the fencing is securely anchored in place.

### **Fencing**

- j. Barbed or razor wire are not used to contain felids.
- k. The supporting posts for fences are firmly fixed into the ground.
- l. Fence material is sufficiently secured to supporting posts in such a way that the weight of the felids could not detach it from the support nor dislodge the supporting posts.
- m. Gates and doors are at least as strong, and as effective, in containing the felids as the rest of the enclosure barriers. In particular gates and doors are designed and maintained so as to prevent animals from lifting them from their hinges or unfastening the securing device.
- n. Gaps at gates, posts and other places do not exceed 1 in. (25.4 mm) for small to medium felids and 2 in. (50.8 mm) for large felids. Gaps are designed to prevent paws, ears and tails from becoming trapped and paws from reaching into adjacent areas that contain animals.
- o. In facilities with multiple cages, common fence lines are avoided but where they exist they are wrapped in mesh small enough to prevent paws, ears and tails from reaching into adjacent cages.
- p. Dimensions
  - A maximum dimension of 2 in. x 2 in. (50.8 mm X 50.8 mm) for small felids, 3 in. x 3 in. (101.6 mm X 101.6 mm) for medium felids and 4 in. X 4 in. (101.6 X 152.4 mm) for large felids is recommended for chain link fence or wire mesh.
  - Fencing of 12-gauge chain link or wire mesh is recommended for small to medium felids and 9-gauge chain link or wire mesh is recommended for large felids.
- q. Where caregivers must work near enclosure fencing, for example at transfer doors, a protective barrier, such as lexan, plexiglas or fine mesh fencing may be installed to prevent animal contact with the staff.

### **Solid Barriers.**

Solid barriers such as concrete block, poured concrete and artificial rock can be used as the sole method of containment or in conjunction with other types of barrier.

Walls are secured in appropriate footings to ensure wall stability, and are of sufficient strength to anchor caging and furniture.

Contours in artificial rock are used to create elevated perches for large felids. Jump distance is considered when perches are provided in barrier walls.

- Care is taken, especially with artificial rock, to ensure that contours in the rock do not provide escape routes from the enclosure.

Height of the wall is the same as that for fences when measured above the nearest secure footfall.

Design of areas using solid walls allows for sufficient air flow throughout an enclosure.

### **Moats**

Water moats, if used, take into account the strong swimming capability of most felids. Rescue equipment is readily available at the moat area in the event a human falls in the water.

- There is a management plan for regions where water moats may freeze.

- The moat does not serve as the primary source of drinking water. Acceptable water quality parameters are established and moat water is monitored on a regular basis.
- Moats are designed to allow felids who go into the water to escape

Moats have an escape route built in to allow felids who fall into the moat back into their enclosure.

Moats are a minimum of 18 ft. (5.5 m) wide for small and medium felids, 25 ft. (7.6m) for large felids, and have a smooth, non-climbable surface for at least the top 9 ft. (4.7 m).

- Water moats are deep enough to prevent the animal achieving a foot purchase on the bottom that might aid escape, and the external wall of the moat is sufficiently high above water level to prevent an animal climbing over it.

Moats are surrounded by fences, walls, hedges or shrubbery, to prevent others from approaching too close to the edge.

Dry moats are accessible by skid steer or similar small tractor to repair erosion or grade issues to meet other service or repair needs in the enclosure.

Animal caregivers have safe and easy access to dry moats.

### **Indoor Enclosures and Shift Yards**

A maximum dimension of 2 in. x 2 in. (50.8 mm X 50.8 mm) for mesh is recommended for small felids, 3 in. x 3in (101.6mm x 101.6 mm) for medium felids and 4in. x 4in. (152.4mm x 152.4mm) for large felids.

Vertical height is at least 8 ft. (2.4m)

Solid walls may be used, as described above, in conjunction with other types of barrier.

A maximum mesh size of 1 in. x 1 in. (25.4 mm X 25.4 mm) is recommended where mesh separates adjacent cages. Woven wire mesh is recommended. A transparent barrier such as Plexiglas or lexan may be used where caregivers must work in close proximity to cage mesh.

Gaps at gates, posts and other places do not exceed 1 in. (25.4 mm) for small to medium felids or 2 in. (50.8 mm) for large felids and are designed to prevent paws, ears and tails from reaching into adjacent areas that contain animals.

Walls are of sufficient strength to anchor caging and furniture.

Design of areas using solid walls allows for sufficient air flow throughout the enclosure.

Solid concrete or concrete block walls are sealed to make them impervious to contaminants and pathogens.

## **H-3 Ground and Plantings**

**Ground cover indoors and out is healthy for felids. Plantings are appropriate and safe.**

### **Vegetation**

- a. Any vegetation capable of harming felids is kept out of reach.
- b. Trees within or near animal enclosures are regularly inspected, trimmed or felled as necessary to avoid great felids being harmed by falling branches, toxicity, or trauma.
- c. Trees and climbing plants are pruned to prevent their aiding felid escape.

- d. Any natural materials (e.g., plants and their products, such as seeds or fruit) are assessed for toxicity to the species held before use.

### **Outdoor enclosures**

- e. All outdoor enclosures have a natural substrate consistent with the site.
- The substrate can be amended with organic materials, including but not limited to soils, sand, leaf litter, bark mulch, grasses, straw and hay.
  - Substrate is provided in sufficient amount/depth to cushion falls from perches or climbing structures.
  - The substrate drains well.
- f. Climbing felid species are provided with appropriate three-dimensional environments to accommodate an array of locomotory and foraging behaviors, as well as appropriate sleeping and resting areas, including nesting and bedding materials.
- g. Felid species who naturally dig and root are provided with suitable substrates, nesting and bedding as species appropriate.
- h. Where natural topography of an enclosure is not varied, it is created through the addition of natural and placed elements.
- i. Trees and shrubs are checked regularly and trimmed as necessary to ensure that growth does not allow escape from open-top enclosures.
- j. Access to very tall trees is limited by electric wires, barriers etc in enclosures housing climbing species.

### **Indoor enclosures**

- k. All indoor enclosures have a non-slip concrete floor and, provided adequate septic service is present, are sloped to a drain.
- l. For new construction, the indoor area is designed to accommodate a deep litter substrate.
- Deep litter enclosures are designed to allow appropriate litter depth and drainage for proper functioning.
  - Litter is properly spot-cleaned and maintained.
- m. Existing construction ensures that all floors are sealed.
- n. Bedding materials are provided in sufficient amount/depth to prevent contact with the concrete.
- Bedding material suitable for use includes, but is not limited to, bark mulch, leaf litter, wood wool, straw hay, shredded paper and wood shavings.
- o. All felids are observed regularly for signs of illness that may be related to ingestion of foreign objects, including wood shavings, bark mulch or other materials that may pose a hazard.

### **Shift yards**

- p. All outdoor shift yards have a minimum of 50% of the surface area in natural substrate. The remaining 50% may be concrete as appropriate for drainage, sanitation and structural needs.
- q. The substrate can be amended with organic materials including, but not limited to, soils, sand, leaf litter, bark mulch, grasses, straw and hay. The substrate drains well.

- r. Bedding materials are provided in sufficient amount/depth to prevent direct contact with any concrete surfaces.
- s. Shift yards for digging species are secured with buried fencing or a poured concrete pad or apron.

## **H-4 Transfer Doors**

**Felid enclosure transfer doors are appropriately designed to ensure both animal and human health and safety.**

### **General**

- a. Animal transfer doors are a key element of facility design.
- b. Doors are designed to allow transport crates to safely attach to them.
  - Transport crates should be able to be moved in and out of the enclosure through the transfer doors.
- c. Transfer doors are designed to remain functional under all circumstances and are maintained in good working order and free from any encumbrances that may prevent opening and closing.
- d. Doors are designed to allow caregiver view of enclosures while operating the doors.
- e. Minimum dimensions of transfer doors are such that felids can leap through the opening without hitting the top or sides.
- f. Transfer doors for large felids are located at ground level.
- g. Doors are designed such that people are out of view when felids are being shifted. If not, no eye contact is made with the felids going through the doors.
- h. Doors and door hardware are properly maintained to ensure proper functioning.

### **Security**

- i. Transfer doors and their frames are constructed of materials similar in strength to those used in the primary enclosure.
- j. Doors are lockable in both the open and closed positions.
- k. For pneumatic or hydraulic doors, pneumatic or hydraulic pressure is sufficient for keeping doors in the open position. A mechanical lock is, however, in place to lock the door in the closed position.
- l. Particular attention is given to preventing hay/shavings from affecting door mechanisms.

### **Animal Safety**

- m. Doors operated via remote control are visible from the control area.
- n. Guillotine doors are not recommended due to risk of animal injury. If used, a backup system should be in place to prevent door from free falling due to mechanical failure or operator error.
- o. Hydraulic systems use peanut or other food-grade oils to prevent risks to the felids in the event of leakage.

- p. Hydraulic and pneumatic door systems include backup systems to allow for door usage in the event of equipment failure.

#### **User Safety**

- q. If door handles or locking mechanisms are in close proximity to the enclosure, a solid barrier is present to protect the user.
- r. Double door systems are used to prevent escape from felid holding areas.
- s. See also Standard S-6 General Staff Safety.

### **H-5 Shelter**

**Felids have access to man-made shelter that provides each individual with protection from extreme weather (including, but not limited to, prevailing wind, snow, sleet, rain, sun, and temperature extremes).**

- a. Felids have space to seek refuge from sun, wind, inclement weather and enclosure mates.
- b. Shelter does not create or result in 'dead ends' in which individuals can be trapped by other group members.
- c. Shade and shelter are provided in multiple locations within enclosures to ensure that all felids have access to shade throughout the day.
- d. Shade and shelter can be created through natural and artificial means including hollow logs, rock overhangs, underground dens, den boxes, shade trees and shade fabric.
- e. Shelter areas provide dry space during wet weather, as well as protection from wind.
- f. If more than 2 felids are housed together, shelter design does not result in dead ends in which subordinate individuals can be trapped by dominant animals.

### **H-6 Enclosure Furniture**

**Felids are provided with an appropriately complex and rich habitat to explore, to ensure the animals' physical, nutritional and stimulation needs are met.**

#### **General**

- a. Enclosures are equipped in accordance with the needs of the felids with bedding material, water features, den/hide boxes, appropriate substrate, vegetation and other enrichment materials designed to aid and encourage normal behavior patterns and minimize any abnormal behavior.
- b. Appropriate complexity is provided through the use of various natural and artificial materials in the enclosure, using a combination of items including, but not limited to, those listed above.
- c. The date that items are placed in an enclosure is noted, and items are removed when they become soiled, damaged or novelty has diminished.
- d. Climbing felid species are provided access to the vertical space available within the enclosures.

### **Outdoor Enclosures**

- e. Plantings - All outdoor enclosures for felids include living or fresh vegetation, which can provide visual barriers, shade and resting sites.
  - All plant materials in an enclosure are evaluated for potential toxicity, including leaves, buds, seeds, fruit, bark and flowers.
  - Enclosures may also be planted with grasses, shrubs etc. that the felids do not tend eat, and in sufficient quantities to survive spraying by the felids.
  - Shrubs and vines are checked daily to ensure they do not provide an opportunity for animal escape from the enclosure.
- f. Trees - Key shade trees within an outdoor enclosure are identified and protected from damage.
  - Trees that may be used as an escape route are identified, pruned or removed; or means to prevent felids from accessing them have been identified, taking into account the jump distance of the felid species housed.
  - Key shade trees in an enclosure are protected from bark damage from scratching, particularly where large felids are housed.
  - Health of trees close to fence lines is checked regularly and any removed if there is fear of it coming down on fence line.
- g. Topography - Varied topography provides visual barriers, increased enclosure complexity and varied elevations, and can be achieved using naturally occurring topography at a selected construction site or through addition of soils, culverts, rocks, logs etc.
  - Horizontal and vertical jump distance is considered when developing enclosure topography.
  - Natural locomotion and behavioral patterns of the species housed are considered in enclosure design.
  - Enclosure design ensures that no dead ends exist where subordinate felids may be trapped by more dominant animals.
- h. Visual barriers can be used to avoid confrontation or aggression, and include climbing structures, fallen logs, culvert pipes, walls, shade structures, topography and large enrichment items.
- i. Climbing structures accommodate natural locomotion patterns for the species housed. When multiple species are housed together, climbing structures created specifically for each species' unique needs are provided. Metal pipe is not used to construct climbers as it becomes dangerously hot in summer sun and can damage skin during cold weather. Climbing structures should be accessible by staff for routine sanitation, repairs and updates and should include:
  - horizontal and vertical elements and ensure that sufficient pathways exist throughout the enclosure so subordinate individuals do not reach 'dead ends' in the enclosure;
  - locations and/or mechanisms to provide enrichment above ground level;
  - resting platforms or perches and handholds of varying size that large and small animals can securely grasp for support;
  - a minimum of 50% of total climber space designed to allow access by individuals of all ages and physical capabilities;
  - soft substrate such as soil, bedding material, mulch or leaf litter is installed below climbers to minimize risk of injuries from falls, especially to youngsters and older individuals.
- j. Pools or comparable water sources are available for tigers, jaguars, and other fishing felids or other species who enjoy getting into water in very hot weather. Permanent pool structures have an

adequate filtration system to maintain institutional water quality parameters or are designed to allow easy draining, cleaning and refilling at suitable intervals to ensure water remains potable.

- In excessive heat, fountains and misters may also be used to cool the air.
- In the absence of a pool structure, large stock water tanks can be substituted. However, care is taken to ensure proper drainage of tanks for cleaning and that standing water or marshy areas do not result within the enclosure.
- Felids are able to safely and freely enter and exit the pool. All ages and levels of fitness are accommodated. Ramps and surrounds are non-slip.

k. Perching

- Horizontal perching areas and platforms are provided to allow resting, sleep, social behavior and feeding above ground.
- Placement of perches or platforms includes consideration for access to animals for close observation, medication or training sessions.
- Perches and benches are accessible to staff for cleaning.

l. Other Materials

- Ropes are secured at both ends with sufficient tension to prevent an animal from becoming entangled. Frayed portions of rope are removed immediately.
- Logs are placed and secured in a manner that prevents rolling or falling onto animals.

**Indoor Enclosures**

- m. To the greatest extent possible, all visual barriers, climbing structures and perching surfaces meet outdoor enclosure criteria.
- n. Indoor furniture is constructed of materials that can be sanitized or easily replaced when they become overly soiled. Furniture is accessible to staff for routine cleaning and repair.
- o. Benches, perches, and other structures allow for climbing and for sleeping above ground level as species appropriate.
- p. Logs for scratching are provided when felids are routinely housed indoors overnight.

**Shift yards**

- q. To the greatest extent possible shift yards meet outdoor enclosure criteria for plantings, trees, topography, visual barriers, climbing structures, perching surfaces and materials used.

## **H-7 Sanitation**

**Proper sanitation is practiced to reduce pathogen transmission.**

**General**

- a. Local, county, state laws regarding proper waste removal are observed.
- b. Where possible, felids are transferred from enclosures prior to cleaning, disinfection and/or sanitizing.

- c. As fomites (shoes, clothing, etc. which carry infectious materials) may be a source of zoonotic disease, all who may come in contact with such materials are made aware of these risks and trained accordingly. (See also Standard V-8, “Zoonotic Disease Program”).
- d. Uneaten perishable food is removed within a timeframe appropriate for the type of foodstuff and size of enclosure, prior to molding or contamination.

### **Removal of Animal Waste**

- e. Animal waste is removed from the habitat as often as necessary to prevent contamination of the felids contained therein, to minimize disease hazards and to reduce odors. This also enables caregivers to collect fecal samples in a timely manner.
- f. Soiled bedding material and substrate are removed and replaced with fresh materials daily, or as needed to prevent buildup. If odorous, bedding is changed regardless of how long in place.
- g. Damaged and soiled enrichment items are removed daily, or as soon as the felids allow access to the area.
- h. Efforts are made to prevent native wildlife getting access to waste.

### **Tools**

- i. Each enclosure has dedicated tools to prevent cross contamination between enclosures. When resources restrict the ability to have dedicated tools, tools are disinfected between enclosures to prevent the spread of parasites and disease.
- j. Tools are labeled when use is restricted to specific areas.
- k. Sanitation tools or equipment, including wheelbarrows, are not used for transport or storage of foodstuffs or bedding.

### **Cleaning and Disinfection**

- l. Feeding areas, automatic water devices, water and food containers are cleaned and disinfected daily.
- m. Care is taken to minimize overspray of waste, directly or via aerosolizing, into adjacent cages during cleaning.
- n. Animals are not present in enclosures being cleaned using power hoses. Care is taken to prevent accidental spraying of animals in adjacent enclosures when power hoses are used for cleaning.
- o. Concrete floored enclosures are dried with a squeegee, and as needed fans, to ensure floors are dry before bedding material is replaced.
- p. All hard surfaces including walls, floors, ceiling, benches, climbing structures, cage mesh and caregiver work areas are sanitized regularly to the extent possible. Note that in large outside enclosures with plenty of exposure to sunshine and rain, there may not be a need for scrubbing and cleaning but areas must be monitored for potential sanitation problems.
- q. Cleaning and Disinfection Standard Operating Procedures are developed and followed to address:
  - safe disinfectant use to prevent hazards to the felids, caregivers and the environment;
  - cleaning and disinfecting protocols for food preparation and veterinary care areas using more powerful disinfectants on hard surfaces;
  - daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly cleaning schedules for all hard surfaces including walls, floors, ceiling, benches, cage mesh and staff work areas designed to minimize the risk of disease transmission;

- disinfectants and other cleaning products stored separately from foodstuffs.
- r. A Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) or equivalent is readily available for all cleaning products in use and all containers are properly labeled as to contents.

## **H-8 Temperature, Humidity, Ventilation, Lighting**

**Temperature, humidity, ventilation, and lighting are appropriately addressed.**

### **Temperature**

- a. The temperature is within an acceptable range for the species housed.
  - Weather is considered in addition to temperature.
  - Allowance is made to accommodate individual animals not able to tolerate temperatures above or below the usual range of comfort for the species.
- b. For outdoor enclosures and shift yards, felids have access to heated or cooled areas when ambient temperature falls below 30°F (-1.1°C), adjusted for wind chill, or rises above 85°F (29.4°C) {80°F (26.7°C) for snow leopards and Pallas' cats}. Great caution is taken with elderly, infant and disabled felids.
  - Snow leopards, tigers, Canada and Eurasian lynx, some bobcats and some cougars can tolerate lower temperatures but these species are provided dry, well-bedded shelter during cold weather.
  - Jaguars and clouded leopards have access to heated areas when temperatures drop below 50°F (10°C).
  - Windbreaks are sufficient in number to accommodate all felids simultaneously with consideration for social structure and relationships in a group.
  - Shade is available throughout the day in a number of areas and adequate size space to accommodate all felids simultaneously with consideration for social structure and relationships within a group.
  - Care is taken to prevent direct felid contact with heat sources. Note: Infrared bulbs or 'heat lamps' are not recommended as heat sources due to risks associated with bulb breakage and tissue damage in the felids.
    - Heating blocks/panels, if used, are installed and used so as to ensure they pose no risk to the felids.
- c. For indoor enclosures, an average ambient temperature range of 35°F (1.7°C) and 85°F (29.4°C) is recommended. Indoor temperature for jaguars, clouded leopards and other felids not native to areas where temperatures fall below 50°F (10°C) is maintained at or above 50°F (10°C).
  - Heat can be provided by forced air or hydronic heating systems. Note: Infrared bulbs or heat lamps are not recommended due to risks associated with bulb breakage and tissue damage to the animals.
  - Cool air can be provided by refrigerant air conditioning, "swamp coolers", fans, or misters.
  - Providing felids with opportunities to choose temperature ranges within an enclosure is preferred. This can be achieved by access to areas near heat vents, skylights, or hog warmers for example.
  - Even when ambient temperatures are 'warm', bare concrete floors, especially damp floors, are too cold for many individuals and are not considered suitable substrate or housing for felids.
  - Any climate control systems include back-up power in case of equipment or power failure.

### **Humidity**

- d. Optimal indoor humidity is between 40% and 70%. Humidity should not be kept above 80% in controlled environments to prevent fungal and mold growth. High humidity can be mitigated through proper ventilation or dehumidifier systems.
  - Prolonged periods of very low humidity may negatively affect coat quality in some species.

### **Ventilation**

- e. Proper ventilation of indoor enclosures is critical,
  - In these areas, Heat Recovery Ventilators and Energy Recovery Ventilators can provide fresh outdoor air with minimal heat loss.
- f. Indoor enclosures ideally have a negative air pressure, with regular exchange of non-re-circulated air.
  - A minimum of one complete air exchange per hour is recommended.
  - Where negative air pressure is not used, HEPA filters may be installed to maintain re-circulated air quality.
- g. To the extent possible, separate air handling systems are maintained between animal areas to prevent disease transmission.
- h. Proper window and door placement can ensure sufficient cross-ventilation in warm climates.

### **Lighting**

- i. Light, natural and artificial, is appropriate for the species housed in terms of intensity, spectrum and duration.
- j. Indoor enclosures - Natural lighting is optimal and can be obtained using skylights, windows, roll-up doors and other means. Glass bricks may be considered, taking into account the fact that light intensity will be less than with clear glass.
  - Supplemental lighting is provided to ensure adequate light, both day and night, for caregivers to observe animals, clean enclosures and perform related animal care tasks.
  - When animals are confined indoors overnight, sufficient lighting is used to extend the daylight period to a natural diurnal rhythm for the species housed to allow animals time to eat and select sleeping sites.
- k. Outdoor enclosures and shift yards - Supplemental lighting is available for use in outdoor areas in event of an emergency.

## **NUTRITION REQUIREMENTS**

### **N-1. Water**

**Fresh clean water is available in sufficient quantity.**

#### **Quantity**

- a. Fresh clean water is available at all times to all individuals.
- b. Multiple water sources are available for group-housed felids to ensure high-ranking individuals do not dominate water sources.

### **Quality**

- c. Water quality parameters are maintained at a generally acceptable level for felids in terms of turbidity, salts, etc.
- d. Potable water sources are tested for contaminants annually.
- e. All water sources (including water bowls) are cleaned at least daily, and more often if needed.
- f. If automatic water devices are not used in hot climates, water sources are shaded or changed multiple times to avoid overly hot water.
- g. If automatic water devices are not used, care is taken to ensure bowls are secured such that the felid cannot tip it over, play with it or hide it from view.

### **Automatic Water Devices**

- h. Devices are tested daily to ensure water is available.
- i. Devices are easily disabled when animals must be fasted for medical purposes.
- j. When monitoring of water consumption is required, an alternative means of providing water is devised.
- k. In colder climates, steps are taken (such as installation of heat sources) to ensure water consumption does not decrease with lower ambient air temperatures.

## **N-2. Diet**

**A properly balanced and healthy diet is provided appropriately based on the needs of each felid, following veterinary instructions for special needs.**

### **General**

- a. A veterinarian or qualified nutritionist periodically reviews all aspects of felid diet at the sanctuary.
- b. Diets of individual felids (including vitamin supplementation) are of a quality, quantity and variety to match the physiological and psychological state of the individual as it changes over time, with consideration for the age, life stage, species, condition, and size of the individual.
- c. Food is wholesome, palatable, free from contamination and of sufficient quantity and nutritive value to maintain all felids in good health.
- d. The sanctuary utilizes a feeding regimen that ensures each individual receives adequate nutrition regardless of status in social group.
- e. Where possible and appropriate, each felid's daily dietary needs are documented and made available to animal care staff.
- f. In open space enclosures, routine observation of feeding activity ensures all animals are able to access sufficient food.
- g. Other than commercial diets prepared specifically for felids, only food "fit for human consumption" is fed

### **Animal Protein**

- h. Felids are offered a meat-based diet, preferably prepared diets which are flash frozen, nutritionally balanced with no byproducts, hormones, antibiotics or preservatives.

- i. Muscle meat, chicken or turkey necks are not fed as the sole diet but may be utilized as one component of a balanced diet developed by the veterinarian or nutritionist.
- j. Carefully sourced (see Carcass Feeding below) whole or partial carcasses are also appropriate when adequately balanced and supplemented under the supervision of a veterinarian or animal nutritionist.
- k. Meat products are offered when felids are most active and likely to consume the diet, as they spoil quickly in temperatures above freezing.
- l. Bones can be offered once or twice weekly to felids maintained on commercial prepared diets, as they may be beneficial to dental health. Care is taken to avoid feeding brittle bones that may splinter.
- m. Diets that consist primarily of muscle meat, chicken or turkey necks are not balanced. While these foodstuffs may be fed, they should only be one component of a balanced diet developed by a veterinarian or animal nutritionist.

#### **Carcass Feeding**

- n. Carefully sourced whole carcasses may be offered to felids to mimic their natural diet. If hunted meat is offered, be aware that lead may be present and, if possible, remove it.
- o. Meat from animals that have died from disease, are suspected to have been diseased or sick or have died of unknown causes is not fed.
- p. Animals euthanized with chemical agents are not used for food.

#### **Vitamins/Supplements**

- q. Prior to offering supplemental vitamins, the health and condition of the individual felid, as well as the diet, is reviewed by a nutritionist experienced in felid care and/or the attending veterinarian.

#### **Treats/Enrichment items**

- r. Preferred food items from the basic diet can be reserved for enrichment.
- s. The calories in foods used as enrichment are considered when planning the overall diet.

### **N-3. Food Presentation and Feeding Techniques**

**Food is prepared and presented in a safe and appropriate manner to meet felids health and social needs.**

#### **General**

- a. Feeding and drinking receptacles are placed in positions that minimize the risks of contamination from soiling by the felids themselves, wild birds, rodents and other potentially invasive species.
- b. Food receptacles, where used, are appropriate for the species housed in terms of number, size and placement, and are cleaned daily.
- c. Receptacles for animal food and water are designed to minimize spillage and are not be used for any other purpose.
- d. Feeding chutes or feeding boxes may be used as a means to safely distribute feed. If used, a solid barrier extending several feet in each direction from the opening will reduce the risk of felids injuring staff through mesh wiring.

- e. Food items are placed in stainless steel buckets/bowls or on easily sanitized pads to minimize contamination from urine and feces.
- f. Felids fed a balanced commercial diet are fed a minimum of once daily during the active feeding time of the species housed.
  - Healthy felids may be fasted one day per week, except during cold weather. Bones or other chewing enrichment are provided on fast days. Elderly, very young or thin animals are not fasted.
  - Satiation fed felids, i.e. those given a whole carcass and allowed to eat as much as they choose, may be fasted two to three days per week provided their weight is maintained and they are not overly hungry after the fast. Fasting is limited in cold weather. Elderly, very young, thin or sick animals are not satiation fed.

#### **Feeding Techniques**

- g. Felids are fed individually to avoid aggression and regulate quantity.
- h. Food items are dispersed widely throughout enclosures to reduce or eliminate aggression that results from competition for food resources, especially preferred items.

#### **Diet Changes, Increases or Decreases**

- i. Adjustments made to an already formulated and nutritionally balanced diet are made to the entire diet to ensure continued nutritional balance.
- j. Considerations for diet increase include weight and condition of the felid, food consumption, activity level and other medical or behavioral considerations.
- k. Diet increases or decreases are made in modest increments with animal response to the change assessed for a minimum period before additional changes are made.
- l. Underweight individuals experiencing health or behavioral problems may be separated for supplemental feeding as needed to avoid undesirable weight gain in conspecifics.

### **N-4. Food Storage**

**Food is stored appropriately.**

#### **General**

- a. Separate and secure facilities are provided for proper and hygienic storage of food.
- b. Dry goods are stored in clean, dry storage areas in sealed containers or on pallets. Products are dated and rotated to use oldest stock first, and expired food as well as bags damaged by pests is discarded.
- c. Items frozen for use are dated and labeled, and no frozen items are thawed and refrozen. Items that are not fed frozen are thawed in a refrigerator to minimize risk of spoilage.

### **N-5. Food Handling**

**Food is handled and prepared in an appropriate manner to retain nutritional value, freshness, and freedom from spoilage, invasive species or other forms of contamination.**

**General**

- a. Food is protected against dampness, deterioration, mold, and/or contamination by insects, birds, rodents or other animals.
- b. No food that is spoiled or otherwise contaminated is served.
- c. Diets are prepared in a safe and hygienic manner to reduce the possibility of contamination or spoilage.
- d. Separate cutting boards, utensils and food preparation surfaces are used when meats, fish and produce diets are prepared in a common kitchen area.
- e. Food preparation techniques meet all local, state/province, and national regulations.
- f. Food preparation surfaces are thoroughly cleaned after use.
- g. Staff and volunteers wash hands thoroughly prior to handling food, and wearing gloves during food preparation is recommended.

**VETERINARY CARE****V-1. General Medical Program and Staffing**

**There is a written veterinary medical program, overseen by a veterinarian, with adequate support staff at the Sanctuary, with 24/7 veterinary care available on call.**

- a. The sanctuary has a written veterinary medical program, including long term preventative medical protocols and disease surveillance and containment procedures, that is developed and carried out under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian – the attending veterinarian - who has training or experience in providing medical care for the felids and other species housed at the sanctuary, and who is aware of specific concerns regarding the felids at the sanctuary.
- b. One or more full-time veterinarians specifically concerned with the veterinary medical program is highly recommended for sanctuaries whose budget will support the salaries of such trained personnel. Sanctuaries unable to employ a full-time veterinarian have access to a part-time veterinarian, under a contractual or other similar arrangement, with training and appropriate experience with the felids housed at the sanctuary.
- c. Veterinary care is available 7 days per week and 24 hours per day for the sanctuary on an on-call basis when a veterinarian is not physically on grounds. When the primary veterinarian is unavailable, there are other suitably experienced veterinarians on call.
- d. There are support staff to carry out the following roles: (1) Husbandry (felid caregivers), (2) Technical (medical technologists, veterinary nurses, or individuals trained at the sanctuary), and (3) Clerical. The sanctuary has available properly trained and qualified professional and supporting personnel as necessary to implement these roles.

- e. A staff member is trained to serve as a medical program director, dealing with emergencies until a veterinarian arrives or is reached. He or she is able to direct any restraint of the felids, be responsible for administration of post-surgical care, and be skilled in maintaining appropriate medical records.
- f. Medications are stored appropriately on site, according to label directions. Medications requiring refrigeration are stored separately from food items.

## **V-2. On-Site and Off-Site Veterinary Facilities**

**Veterinary facilities are appropriately located, designed and equipped.**

- a. Any on-site veterinary facility at the sanctuary meets all local and state/province building regulations
- b. Surfaces in the on-site veterinary facility with which felids can come in contact are non-toxic and can be readily disinfected.
- c. The on-site facility is located away from areas of heavy public use to minimize the noise levels for hospitalized felids.
- d. The on-site facility has separate areas for any of the following veterinary functions performed on-site: physical examinations and medical treatments, enclosures for hospitalized felids, sterile surgery, necropsy, medical quarantine, laboratory, radiology and pharmaceuticals storage which includes, when necessary, a safe for narcotics that meets the standards set by applicable regulations (e.g., the Drug Enforcement Administration [DEA] in the United States).
  - Food preparation areas, storage areas and staff locker room/housing with showers are separate from the medical facility.
- e. If the sanctuary does not have an on-site veterinary facility, or only a partially outfitted veterinary facility it has a contract or similar arrangement with a nearby veterinary hospital for off-site treatment as needed. The hospital should have a sterile surgical facility with anesthetic equipment to include radiology equipment, a laboratory, and pharmaceutical storage. If necropsies are performed at the hospital, there is a separate area for necropsies and a separate storage refrigerator for storage of carcasses.
- f. See also Standard V-4 "Clinical Pathology, Surgical, Treatment and Necropsy Facilities."

## **V-3. Preventative Medicine Program**

**The sanctuary has a complete preventative medicine program.**

- a. Appropriate preventative medicine programs are in place to manage all felids, with special attention paid to geriatric animals.
- b. The preventative medicine program includes quarantine procedures, parasite surveillance and control, immunization, contraception, infectious diseases screening, dental prophylaxis, and periodic reviews of diets, husbandry techniques and invasive species control.
- c. When circumstances permit, and as appropriate for the individual animal, an overall examination is performed annually, blood is collected, serum banked as a baseline control and the results are recorded. The attending veterinarian, in consultation with the sanctuary director, determines any schedule for routine physical examinations, including ocular, dental and musculoskeletal assessment, and implements any necessary treatment.
- d. A veterinarian, veterinary technician, or other trained personnel performs regular fecal examinations to look for parasites, protozoa and bacteria (random enclosure sampling is adequate for group-

housed felids). Results are recorded. Fecal examinations are repeated following treatment to evaluate efficacy.

- e. All felids are immunized as recommended by the attending veterinarian, using currently recommended procedures and products as appropriate for the country, species and individual. Where possible, killed vaccines are utilized to minimize the potential for adverse reactions. Schedules and products are dictated by the disease status of domestic and wild animals in the area surrounding the sanctuary and relevant local and national laws.
- f. When felids are immunized, the type, serial number, and source of product are recorded in the individual animal's medical record.

#### **V-4. Clinical Pathology, Surgical, Treatment and Necropsy Facilities**

**Clinical pathology, surgical facilities and services, medical treatment for sanctuary felids and necropsy are all high quality, humane, professional, legal, and safe.**

##### **Clinical Pathology**

- a. Diagnostic laboratory services are available on- or off-site to assist with the examination of felids and the diagnosis of disease.
- b. Diagnostic capabilities include cytology, microbiology, parasitology, complete blood count, blood chemistry, urinalysis, serology and other appropriate laboratory procedures.

##### **Surgical**

- c. The sanctuary has access to surgical facilities (either on-site or at a nearby veterinary hospital) that are clean, free from excessive noise and unnecessary pedestrian traffic, have adequate lighting, ventilation, and temperature controls, and that can be easily cleaned and disinfected. For sanctuaries utilizing off-site aseptic surgical facilities, an on-site area that can be adapted for occasional or emergency aseptic surgical use is available.
- d. Surgical facilities have access to appropriate anesthetics including injectable and inhalant anesthetics, reversal agents, etc. Where gas anesthetic equipment, including scavenger units, is used equipment is cleaned and calibrated and filters are replaced, annually at a minimum. Gas cylinders are safely stored and replaced regularly.
- e. Facilities have sterilized surgical packs, surgical preparation solutions, intravenous fluids, fluid administration equipment, pulse oximetry, heart monitoring equipment (e.g. electrocardiogram, stethoscope), and emergency drugs on-site with appropriate maintenance and/or replacement schedules for each.
- f. Surgical facilities have access to gas anesthesia equipment with a gas scavenging system and oxygen, sterilized surgical packs, surgical preparation solutions, intravenous fluids, fluid administration equipment, pulse oximetry, heart monitoring equipment (e.g. electrocardiogram, stethoscope), and emergency drugs.
- g. If on-site, the sanctuary ensures that surgical equipment is maintained in good working order and is on a program of routine preventive maintenance.
- h. Only a licensed veterinarian performs surgery, using standard operating procedures. (Note: A veterinary technician appropriately trained by a veterinarian in states or provinces where such action is permitted by veterinary practice acts can perform surgical first aid.)
- i. The veterinarian uses aseptic surgical procedures whenever applicable.

- j. Veterinarians and support personnel are compassionate and knowledgeable about the humane aspects of felid treatment, including the proper use of anesthetics, analgesics, and tranquilizers.
- k. Surgical incisions are observed daily, or as frequently as possible while minimizing stress to the felids, for signs of dehiscence or infection. Analgesics are administered post-operatively when appropriate.

#### **Treatment**

- l. Medications are maintained and used in accordance with local, state/province, and national laws and regulations and are administered in accordance with the state veterinary practice act, or equivalent outside the US.
- m. The sanctuary has a pharmacy on-site where routinely used drugs, such as emergency resuscitative medications, antibiotics, anthelmintics, fluids, anesthetics, analgesics, tranquilizers, etc. are maintained.
- n. All medications are purchased, prescribed and administered under the guidance of the veterinarian.
- o. When distributed to felid caregivers, medications are properly labeled and packaged, with the contents identified and instructions for the amount, frequency and duration of administration as well as the name and identification of the primate to receive the medication, the expiration date of the medication, prescribing doctor and number of refills if any.
- p. All medical treatments and drug prescriptions are documented in the felid's medical record.
- q. Basic physical capture and restraint equipment to facilitate medical treatment is available at the sanctuary.

#### **Necropsy**

- r. Whenever possible, there is an isolated area on the grounds for performing necropsies, or appropriate storage facilities until the deceased felid can be transported to a facility for a postmortem examination as soon as possible, understanding that necropsies performed longer than 24 hours after death be of limited value due to autolysis. (Note: Any refrigerated area for holding dead felids is physically separate from live primate holding, treatment, and surgery areas and from food supply storage or preparation areas.)
- s. Disposition of dead felids and their parts meet all legal restrictions.
- t. Dead specimens not used are incinerated or disposed of as deemed suitable by the veterinarian in accordance with local, state/province and national regulations.

### **V-5. Quarantine and Isolation of Felids**

#### **Appropriate quarantine and isolation policies and accommodations are in place and utilized.**

- u. Upon arrival, all felids undergo quarantine for a minimum of 30-60 days or according to the protocol established by the attending veterinarian, or for a greater period if required by applicable law. The quarantine period should be longer (at least 60-90 days) for those felids that have received minimal screening prior to arrival, such as felids from the wild. Felids previously housed together may be quarantined together.
- v. If the sanctuary does not have an adequate quarantine facility, steps should be taken to have felids undergo quarantine under these guidelines prior to their arrival.

- w. Local, state/province, or national regulations regarding quarantine of newly arrived felids are followed.
- x. All utensils and outer clothing used in quarantine are restricted to that area.
- y. Protective clothing, boots and footbaths are used by all staff entering the quarantine area or areas containing quarantined animals. Quarantine clothing is not removed from the quarantine area, except in a sealed container for cleaning.
- z. Caregivers wear protective gloves and masks when cleaning or handling anything with which the quarantine felids come into contact.
- aa. Where possible, staff working in quarantine areas does not work with other sanctuary animals. If this is not possible, work is done in the quarantine areas last.
- bb. Quarantine staff cares for newly admitted felids in their quarantine area before caring for sick animals, which are housed in separate isolation enclosures.
- cc. The quarantine area allows for daily cleaning and sanitation, either with removable catch trays or a drainage system that allows fecal matter to flush into a septic system; waste is otherwise removed and disposed of properly.
- dd. In enclosures housing animals carrying infectious or transmissible diseases, to the extent possible, all surfaces of the enclosure are properly sanitized.
- ee. Quarantine areas have adequate ventilation, heat and air conditioning, which are used to ensure optimum conditions, particularly in the case of young, elderly or sick felids who may be more sensitive to environmental changes.
- ff. Quarantine animal waste is handled separately from all other manure or compost at the facility. Because of the risk of disease transmission, quarantine waste is not spread on pastures or composted.

## **V-6. Medical Records and Controlled Substances**

**Complete medical records are maintained, appropriate statistics maintained, felids have permanent identification, and controlled substances are prescribed and stored legally.**

### **Medical Records**

- a. An electronic database format is recommended for most record keeping, but in either case, the sanctuary has a back-up system for the records.
- b. Records that, if not required by law, are recommended by GFAS include but are not limited to:
  - Individual animal records showing origin, age, species, gender, microchip number, tattoo, photo, bio, etc.;
  - Individual veterinary record;
  - Reproductive history, if known;
  - Contraception records;
  - Weight, current diet and record of diet changes;
  - Food consumption and preferred food items;

- Enrichment dates, items used and ape's response.;
  - Where applicable and appropriate, any positive behavioral management records showing completed objectives and those in development;
  - Current and historic cage mates, social groups and partners, including response to various phases of introduction and response to other individuals;
  - Acquisition documents (see Standard P-2, "Acquisition Recordkeeping and Monetary Exchange");
  - Welfare assessment for the felids as a whole including measures of: disease prevalence, morbidity and mortality rates, and activity levels;
  - Inspection reports, as applicable, from international, national, state/province and local agencies, as well as accrediting organizations;
  - Other animal documentation as applicable, such as complaints or police reports pertaining to specific animal and animal escape reports.
- c. Medical records are dated, legible and indicate examination findings, treatments (types of medication, dosage, duration), surgical procedures, anesthetic procedures (type of agent, dosage, effect), results of all laboratory tests (parasitologic, hematologic, bacteriologic, etc.) pathology reports, plus immunization records with all relevant dates, felid identification and nutrition/diet information, and, where applicable, necropsy reports.
- d. Copies of medical records accompany any felid who is transferred to another sanctuary.
- e. Medical records are maintained under the direction of the veterinarian or trained felid caregiver. Where possible, duplicate record sets are stored at another site, or in a fire proof or theft proof safe on site or an online storage system.
- f. Statistics are tabulated regularly on the rates and nature of illness and mortality in the sanctuary.

#### **Controlled Substances**

- g. Only a licensed veterinarian prescribes controlled substances used at the sanctuary, and all such substances are secured in accordance with any applicable laws.
- h. The sanctuary maintains appropriate records and logs for all controlled drugs used. All drug logs are kept up to date and comply with any national or other legal requirements (such as the Drug Enforcement Agency in the U.S.).
- i. Expired drugs are marked as such and stored separately.
- j. When disposing of drugs, they are discarded in accordance with applicable national, state, and local law and regulations (such as the USDA and DEA in the United States).

### **V-7. Breeding**

**No intentional propagation of felids occurs, and sound practices are in place and implemented to prevent propagation and to properly care for infants born at the sanctuary.**

- a. Although GFAS recognizes the importance of appropriate "conservation breeding" programs, they fall outside the mandate of GFAS Accreditation programs unless they adhere to the following guidelines:

- Animals are not brought into captivity for the purpose of breeding. Animals that are allowed to breed should enter a wildlife facility as a result of normal acquisition protocols such as surrender or government confiscation and be considered an endangered or threatened species with available release sites within the state/province, conducted with specific conservation goals, in accordance with local, state/province, national, and international law and regulations.
  - Breeding should not be forced – that is, not the result of artificial insemination or being placed in enclosures of insufficient size or otherwise not in keeping with GFAS standards.
  - Breeders – that is, the parent animals – should be released into the wild with their young. If breeding animals are deemed unreleasable, there should be documented evidence from a qualified professional that the animals cannot be released because of a physical condition or other reason that would make them unable to survive in the wild. Offspring of unreleasable parents should not be released until an age of species-specific maturity for survivability.
  - Unreleasable breeding animals should receive the care required of all animals under the GFAS standards and should not be maintained for the purpose of breeding if they have incurable or unmanageable pain or suffering and do not have an acceptable quality of life.
  - The facility should have an identified release site for the breeding animals and offspring, with any necessary permits or memoranda of understanding in place. While GFAS may consider whether a definite plan (such as ongoing surveys of land for potential release sites and a timeline for releasing animals) is sufficient, it will not be sufficient for a facility to simply say that it hopes or plans to be able to release the animals one day. Thus, a facility may not breed any animals in captivity, even highly endangered animals in order to create a sustainable population, without a definite release plan in place.
- b. The sanctuary has felid-appropriate contraceptive programs in place. Single-sex groups do not require contraception.
- c. If females arrive at the facility pregnant, the sanctuary provides necessary care and the female is allowed to deliver unless there are valid health reasons for terminating the pregnancy, or unless the attending veterinarian feels the pregnancy is in such an early stage that aborting the fetus is an option, if so desired by the sanctuary. After delivery, reproductive control methods are applied after allowing adequate time for weaning as appropriate for that felid, provided there is no further opportunity for breeding during this period of time.
- d. Infants born at the sanctuary remain with the mother as appropriate for natural rearing, provided there is no further opportunity for breeding during this period of time. Infants are only removed from females for hand-rearing if there is a threat to the life of the infant or the mother.

## **V-8. Zoonotic Disease Program**

**The staff and sanctuary veterinarian are knowledgeable about zoonotic diseases that may affect felids at the sanctuary, and implement appropriate policies and procedures as needed to mitigate risk and deal with any exposures that occur.**

- a. The sanctuary's veterinarian is knowledgeable about zoonotic diseases that may affect felids at the sanctuary. All potential or emerging diseases have emergency procedures and a defined process to avoid transmission of diseases through bites, scratches, body fluids, direct contact with felids and other means. (Note: Additional precautions may be necessary for staff classified as increased risk of disease, including those who are immune-compromised.)

- b. A physician with expertise in infectious diseases is consulted whenever an employee contracts an unusual illness or is exposed to a felid diagnosed with a zoonotic disease.
- c. Personnel have adequate training to understand the potential risk of disease transmission, including potential sources of disease, modes of disease transmission, and clinical signs associated with disease.
- d. When a reportable disease is identified, all appropriate local, state/province, and national regulatory officials are contacted.
- e. All areas in which the staff has direct contact with felids have hand-washing facilities available in the immediate vicinity (or an equivalent; e.g., bactericidal hand-wipes)
- f. Human food consumption by the staff does not occur in the immediate area of felid contact.
- g. Rabies testing and vaccination protocols vary by location. Federal, state or province and local rabies prevention protocols supersede recommendations made in this document.
- h. See also Standard S-8 (“ First Aid and Zoonotic Disease Training, and Staff First Aid ”).

## **V-9. Euthanasia**

**Euthanasia is governed by an ethical written policy that includes identification of appropriate personnel and procedures.**

- i. The sanctuary has a written policy addressing the circumstances surrounding euthanasia decisions and procedures, including the following:
- j. Euthanasia is performed in compliance with any national or local law, administered under the strict supervision of a licensed veterinarian. In extreme circumstances of animal suffering when a veterinarian is unable to reach the sanctuary in a timely manner, an emergency method of euthanasia may be required and is performed by a trained and qualified staff member when no other humane option is available.
- k. Euthanasia is in the best interest of the individual animal only used as a final option, and is not used as management tool (such as a means to create space for more animals).
- l. Acceptable reasons for euthanasia include:
  - Incurable disease/injury that is likely to cause unmanageable pain or suffering;
  - Disease/injury where treatment is likely to cause unreasonable pain or suffering;
  - Disease/injury where treatment will not be effective in restoring the animal to an acceptable quality of life;
  - Disease/injury where treatment is beyond the normal community standards of monetary expenditure and would cause an excessive burden on the sanctuary resources, and no other sanctuary can step in, after reasonable efforts to locate such a sanctuary;
  - The process of aging has resulted in an unacceptable quality of life;
  - In the event of presenting an infectious disease risk to some or all of the residents.
  - For facilities engaged in the rehabilitation and reintroduction of wildlife, it is determined in accordance with an appropriate protocol or other “decision tree” analysis that an animal cannot be reintroduced to its natural habitat and there is no appropriate (consistent with these standards) long-term care option.

- m. Euthanasia is performed so that it avoids distress to the testudines, and unless impossible, is performed out of view of other animals.
- n. The species and ecosystems are carefully considered during disposition activities.

## **WELL BEING AND HANDLING OF FELIDS**

### **W-1. Physical Well-Being**

**All felids are routinely monitored to ensure their physical well-being. All aspects of husbandry, including veterinary care, environmental enrichment and diet are designed to optimize the felids' physical well-being.**

- a. The welfare of each individual felid is the overriding consideration in all sanctuary actions.
- b. Felids are able to enjoy lives that are as close as possible to that of their wild counterparts as regards stimulation and interest. This is achieved by adopting husbandry and management procedures, including appropriate housing and enclosure design, environmental enrichment programs, positive reinforcement training programs and a balanced diet to meet nutritional requirements.
- c. Felids are provided with opportunities to climb, forage for food and play by providing species-appropriate climbing structures, a variety of plants and substrates and other enclosure enhancements and there are places to hide and rest in comfort.
- d. Regular assessments are performed in an effort to quantify and measure the welfare of individual animals through monitoring of nutritional, physical and social conditions. Qualified personnel conduct daily observations of each felid to monitor for signs of physical abnormalities. Any unusual activities are recorded in a log at each inspection. Sudden changes in food consumption and other behaviors are immediately brought to the attention of supervisory staff. Note: In open space enclosures, it may not be possible to observe each animal on a daily basis. In such habitats, it is important to get an accurate count and to spend time observing all felids on a weekly basis.
- e. Where possible and appropriate, records of individual felids are kept to provide both behavioral and veterinary history.
- f. Where possible, each felid is weighed annually, either during a routine physical or through the use of a built-in scale, to monitor for signs of illness and to determine dosages for chemical anesthetics.
- g. The use of positive reinforcement training may be appropriate for felids who enjoy interacting with people to provide additional enrichment and reduce the need for chemical immobilization and to reduce stress during medical intervention.

### **W-2. Social Housing**

**Felids are grouped appropriately with the safety of animals and staff in mind.**

#### **General**

- a. Most felids are solitary by nature and are afforded their own private space if they are not amenable to living with other felids.

- b. Felids housed together are compatible and all felids have ample space to retreat and hide as needed while social tensions are resolved.
- c. Clawed felids are not housed with declawed felids.
- d. Felids are not housed near animals that interfere with their health or cause them physical or psychological discomfort.
- e. Habitats are of sufficient size to allow appropriate space between individuals in social groupings and to allow for temporary isolation from conspecifics.
- f. Felids are housed so that no individual endures constant harassment or suffers physical injury, and so social behaviors do not prevent any individual from maintaining proper nutrition and hydration.
- g. Close attention is paid to felids in social housing, with age, species, and sex of animals housed together taken into account. Long-term positive relationships may change with little warning.

#### **Solitary Housing**

- h. Is afforded to felids based on their individual preferences. In some cases, however, positive benefits may be gained by having a conspecific to interact with.
  - Felids raised together may be negatively impacted by separation.

#### **Mixed Species Housing**

- i. Mixed species situations are not recommended for felids except where the felids are of a comparable size, compatible temperament and were raised together.
- j. Where facilities are open to the public mixed species housing may convey contrary educational messages.

### **W-3. Introduction of Unfamiliar Individuals**

**Introduction of any new felid to a social group is done according to techniques appropriate for each species, with staff safety ensured.**

#### **General**

- a. Introduction of unfamiliar felids is carefully considered. Professionals with experience in social introductions, if not on staff, are consulted whenever possible during these considerations.
- b. Felid introductions are monitored closely for several days for tension, aggression, shifts in dominance, territoriality, etc.
- c. Food and water consumption is monitored carefully to ensure that all felids are able to access food/water.
- d. Felids have access to separate shelter, ample room to move away from each other and no opportunities for an animal to be cornered.
- e. As needed and possible, information listed below is gathered for the introduction planning process:
  - A list of individual animals to be introduced, including all that the sanctuary ultimately hopes to integrate into a group.

- Background of each individual, including but not limited to: age and gender; social experience with other felids; rearing history (hand-reared, parent reared, time spent with mother and siblings).
- f. As appropriate or needed, benchmarks or desired outcomes are identified for each step in the process. Examples include:
- physical location of animals during visual/olfactory contact period;
  - behavioral goals of visual/olfactory contact period;
  - physical location of animals during tactile contact period
  - behavioral goals of tactile contact period;
  - benchmarks for proceeding to physical introduction;
  - space and cages to be used for physical introduction;
  - reasons location selected: neutral space, ample run around, visual barriers, doors that can be closed to protect animals in trouble etc.;
  - cage set-up for physical introduction, enrichment etc.;
  - emergency equipment that might be needed;
  - time frame necessary to acclimate animals to presence of equipment;
  - criteria for separating animals if physical introduction does not proceed safely;
  - post introduction management and husbandry protocols.
- g. The plan is developed with involvement of all staff involved with care of the species and details a series of steps that will be taken to integrate the individual animals involved. Necessary modifications to enclosures are identified and completed prior to beginning the process.
- h. The plan establishes behavioral goals for introductions and is not driven by schedules, and is open to modification as introduction/integration develops and evolves.
- i. Only normally scheduled caregivers and animal managers are present to directly observe. Individuals who are not routinely present in the animal area, including veterinary and management staff, observe via remote video or receive reports from staff.
- j. All caregivers have a clear understanding of the plan including contingencies for problems that might occur, and are empowered to take appropriate action in the event of perceived emergency.
- k. If the introduction is not successful, no attempt is made to reunite the individuals until housing or social circumstances can be changed or other factors that may have contributed to the problems have been resolved.

#### **W-4. Behavioral/Psychological Well-Being**

**The behavioral/psychological well-being of each felid is evaluated and addressed, and a welfare plan and report is part of each felid's file.**

##### **General**

- a. There is a formal, written enrichment program that promotes species-appropriate behavioral opportunities and ensures the captive felids' psychological well-being. A complete environmental enrichment program includes the following:

- Structural enrichment - Enclosure design and furniture that add complexity to the environment and promote species-specific behavior. Examples include climbing structures and pools
  - Object enrichment – Objects that encourage inspection and manipulation and promote species-specific behavior. Examples include boxes, balls, bones, barrels, drums and rawhide.
  - Food enrichment - Varying food choices and food presentation.
  - Social enrichment - Affiliative interactions between caregivers and felids may be appropriate in some instances. The decision to include social enrichment with caregivers should be made on an individual basis, considering only the social needs of the animal such as solitary animals, particularly those hand reared by humans with no conspecific contact or neonatal and juvenile animals in situations where appropriate.
- b. All felid care staff are trained to recognize abnormal behavior and clinical signs of illness. Measures of well-being that are assessed include:
- species appropriate behavior and interaction with other animals;
  - the animal's ability to respond appropriately to variable environmental conditions, physiological states, developmental stages, and social situations as well as adverse stimuli.
- c. Stereotypic behavior, self-injurious behavior, and inappropriate responses to various stimuli not previously documented or witnessed may be evidence of compromised well-being and are investigated. A plan to address the concerns is developed.
- d. Where possible and appropriate, a behavioral/psychological profile is maintained for each individual felid and updated annually. A copy of the welfare report is kept in the primate's permanent file.

## **W-5. Felid-Caregiver Relationships**

**Positive relationships between felids and caregivers are maintained. Felids are not fearful or aggressive in response to human presence or routine care procedures.**

### **General**

- a. Felids arrive at sanctuaries with a variety of previous experience with caregivers, which caregivers take into account in their interactions with these species.
- b. Facility design plays a key role in caregiver-felid safety and the ability to maintain a positive relationship.
- c. A protocol for introducing felids to new caregiver staff has been developed. Where possible, new caregivers accompany a trusted caregiver until the felids become comfortable with the new individual.
- d. A positive relationship between the felids and regular caregivers, animal managers and veterinary staff is one in which the felids are given the freedom to integrate with their conspecific social group with minimal human interference or to interact regularly with caregivers if they choose.
- e. Where possible and appropriate, animals become familiar with the veterinary staff, allowing close observation. Individual felid preference for interaction with caregivers, animal managers and veterinary staff is taken into account.
- f. The animals do not become fearful or overly aggressive in response to human presence or routine care procedures.
- g. Interactions with felids do not cause overheating, excessive cooling, physical harm, or unnecessary discomfort, and minimizes physical and psychological stress or trauma as much as possible.

- h. Negative interactions are avoided. However, when they occur, efforts are made to recover trust and a positive relationship if the felid enjoys regular interaction with people
- i. Physical abuse, deprivation of food or water, aversive spraying with a hose, and other forms of negative reinforcement or punishment-based training are never used to train, shift or otherwise handle felids. Note: This does not preclude the use of hoses or other watering devices in caring for the felids who enjoy this form of enrichment.

## **W-6. Handling and Restraint**

**Any necessary handling and restraint is done safely and appropriately, with minimal distress to felids, and staff are trained in felid-specific safe handling techniques/practices.**

### **General**

- a. Humans do not enter enclosures with felids. Direct physical interaction is limited to protected forms of contact, by experienced personnel, to minimize the risk of injury.
- b. Handling for veterinary care is done as expeditiously and carefully as possible in a manner that does not cause trauma, overheating, excessive cooling, physical harm, or unnecessary discomfort, and minimizes physical and psychological stress as much as possible.
- c. In general, manual restraint is not used on large felids and not recommended for small to medium felids, and is not attempted when multiple animals are present in an enclosure.
- d. If physical restraint or drug delivery systems must be used, the lightest and least stressful methods that are appropriate are chosen, bearing in mind the safety of staff and animal.
- e. A written policy for the humane chemical restraint and safe capture of animals housed at the sanctuary is in place, to include:
  - Training and certification in the equipment, humane chemical restraint, immobilization process, and the use of drugs for veterinarian purposes or emergencies;
  - Procedures listing at a minimum those persons authorized to administer animal drugs, situations in which they are to be utilized, location of animal drugs in a safe and secure place, and those persons with access to them, and an emergency procedure in the event of accidental human exposure.
- f. All chemical restraint equipment is cleaned after each use, maintained in good working order and tested on a regular basis.
- g. Felids are chemically immobilized by qualified personnel when direct handling is necessary (i.e., physical exams). Chemical immobilization is performed only by a licensed veterinarian or by trained staff under the guidance of a licensed veterinarian, or other qualified individuals authorized by the sanctuary director or veterinarian, following the laws and regulations of country where the animals are housed. Specific anesthetic protocols, including record-keeping, are followed.
- h. Chemical restraint is not used when multiple animals are in an enclosure except in an emergency situation. In such cases, all possible precautions are taken to prevent threats to the handlers and the animal being sedated.
- i. Multiple staff members are trained to use a dart gun and other restraint equipment, and to employ safe capture techniques. The staff, and volunteers where appropriate, are aware of who is trained and authorized to use restraint equipment.

- j. As part of their training, staff members are instructed to report any medical conditions or physical limitations that may hinder their ability to employ safe capture techniques.
- k. Where possible and appropriate, Positive Reinforcement Training is used to minimize the need for chemical immobilization and to reduce stress during procedures.
  - With appropriate training, many procedures can be performed cooperatively and without anesthesia, such as examination of body parts, treatment of superficial injury, heart rate monitoring, injection administration, etc.
  - Some felids may be conditioned to enter a squeeze cage or lockout area. Where this method of restraint is used, attachments for crates and squeeze cages are included in facility design or modifications.

## **W-7. Animal Transport**

**Felids are appropriately transported to maximize safety and minimize stress and in accordance with all local, state/province, national, international requirements and laws.**

### **General**

- a. Felids are transported only when necessary, such as when being transported to the Sanctuary, to a medical facility for care or to another accredited Sanctuary for reasons as described in acquisition standards.
- b. Pre-transport health examinations ideally include a complete physical exam to ensure the animals are deemed healthy and fit to travel, with attention to parasite checks, necessary vaccinations, and completion of any tests required by regulations of the receiving state/province or country.
- c. Health certificates and any required transport permits accompany the felid when being transported interstate or internationally. All transport abides by local, state/province, federal and international law. A veterinarian is responsible for preparing and signing the health certificate.
- d. Prior to transport, the sanctuary ensures that adequate facilities are available at the receiving end and food items that are familiar to the animal are available.
- e. Where possible and appropriate, felids are acclimated to shipping. Capture, restraint, and transportation methods consider the felid's temperament and behavior in order to minimize injury, and distress.
- f. At a minimum, transport enclosures meet appropriate animal welfare standards (e.g., IATA, US Animal Welfare Act Transportation Standards or similar).
- g. Transport crates and vehicles are in good condition and meet federal and/or international standards. Equipment suitable for lifting, crating and transportation of animals kept within the sanctuary is readily available.
- h. Transport vehicles ideally should be climate-controlled to maintain a safe and comfortable environment for felids. If climate control is not available, animals should not be transported in severe weather conditions, and vehicles must have adequate ventilation to ensure proper airflow and temperature regulation.
- i. Transport containers:

- are large enough to ensure that felids have sufficient space to turn about freely and to make normal postural adjustments.
  - should include bedding of a suitable absorbent material, in sufficient quantity to absorb and cover animal waste (unless the animals are on wire or other nonsolid floors) and to provide cushioning and promote comfort during transport.
  - have impervious surfaces, which are cleaned and disinfected after use.
  - are designed to permit safe transfer into a secondary enclosure.
  - are designed to minimize the risk of the felid reaching through to make contact with personnel.
  - are designed to allow personnel to safely provide or offer water and food to animals during transport.
  - are placed within a secondary container or closed compartment on the transport vehicle.
- j. Any felid taken outside the sanctuary, for an approved reason such as medical treatment or transfer to a more appropriate sanctuary, is in the personal possession of the sanctuary director, or of competent persons acting on his/her behalf and adequate provision is made for the safety and well-being of the animal and public safety.
- k. All felids taken outside the sanctuary are kept securely at all times. Felids are managed outside the sanctuary in such a way that the animal is under control and not likely to suffer distress, cause injury or transmit or contract disease.
- l. Complete medical records, diet and husbandry information, and identifying papers (e.g., describing tattoos, or other identification methods) accompany all transported felids.

□

## FELIDS BEING RELEASED TO THE WILD

GFAS strongly supports the efforts of wildlife rehabilitators and sanctuary managers to return wildlife to its natural environment, provided appropriate steps are taken to ensure that the animals released are likely to survive in the wild.

Facilities releasing felids to the wild must also make every effort to reduce the risk of their having a damaging impact on ecological resources, including other animal species, found naturally in the release area. Examples of risk factors include but are not limited to:

- Displacement of indigenous animals;
- Transmission of novel pathogens;
- Disruption of local human communities, including damage to dwellings and injury to local inhabitants;
- Alterations to the environment that disrupt the ecological niche of other species.

For a more detailed discussion of the potential risks, as well as time and financial commitment involved in creating a quality re-introduction project, see the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Species Survival Commission (IUCN/SSC) Reintroduction Specialist Group's "Guidelines for Re-Introductions".

## **R-1. General Considerations**

**The sanctuary has policies, agreements and plans in place to optimize the chances for successful re-introduction of felids into the natural environment.**

- a. The facility has a written policy regarding the handling of any potential problems involving released animals. The policy should include but is not limited to:
  - a plan to minimize the risk to human life and property in the area of release;
  - a plan for compensation for or mitigation of damages incurred by the released animals;
  - a deterrent plan to discourage inappropriate activities, *i.e.*, spending time around human habitation.
  - a plan for management or removal of animals who fail to integrate appropriately or who become habitual 'problem animals.'
- b. In as much as possible, using the latest available information on potential health concerns regarding other species found in the area of release, animals are tested and treated for pathogens that might pose a threat to other wildlife.
- c. The facility has agreements in place with any and all appropriate authorities to allow the release process to proceed as smoothly as possible.
- d. Ideally, permissions, any necessary documentation, site determination, etc. begin as soon as it is determined that there are animals in care that are likely to be suitable for release.
  - In particular, facilities obtain any permits or other forms of authorization needed to proceed with the release.
  - Potential release sites are identified and evaluated as early in this process as possible.
- e. Cooperative agreements are in place prior to animals being released which may include, but are not limited to:
  - veterinary and scientific involvement in post-release monitoring;
  - community acceptance of the project and involvement in habitat protection and awareness raising;
  - landowner agreements enabling release, including the addressing of specific permissions and permits;
  - involvement of NGOs with similar or conflicting interests that may impact (positively or negatively) the project.

## **R-2. Rescue Of Felids**

**The sanctuary has developed guidelines for rescue work, taking into account staff and animal safety, contingencies for caring for the animal once rescued, and any local, state or national regulations or agency cooperation required.**

- a. Facilities accepting felids from the illegal trade have policies and procedures (ideally in writing) in place with the appropriate authorities that allow for rapid transfer of the animals to the sanctuary or rescue center. These policies and procedures are designed to reduce the risk of:
  - disease transmission;

- habituation;
  - Inappropriate or inhumane treatment, due to lack of knowledge, by personnel involved in seizure of wildlife from the illegal trade.
- b. In as much as possible, while respecting local or national cultural/religious tenets, a euthanasia policy is in place to address situations where the animal's prognosis for survival is too low to warrant attempting treatment.
- In situations where field euthanasia is being considered, where possible and appropriate (e.g., the animal is reasonably safe from further human interference and the stress of capture would outweigh the benefit of humane euthanasia), the option of leaving the animal *in situ* may be considered.
  - See also Standard V-5, "Euthanasia."

### **R-3. Evaluation Of Suitability For Release**

**Felids admitted into sanctuary are evaluated for their potential suitability for release.**

- c. The sanctuary has a protocol in place (ideally in writing) to evaluate potential release candidates and to determine which felids are given priority for potential release.
- Animals who have spent little time in captivity and/or who have had little human contact are given priority for potential release.
  - Animals found to be free of diseases and/or parasites of potential concern to the health of the population, particularly in the intended release area, are given priority for potential release.
- d. All felids are treated as potential release candidates, particularly those who have not been kept long term as pets. If felids admitted into sanctuary are determined to be potential release candidates, every effort is made to protect them from exposure to human disease and to keep them as wild as possible.

### **R-4. Quarantine And Prerelease Housing**

*(See also Standards H-1 to H-9, "Felid Housing," and V-5, "Quarantine and Isolation of Felids")*

**The sanctuary has appropriate quarantine facilities and prerelease housing for felids, with consideration given to sick and injured felids.**

#### **General**

- a. Non-quarantine housing for felids being considered for release provides as close to natural a setting as possible. The space allows for running, climbing, and other actions naturally performed in the wild.
- b. Quarantine facilities and prerelease housing for felids intended for release are situated a minimum of 66 ft. (20m), giving consideration to factors such as wind direction, from resident felid populations to protect them from exposure to pathogens present in the sanctuary population that could compromise their return to the wild. A wall surrounding the quarantine area reduces pathogen transfer risk and aids in restricting access to authorized personnel.

- Where this is not possible, sanctuary residents are screened for potential pathogens of concern, and pathogen-free animals are housed closest to the animals intended for release to the wild.
  - Sanctuary animals being used as surrogates are screened for pathogens prior to introduction to any dependent felids.
- c. Where possible and appropriate, sanctuaries follow International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council guidelines (<http://www.nwrawildlife.org/content/minimum-standards>) in dividing housing into three types:
- Restricted activity/mobility – for the initial stages of rehabilitation where the illness or injury requires the animal be treated and/or prevented from activities that would slow the rehabilitation process. At a minimum, the animal is able to maintain normal upright/alert posture and to stretch the body.
  - Limited activity/mobility – for the recovery stage of rehabilitation where the animal is regaining mobility and building strength, and staff does not need access to the animal on a daily basis. The animal is able to move short distances and perform some climbing and perching activities.
  - Unlimited/Prerelease – the final stages of rehabilitation where the main concern is ensuring that the animal is fit for release. In this phase, the enclosure provides the felids with opportunities to demonstrate the skills necessary for survival in the wild.

### **Quarantine Housing**

- d. Sick or injured wildlife is quarantined in such a way that the rehabilitation process is begun during the quarantine phase.
- e. Quarantine facilities have appropriate housing for the treatment of injured or ill felids.
- f. Quarantine facilities are designed to allow for monitoring and, as needed, modification of behavior of felids intended for release.
- g. Healthy felids admitted to quarantine have as large an enclosure as possible to help maintain natural locomotion and behaviors.
- h. Upon arrival, felids are quarantined for an adequate number of days, ideally for a minimum of 60 days. In some situations a longer quarantine may be advisable.
- i. The attending veterinarian works closely with regional, national and international experts and authorities to determine appropriate quarantine timing based on health risks to which the newly admitted felids may have been exposed.
- j. Orphaned felids, particularly those who have been kept as pets and potentially exposed to human pathogens, are isolated until any potential health risks are evaluated.

### **Initial Housing for Orphaned, Ill or Injured Felids**

- k. Animals admitted requiring treatment for illness or injury are housed in enclosures that allow for ease of care. These initial care enclosures can be smaller than that which is acceptable for long-term care.
  - Dependent on illness or injury, either Restricted or Limited activity/mobility housing may be utilized.
- l. Enclosures provide visual and acoustic barriers to minimize stress.
- m. Orphaned felids are housed in nursery units, preferably with conspecifics, as species appropriate.
  - Where possible, safe, and appropriate, adult felids are utilized as surrogates to help care for the orphans, thus reducing human contact. Where this is not possible or appropriate, human

caregivers act in a manner that preserves the natural behaviors of wild felids as much as possible.

#### **Intermediate Housing for Orphaned Felids**

- n. As soon as the orphaned felids have been weaned, they are moved to intermediate housing, where human contact is decreased and interaction with conspecifics, as species appropriate is increased. Where possible, the animals are moved to the release site and cared for in a soft release enclosure.
- o. Animals are provided with adequate opportunity for climbing and foraging as species appropriate.
- p. In as much as possible, conspecifics are used to teach natural behaviors, as species appropriate. Where appropriate releasable conspecifics are not available, and where possible, safe, and appropriate, resident animals with strong natural skills who do not present a disease risk to the wild population, may be used to teach these behaviors.
- q. (Note: Hunting and capture of prey appears to be highly ingrained in most of these species, reducing the need for live prey, except in special circumstances such as injuries compromising movement or vision. See also Diet, Nutrition and Foraging Skills)
- r. Intermediate housing is isolated from resident animal areas, ideally within a natural habitat which allows the orphans to adjust to a more wild environment.

#### **Intermediate and Prerelease Housing for Sick or Injured Felids**

***Note: Adult and independent subadult animals, dependent on their admitting condition, may not require intermediate housing.***

- s. Animals suffering from injuries that may affect their suitability for release are moved to intermediate housing while regaining strength. Animals are regularly evaluated to determine whether they are likely to be releasable. Once the felids are deemed fit, they are moved to prerelease housing.
- t. Independent animals brought in for rehabilitation who can be released back into the environment from which they came are returned as soon as it is determined that the animal has recovered sufficiently to resume its presence in its former area.
  - Consideration is given to social and territorial issues that may affect safe return to the original habitat.
- u. Prerelease housing for adult and independent subadult animals is ideally situated at the intended release site, allowing the animals to acclimate to their new environment before release.
- v. In both intermediate and prerelease housing, sufficient vertical as well as horizontal space is provided, as species appropriate to allow the felids to develop strength and display normal wild behaviors.

### **R-5. Diet, Nutrition And Foraging Skills**

**Felids are fed an appropriate diet that approximates that which will be found in the habitat to which they are released, and foraging behavior is encouraged.**

- a. As early in the rehabilitation process as possible, felids are exposed to the types of foods found naturally within the environment where they will be released and assessed for their ability to find appropriate foods and avoid inedible or poisonous foods.
- b. Release candidates are fed in such a way as to encourage natural foraging behaviors.

- Use of live prey is restricted to cases where there are concerns about the ability of the individual animal to stalk and capture prey.
- c. Rescued felids admitted in poor physical condition may require specialized diets to recover their health. Nutritional deficiencies are assessed and diets modified to address those deficiencies. Once the felids are back on a normal nutritional plane, any foods not found in their planned release area are no longer fed.

## **R-6. Husbandry And Health**

**Felids are fed an appropriate diet that approximates that which will be found in the habitat to which they are released, and foraging behavior is encouraged.**

- a. Once a felid has been evaluated as a potential release candidate, all aspects of care are focused on preparing the animal for the wild.
  - Human activities and noises are minimized in areas housing felids being prepared for reintroduction.
  - Apart from dependent young with no suitable conspecific surrogates, human interaction with felids being prepared for release to the wild is restricted to those activities that will enhance the felids' ability to live in the wild.
- b. The animal is placed in an appropriate social group or paired with a compatible conspecific, depending on species. Where appropriate surrogate conspecifics are not available, dependent young may be reared by human caregivers using approved best practices for the species housed.
  - Care is taken to balance the need to nurture these young animals with their need to develop appropriate survival skills as well as intraspecific social behaviors.
  - Animals are integrated into an appropriate social group, ideally comprised of other conspecifics intended for release, as quickly as possible.
- c. Introductions follow Standard W-3 "Introduction of Unfamiliar Individuals."
- d. Opportunities to explore, climb, forage and learn skills in the natural environment are provided.
- e. Felids admitted into care from the wild at the stage where they are already independent, with recoverable illness or injury problems, are treated and released as quickly as possible, taking into account the potential for the animal not being accepted back into its previous social group or territory.
- f. Caregiver-felid relationships for animals intended for release to the wild, while ensuring the animals' psychological well-being is met, focus on:
  - avoiding any types of interaction that may compromise the felids' chances for release;
  - encouraging the felids to develop appropriate relationships with conspecifics for their social needs.
- g. Veterinary staff evaluate overall health including:
  - recovery from the initial cause for admission to the facility;
  - pathogen surveillance to ensure the animal does not present a risk to the wild population as a result of exposure during the rehabilitation process.
    - In as much as possible, using the latest available information from the OIE-World Organization for Animal Health ([www.oie.int](http://www.oie.int)) and the IUCN's Conservation Breeding

Specialist Group (<http://www.cbsg.org>), animals are monitored for human pathogens not found in the wild population.

- h. Felids being cared for in sanctuary for later release back to the wild are managed in such a way as to optimize their chances for successful return to the natural environment.

## **R-7. Health And Safety Of Caregivers Working With Releasable Felids**

*(See also Standard V-8, “Zoonotic Disease Program”)*

**No caregiver begins work with releasable felids until routine testing has indicated he or she poses no risk to the felids’ release to the wild.**

- a. Caregivers working with felids intended for release to the wild are routinely monitored for potential anthroponoses (diseases that have potential to be transmitted to the animals).
- b. Testing, vaccinations and fecal cultures for pathogens may be utilized, as appropriate for the region, to ensure the health of both the felids and their caregivers. New caregivers should not have contact with the felids for the first two weeks of employment.
- c. Provision of adequate nutrition for staff is considered as a possible contribution to the continued well-being of both staff and felids.

## **R-8. Assessment of Health and Skills**

**Felids are fully assessed for health and appropriate skills prior to release.**

- a. Felids who have completed the rehabilitation process and have been successfully integrated into a social group or pair, as is species appropriate, are further evaluated for release, with attention to health and the skills attained.
- b. Each animal’s skills (e.g. foraging, appropriate interaction or avoidance behaviors in the presence of conspecifics, avoidance of dangers including poisonous foods or predators) are evaluated.
- c. A complete health assessment is performed including:
  - Overall fitness as relates to being able to survive in the wild, keep up with a conspecific group, avoid predators, etc.
  - Injuries and limitations that originally caused the animal to be brought into care are resolved, either completely, or to the extent that the felid has a reasonable chance for long-term survival.
- d. Felids have been tested, and found free of pathogens that have potential to harm the wild population in the planned release area, based on the latest current knowledge.
- e. Genetic assessment has been done to ensure that the felids being released are of an appropriate subspecies/population/subpopulation for the release site if their origin is not known.
- f. Felids are exposed to post-release monitoring equipment prior to release to allow them to acclimate to its presence.

## **R-9. Determining Appropriate Release Sites**

**Release sites are evaluated for health and other threats and for appropriateness for the species.**

- a. The potential release site is evaluated for the presence of appropriate and adequate food sources.
- b. The area is evaluated for potential health concerns.
- c. The potential release site is surveyed to ascertain whether any wild felids are present, either permanently or seasonally.
- d. The area is evaluated to establish carrying capacity for felids to be released. This includes taking into consideration others releases that may have already taken place and issues of territoriality. Animals are released in an appropriate habitat where carrying capacity for the species has not been reached.
- e. The area is evaluated for instances of potential human-wildlife conflict.
- f. IUCN guidelines are, in as much as possible, followed when determining release sites for rehabilitated felids.
- g. Animals are released away from areas where there is potential for or has been a history of human-animal conflict.

**R-10. The Release Process And Post Release Monitoring**

**Felids are supported as needed to adapt in their new environment and are monitored post release.**

- a. Once it is determined that the felids have the basic skills for foraging in their new environment, supplemental care is discontinued.
- b. A post-release monitoring program is in place to ensure the rehabilitation program is providing the animals with the skills necessary to survive, that the habitat is adequate and that, as is species appropriate, felids have integrated into the wild.
  - Use of radio and satellite telemetry is recommended whenever possible and appropriate.
- c. Ideally, felids are returned to the wild using a soft release process wherein they are housed in an enclosure within the release area or spend time with caregivers in the release area where supplemental food may be provided as needed and observation of their acclimatization may be observed.
- d. Post release monitoring, in conjunction with outside veterinary and scientific personnel, continues for a minimum of one year.
  - Level of monitoring may decrease over time as felids are determined to be acclimating to the environment.
  - Longer term monitoring of the animals and their impact on the habitat is preferred.
  - Practices used and results obtained, both positive and negative, are shared both within the facility and with others involved in felids reintroduction to aid in the continued improvement of the program.

## **Appendix 1**

- a. In most situations where felids are to remain captive males are castrated or vasectomized to allow for flexibility in future social groupings. The spaying of females will often decrease aggression and may have medical benefits for the individual felid.
- b. Cautions
  - Vasectomy or castration of males will not prevent potential adverse effects to females from prolonged, cyclic exposure to endogenous steroids associated with the obligate hormonal pseudo-pregnancy that follows ovulation in felids. Endogenous steroids and steroid contraceptives cause similar side effects
  - Progestin contraceptives are associated in large felids with progressive uterine growth that can result in infections and sometimes uterine cancer; mammary tissue stimulation also can result in cancer. Signs of diabetes mellitus have also been reported
    - If a progestin is used, treatment should only be short term, because of the increased likelihood of side effects with prolonged exposure
    - If a progestin is used, treatment should start well BEFORE any signs of proestrus, since the elevated endogenous estrogen can exacerbate side effects of the progestin
    - Progestins should not be used in pregnant animals, since they may suppress uterine contractions necessary for normal parturition. Thus, progestins should only be administered to females confirmed non-pregnant
  - MGA Implants are not recommended, but if they have been used, they are removed in less than 4 years.
  - Suprelorin® implants appear to work well and there seems to have been no reported side effects in felids of either sex.