



How to adopt an animal welfare policy



1. Be part of the change

Throughout the world, wild animals are taken from the wild or bred in captivity to be used as entertainment in the tourism industry.¹

Animals such as dolphins, elephants, and tigers experience harm, stress, and pain in unacceptable conditions at wildlife entertainment venues. They are typically exposed to cruel training that causes physical and psychological damage, are separated from their mothers at an early age, and are unable to live a natural life.

A 2015 study by Oxford University's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU), commissioned by World Animal Protection, reported up to 550,000 wild animals suffering for tourist entertainment in wildlife attractions worldwide.²

Travel companies play a crucial role in creating and changing the supply and demand for captive wildlife experiences. As long as reputable and trusted companies sell and promote tickets and packages that include wildlife entertainment venues, travelers will be misled to assume that these activities are acceptable or even beneficial for animals, when in fact they are cruel and cause irreparable and lifelong harm.

As a member of the travel industry, you can help protect animals by becoming a wildlife-friendly travel company. This involves phasing out wildlife entertainment from your supply chain and offering responsible alternatives that provide meaningful and memorable travel experiences.

2. Purpose, scope, and disclaimer

This toolkit has been created to support companies like yours in drafting a robust animal welfare policy and guiding you in adopting more ethical practices concerning animals, in particular wildlife.

As wildlife encounters are among the most popular vacation experiences, most of the principles and guidelines that are recommended in this document relate to wild animals, whether in captivity or in the wild. This doesn't mean though that ensuring good welfare for other animals is any less important.

Adopting an animal welfare policy based on this guidance document must not be considered as a certification or in any other way an endorsement by World Animal Protection of your company's animal related practices. The content of this policy guidance should be customized to be relevant for your company.

Please reach out to World Animal Protection if you wish to receive more information or any further support or materials, such as staff training, checklists, or customer education. Email us at tourism@worldanimalprotection.us.

3. What is wildlife entertainment and why is it unacceptable?

"Wildlife entertainment" includes all activities and attractions that allow tourists to have close contact with wild animals or offer animal performances.

Popular examples include dolphin shows, elephant rides and washing, and photos with tiger cubs. These attractions with animals are simply unacceptable as they will never meet the animals' most basic welfare needs. In addition to the entertainment being demeaning, the suffering starts from the moment the animals are captured from the wild or bred in captivity. In most cases young animals are prematurely separated from their mothers and exposed to harsh training, causing physical and psychological damage.

This exploitation and abuse exacerbate the life-long stress and discomfort they experience while living in unsuitable conditions at entertainment venues. All solely for commercial gain.

4. Review current offers first

Before drafting an animal welfare policy, undertake an initial review of the products and experiences involving (wild) animals that your company offers. The following questions can help when reviewing animal-related products.

- **Are wild animals required to perform in shows?** E.g. orangutans who re-enact kick-boxing matches, elephants and dolphins who perform tricks.
- **Are visitors allowed to hold, touch, or directly interact with wild animals?** E.g. tiger (cub) selfies, walking with lions, riding an elephant or an ostrich, or swim-with-dolphin experiences.

If the answer is "yes" to one or both of these questions, it's an unethical wildlife venue.



5. How to draft an animal welfare policy

A robust animal welfare policy consists of two parts:

- Your company's **values** in relation to animal welfare. These will not have an immediate impact on the animals in your company's supply chain, but they relay principles to your suppliers, partners, and customers.
- Your company's **guidelines** that outline what's acceptable and what's not in concrete terms.

5.1. Essential animal welfare principles to recognize

- The travel industry plays a key role in steering demand away from cruel wildlife experiences, encouraging the improvement of conditions for existing captive wild animals, and asking suppliers to end commercial breeding and trade to ensure this is the **last generation** of captive wildlife used for entertainment.
- All animals must be respected for their intrinsic value and that the best way to experience animals while on vacation is by **seeing them in the wild**.
- When under human care animals must have **a good life** by enjoying good physical and mental health. That they should be provided with an environment and conditions that prevent suffering, and also enable positive experiences, with the ability to make choices and express the widest possible range of natural behaviors.
- The unique needs of wild animals in particular can never be fully met in captive environments. That where wild animals are kept in captive conditions they must be provided with the best possible welfare and not be held captive for entertainment purposes.
- Your company will only work with suppliers if the animals under their care have the highest possible welfare in line with the **Five Domains of Animal Welfare**³:

1. **Nutrition** – factors that involve the animal's access to sufficient, balanced, varied, and clean food and water.
2. **Environment** – factors that enable comfort through temperature, substrate, space, air, odor, noise, and predictability.
3. **Health** – factors that enable good health through absence of disease, injury, impairment, and good fitness level.
4. **Behavior** – factors that provide varied, novel, and engaging environmental challenges through sensory inputs, exploration, foraging, bonding, playing, retreating, and others.
5. **Mental State** – by presenting positive situations in the previous four functional domains, the mental state of the animal should benefit from predominantly positive states, such as pleasure, comfort, or vitality, while reducing negative states such as fear, frustration, hunger, pain, or boredom.

5.2. Essential guidelines outlining what and what not to offer

We recommend that travel companies develop an animal welfare policy based on clear guidelines that set out acceptable and unacceptable activities.

We recommend not selling or promoting venues and/or activities that offer tourists any of the following experiences:

- Close interaction with wild animals, such as touching or riding, including but not limited to elephant riding and bathing, swimming with dolphins, or walking with lions;
- Watching wild animal performances, including but not limited to dolphin shows, circuses, orangutan boxing;
- Photo opportunities with wild animals, including, but not limited to big cats, sloths, primates, or dolphins;
- Watching animals fight or race, or being used in other sports or cultural events that cause animals to suffer or die, including but not limited to bullfighting and running, crocodile wrestling, dog fighting, rodeos, elephant polo, and horse or dog racing;

- Visiting facilities where captive wild animals are bred and kept for commercial products, including but not limited to crocodile farms, civet coffee farms, bear bile farms, turtle farms;
- Consuming food that has caused extreme animal suffering and/or that threatens the survival of species in the wild, including bush meat, foie gras, tiger wine, bear bile, shark fin, whale meat, turtle meat, snake blood, and civet coffee (Kopi Luwak);
- Buying souvenirs made from wild animal parts, such as bags made out of crocodile or snake-skin, jewelry made out of coral, ivory, tortoise shells;
- Engaging in any form of hunting, including trophy and canned hunting or sport fishing.

When not in conflict with any of the above guidelines, the following venues and activities where tourists can experience animals can be offered and/or promoted:

- Genuine wildlife sanctuaries, rehabilitation facilities, and rescue centers that have the highest standards of animal care and where there is no breeding for commercial purposes. E.g. sanctuaries certified by the [Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries \(GFAS\)](#) or elephant venues following [World Animal Protection's Elephant-Friendly venue guidelines](#). For further guidance on how to recognize a genuine wildlife sanctuary, see [World Animal Protection's checklist](#).
- Responsible wildlife watching where tourists observe animals in their natural environment from a safe and respectful distance without luring or chasing them or in other ways interrupting their natural behaviors or routines. E.g. whale watching operators and destinations ([Whale Heritage Sites](#)) certified by the [World Cetacean Alliance \(WCA\)](#).
- Zoos and aquariums that are members of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) and Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) which do not hold cetaceans in captivity and do not use wild animals for direct contact activities with visitors or have them perform in shows. (Keep in mind that these accreditation/affiliations alone can't be relied on as a measure of good welfare.)⁴

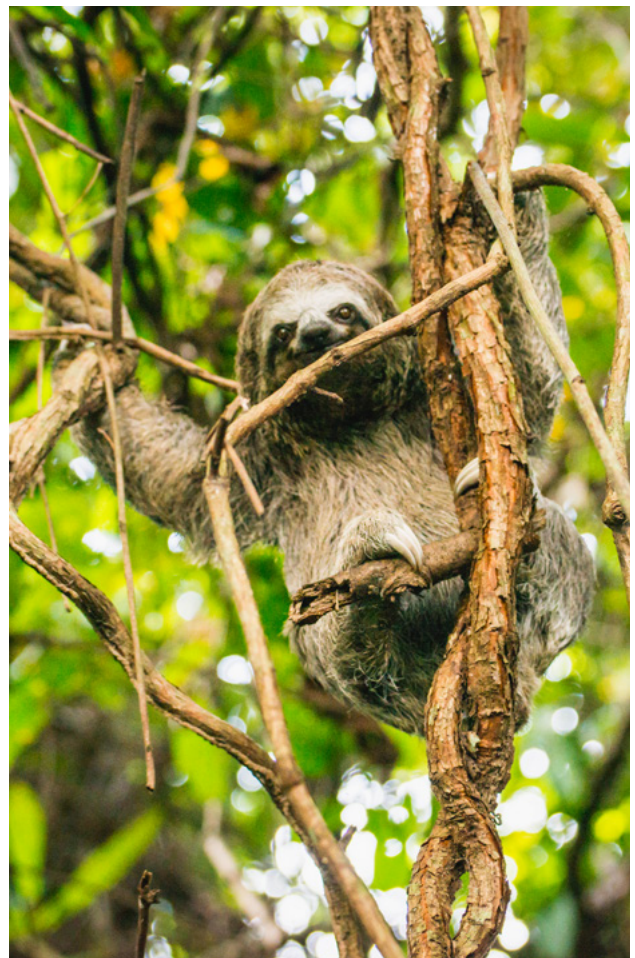
6. Implementation, monitoring, and evaluation

For your company's animal welfare policy to be fully implemented across your organization we encourage you to set clear objectives with time bound targets so progress can be monitored and reported.

When implementing the policy your company should ensure suppliers understand it, how they can guarantee compliance, and your processes for when they do not.

Awareness raising through education is another essential part of ensuring the policy becomes fully entrenched into your daily business operations. Training and checklists can be provided to staff and suppliers. Customers should also be empowered to recognize and report on good and bad animal practices.

Finally, we strongly recommend you evaluate your company's animal welfare policy on a regular basis to allow for updates and improvements based on the latest research, evidence, and expertise.



Appendix 1. Ready to go animal welfare policy template

[Company name]'s Animal Welfare Policy

[Company name] is committed to responsible tourism and protecting animals who are impacted by the travel industry. We have developed this animal welfare policy as animal encounters have become increasingly popular as part of people's vacation experiences. However, some animal-related activities, such as elephant washing and rides, photo opportunities with tigers, or watching dolphins perform, lead to suffering through cruel treatment and inhumane conditions.

[Company name] believes that all animals should be respected for their intrinsic value and that the best way to experience animals while on vacation is by seeing them in the wild. When under human care, all animals, must have 'a good life' by enjoying good physical and mental health. The conditions they are provided must favor positive experiences over negative ones within an environment that encourages making choices and enables them to express the widest possible range of natural behaviors.

[Company name] only works with suppliers if the animals under their care are provided with the highest possible welfare in line with the Five Domains of Animal Welfare⁵:

1. **Nutrition** - factors that involve the animal's access to sufficient, balanced, varied, and clean food and water.
2. **Environment** - factors that enable comfort through temperature, substrate, space, air, odor, noise, and predictability.
3. **Health** - factors that enable good health through absence of disease, injury, impairment, and good fitness level.
4. **Behavior** - factors that provide varied, novel and engaging environmental challenges through sensory inputs, exploration, foraging, bonding, playing, retreating, and others.
5. **Mental State** - by presenting positive situations in the previous four functional domains, the mental state of the animal should benefit from predominantly positive states, such as pleasure, comfort, or vitality, while reducing negative states such as fear, frustration, hunger, pain, or boredom.

[Company name] also recognizes that the needs of wild animals in particular can never be fully met in captivity. Where wild animals are kept in captivity the facility must not only provide them with best possible welfare conditions, it must also contribute towards a shift away from exploitative practices and be supportive of phasing out keeping wild animals for commercial purposes.

Our guidelines

At [Company name], we do not sell or promote venues and/or activities that offer tourists any of the following experiences:

- Close interaction with wild animals, such as, touching or riding, including but not limited to elephant riding and bathing, swimming with dolphins, or walking with lions;
- Watching wild animal performances, including but not limited to dolphin shows, circuses, or orangutan boxing;
- Photo opportunities with wild animals, including, but not limited to big cats, sloths, primates, or dolphins.
- Watching animals fight or race, or being used in other sport or cultural events that cause animals to suffer or die, including but not limited to bullfighting and running, crocodile wrestling, dog fighting, rodeo, elephant polo, and horse and dog racing;
- Visiting facilities where captive wild animals are bred and kept for commercial products, including but not limited to crocodile farms, civet coffee farms, bear bile farms, turtle farms;
- Engaging in trophy or canned hunting or sport fishing.

When not in conflict with any of the above guidelines [Company name] does offer and/or promotes the following venues and activities where tourist can experience animals:


- Genuine animal sanctuaries, rehabilitation facilities, and rescue centers that have the highest possible standards of animal care. E.g. sanctuaries certified by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) or elephant venues following World Animal Protection's Elephant-Friendly venue guidelines. For further guidance on how to recognize a genuine wildlife sanctuary, see World Animal Protection's checklist.
- Responsible, wildlife watching where a visitor can observe animals in their natural environment from a suitable distance without interrupting their natural behaviors or disturbing their routines. E.g. whale watching experiences certified by the Whale Cetacean Alliance (WCA).
- Zoos and aquariums that are accredited by members of World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) and Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) which do not hold cetaceans in captivity and do not use wild animals for direct contact activities with visitors or have them perform in shows. (Keep in mind that these accreditation/affiliations alone can't be relied on as a measure of good welfare.)

Endnotes

1. The Show Can't Go On, WAZA Report. World Animal Protection. (2019). Retrieved from https://www.worldanimalprotection.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/15072019_waza_report-final_1.pdf
2. Moorhouse, T.P., Dahlsjö, C.A.L., Baker, S.E. et al. (2015) The Customer Isn't Always Right - Conservation and Animal Welfare Implications of the Increasing Demand for Wildlife Tourism. PLOS ONE.
3. The more modern science based Five Domains of Animal Welfare model combined with the concept of 'a good life' recognizes the importance of animals having positive experiences. The model meets and exceeds the often used Five Freedoms which has increasingly been found to be limited in its assumption that the absence ("freedom") of negative states would ensure good welfare.
4. The World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) is the main global umbrella organization for zoos and other related institutions. Consequently, it is expected to lead the way with clear animal welfare standards and guidelines for its members, backed by robust monitoring. However, as our 2019 report, 'The show can't go on' revealed, we found clear evidence that cruel and demeaning visitor attractions (big cat shows, dolphin performing stunts, elephant rides, etc.) are happening at zoos and aquariums linked with WAZA. Similarly, inadequate conditions and cruel activities have been found in venues accredited by other bodies, such as the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA). Travel companies cannot rely on accreditation alone as a means to guarantee that captive wild animals have good lives. That being said, if unacceptable wildlife activities are not already present, accredited or affiliated venues are preferable to non-accredited or non-affiliated venues. While in practice enforcing standards can be an issue, in theory, at least they have a defined standard of animal welfare to meet. So, travel companies promoting zoos and aquariums where there are no unacceptable wildlife activities are advised to refer to accredited venues rather than those not mentioning any accrediting bodies. Importantly, the further travel companies move away from promoting zoos and aquariums and towards responsible, certified sanctuary and wild watching experiences, the more robust the animal welfare policy will be. The full report is available at: https://www.worldanimalprotection.org/sites/default/files/media/int_files/15072019_waza_report-final.pdf
5. The Five Domains is the latest science-based structure for assessing animal welfare as it considers the importance of animals having positive experiences. The model meets and exceed the Five Freedoms model which only defines the basic needs of animals and focuses on the prevention of negative experiences.

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