



May 2024

FLSA: NON-EXEMPT

ZOOKEEPER

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DEFINITION

Under general supervision, participates in all aspects of maintenance and daily care of zoo animals, provides information and customer services to zoo visitors, and performs related work as required.

SUPERVISION RECEIVED AND EXERCISED

Receives general supervision from assigned supervisory or management personnel. No direct supervision of staff is exercised. May exercise technical or functional supervision over part time or seasonal staff and volunteers.

CLASS CHARACTERISTICS

This is a journey-level class in the City of Eureka's Sequoia Park Zoo that performs a range of routine and complex animal care duties, maintains high husbandry standards, and provides customer service and education to guests. This class is distinguished from the Animal Care Supervisor in that the latter is responsible for technical and functional direction over lower-level zookeeper staff and is capable of performing the most complex duties assigned to the division.

EXAMPLES OF ESSENTIAL JOB FUNCTIONS (Illustrative Only)

Management reserves the right to add, modify, change or rescind the work assignments of different positions and to make reasonable accommodations so that qualified employees can perform the essential functions of the job.

- Provides innovative animal husbandry compliant with Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) standards.
- Actively observes animals' behavior, checking for any signs of illness; reports irregularities and abnormal behavior to supervisor; works with Animal Care Supervisor and veterinarian to address medical needs.
- Cleans, sanitizes, and maintains animal habitats, exhibits, holding areas, service areas and related enclosures in compliance with standards set by the Zoo, AZA, and USDA.
- Assesses animal welfare, recognizes positive and negative indicators of welfare, makes recommendations to improve welfare, and implements approved changes.
- Orders, stores and prepares food and feeds animals according to established diets and assigned schedule; researches and recommends diet changes based various conditions, including time of year, behavior, and body condition of animals; implements approved changes.

- Coordinates with Animal Care Supervisor and zookeeper staff to develop, apply and evaluate animal behavioral and welfare objectives for animal training and enrichment activities utilizing operant conditioning; towards specific objectives to ensure compliance with USDA and AZA standards.
- Implements positive reinforcement operant conditioning as the primary tool for animal training; provides optimal care by teaching behaviors for cooperative participation in daily husbandry care and for mental/physical stimulation; builds trust-based relationships and allows for animal choice and control.
- Performs minor maintenance and repairs on animal enclosures and reports any facility defects to appropriate supervising personnel; performs routine inspection and maintenance on critical water and mechanical systems and equipment.
- Identifies and feeds out browse plants to animals in accordance with Zoo browse guidelines.
- Administers medication and restraint and/or capture of animals for transport or examinations; observes sick, quarantined, and/or potentially injured animals; works with the Animal Care Supervisor and veterinarian to manage and treat animal health issues.
- Provides general and educational information to public, explains animal behavior and care, and takes questions from the public and other Zoo personnel; facilitates formal and informal public presentations to engage guests; contributes to an overall positive guest experience.
- Attends meetings, conferences, workshops, and training sessions to become and remain current on principles, practices, and new developments in assigned work areas.
- Maintains a variety of animal records including animal behavior and medical on the condition, treatments, observations, and other procedures primarily using ZIMS or other record keeping systems.
- Works with other staff to develop, implement, and update section Standard Operating Procedures.
- Performs other duties as assigned.

QUALIFICATIONS

Knowledge of:

- Modern zoo operating practices and principles, including safety.
- Principles and techniques of biology, zoology, animal husbandry, or related work; must demonstrate the ability to increase knowledge of natural history, zoology, and general animal husbandry of the species and individual animals in area(s) of experience.
- AZA accreditation and USDA standards of animal care and husbandry; able to recognize inspection concerns and address issues with minimal guidance.
- Recognizes normal and abnormal animal behavior, feeding procedures, safe handling techniques, animal flight distances and aggressive behavior indicators, and signs of illness of animals.

- Basic veterinary care procedures, including proper restraint, wound care, and proper administration of oral and injectable medications.
- Wild animal behavioral management techniques, including environmental enrichment strategies and operant conditioning.
- Principles of animal welfare, including techniques to assess animal welfare, recognizing positive and negative indicators of welfare, and techniques to improve animal welfare.
- Advanced understanding of animal food preparation, nutrition, storage, and feeding techniques.
- Techniques for delivering educational and engaging zookeeper talks to the public.
- Plant taxonomy techniques to identify toxic and non-toxic plant species.
- Basic construction and tool use for maintenance of animal habitats and displays, including plant maintenance.
- Applicable Federal, State and local laws, codes, and regulations for animal care, handling, and welfare.
- Occupational hazards and standard safety practices, including zoonotic diseases.
- Desktop computer applications and knowledge of ZIMS database system or similar animal records database.
- Techniques for dealing effectively with the public and City staff.

Ability to:

- Use the tools of animal observation, enrichment, training and other management methods to ensure the best possible physical and psychological well-being of the animals in their care.
- Implement Zoo priorities as well as demonstrate the initiative and expertise to regularly find ways to make improvements.
- Learn, understand, and interpret rules and regulations governing the intake, care, and transportation of animals.
- Recognize normal and abnormal animal behavior and correctly interpret animal behavior.
- Handle potentially dangerous animals in a safe, humane, and efficient manner.
- Perform basic veterinary care and administer medications to all relevant animal types.
- Communicate with and assist guests. Take initiative to facilitate guests' appreciation of animals and enjoyment of their visit.
- Effectively represent the City at the Zoo.
- Practice safe work habits and train others in proper and safe work procedures.
- Prepare and maintain records, and utilize modern office and computer equipment.
- Work without supervision, organize own work, set priorities and meet critical time deadlines.
- Establish and maintain effective working relationships with those contacted in the course of work and work as part of a team.
- Use English effectively to communicate in person, over the telephone, and in writing.

- Use basic hand and power tools.

Education and Experience:

Any combination of training and experience that would provide the required knowledge, skills and abilities is qualifying. A typical way to obtain the required qualifications would be:

- Equivalent to a 4 year degree in zoology, biology, natural sciences, wildlife, or a related field, and
- The equivalent to one year of full-time experience (2080 hours) working with exotic/wild animals within a zoo operation, a wild animal park, wildlife rehabilitation center, or other animal facility.
- Experience working with exotic/wild animals within a zoo operation is preferred.
- Experience in an AZA accredited facility is highly desirable.

License:

- Valid California class C driver's license with satisfactory driving record.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

Must possess mobility to work in a standard office setting and use standard office equipment, including a computer, as well as in a zoo environment, and to inspect various animal care sites and habitats, including traversing uneven terrain, climbing ladders, stairs and other access points; to operate a motor vehicle and to visit various City and meeting sites; vision to read printed materials and a computer screen; and hearing and speech to communicate in person and over the telephone. This is primarily a field classification and standing in and walking between work areas will be required. Wrist flexion and lateral rotation are necessary in combination with grasping to handle tools and equipment. Finger dexterity is needed to access, enter and retrieve data using a computer keyboard, typewriter keyboard or calculator and to operate various hand and power tools and maintenance equipment. Positions in this classification frequently bend, stoop, kneel, and reach to perform work; push and pull drawers open and closed to retrieve and file information. Employees must possess the ability to lift, carry, push, and pull materials, objects, and animals necessary to perform job functions.

ENVIRONMENTAL ELEMENTS

Employees primarily work at outside animal care sites and habitats and may be exposed to inclement weather conditions and hazardous physical substances. May involve exposure to dangerous and/or diseased animals. Employees may interact with upset staff and/or public and private representatives in interpreting and enforcing departmental policies and procedures. This position will be around animals known to cause allergies.

WORKING CONDITIONS

May be required to work on evenings, weekends and holidays.