



THE MINISTRY FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

Role and Responsibilities at Zoos in New Zealand

WHAT IS A ZOO?

The term “zoo” is loosely used to capture places that hold animals for public display, conservation and education. These include places such as aquariums, aviaries, and wildlife parks. The animals they hold include native and exotic animals, and domestic and wild animals. Some of these have been in New Zealand for many years while others are relatively new arrivals.

OUR ROLE

The Ministry for Primary Industries’ (MPI) role at zoos in New Zealand is to ensure that animals of regulatory interest are contained and that animal welfare requirements are met. The main responsibilities of our role include:

- » approving specific zoos as containment facilities;
- » approving operators of those containment facilities;
- » auditing to ensure requirements are being met; and,
- » investigating any animal welfare concerns that are raised.

Not all zoos are classified under law as containment facilities. Of the 85 places in New Zealand that could be called a zoo, only about 20 are registered by MPI as containment facilities.

ZOO CONTAINMENT FACILITIES

While zoos hold a range of animals, the only ones that are of regulatory interest under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (HSNO) Act 1996 to MPI are those defined as a “new organism”. This mainly refers to any organism that was not present in a contained environment in New Zealand before 29 July 1998. Animals that are new organisms include lions, tigers, elephants, tarantulas and a range of bird species. Such animals cannot be legally released into the wider New Zealand environment, or owned by the general public as pets.

Zoos need special approvals (called HSNO approvals) to hold new organisms. These approvals are granted by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA). The EPA requires that all zoo animals are permanently held in containment facilities designed, constructed, and operated to securely contain each animal species. Only MPI can approve containment facilities and the operators responsible for them. In addition, legislation requires MPI to ensure that all zoos comply with HSNO containment facility and operator requirements.



REQUIREMENTS FOR ZOO CONTAINMENT FACILITIES

All HSNO approvals specify that zoo containment facilities must comply with the requirements of the **Containment Facilities for Zoo Animals Standard** (the “zoo standard”).

This standard, which is approved by the EPA, specifies the containment and operating requirements for holding animals. It is MPI’s responsibility to enforce this standard.

The zoo standard only applies to zoo animals that are new organisms and are not eligible for release into New Zealand. The primary purpose of containment is to prevent the animal’s escaping.

A containment facility such as a zoo may also hold animals that are not classified as new organisms, horses, geese and indigenous animals such as kiwis and tuatara. These animals are not subject to the requirements of the zoo standard.

AUDITING ZOO CONTAINMENT FACILITIES

Zoo containment facilities are audited to ensure they comply with the approvals they hold. Audits generally occur annually, though this frequency is increased if non-compliance becomes an issue. If required, MPI also has the ability to intervene

in the management of zoos to ensure they comply with their containment requirements.

Audits are carried out by biosecurity inspectors, warranted under the Biosecurity Act 1993, and are also New Organism Enforcement officers, warranted under the HSNO Act 1996.

ANIMAL WELFARE ACT 1999

The Biosecurity Act 1993 and the HSNO Act 1996 require MPI to proactively audit zoo containment facilities. While MPI also enforces the Animal Welfare Act 1999, this enforcement is carried out reactively. This means an animal welfare concern has to be raised with MPI before it is investigated. MPI does not carry out regular audits of zoo containment facilities to ensure that animal welfare requirements are met.

Anyone can raise an animal welfare concern with MPI by calling **0800 00 83 33**. All concerns are investigated by animal welfare inspectors, warranted under the Animal Welfare Act.

Compliance with animal welfare requirements is not part of a biosecurity inspectors routine audit of a zoo. However, if potential animal welfare concerns are identified during audits, biosecurity inspectors will notify animal welfare officers to follow up the concerns.

