

## **ARE YOU A COMMITTED ZOO KEEPER?**

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Nowadays zoological institutions have experienced a great evolution. At the present time zoo keepers are a key element. Any zoo it would work successfully in terms of animal welfare, reproductive success, sustainable use of the installations, etc., if their zoo keepers were not trained, motivated and excited to implement their task.

One of the biggest challenges we face is the pressure of the animalistic groups that attack our profession and institutions, in many cases, with lies or false and manipulated truths.

It is very important that, in a certain way, we work in front of the public and share all our effort in taking care of the animals under our care: how we prepare the food, why we put it in one way or in other way, why there are restricted zones to public, what we should encourage in our institutions, why we train and how to get closer to visitors by educational exhibitions, the power of facilities in education, how to transfer or treat our animals, or what happens when they die... Normalize situations or behaviors that are as normal as we are, and “desinfantilize”. Take advantage of the fact that there are more attractive species to the public to approach them to their habitats problems.

The self-criticism of our work and respect for our ideas is a very healthy and beneficial exercise: plans of species, reproduction, handling with species, euthanasia, veterinary techniques, education...

But can we do better the work we have assigned? Can we do something more inside and outside our zoological institution?

In this talk we will give some ideas about how to do better our work, taking into account some factors such as having a lower impact on the environment. But we will go further and review a set of actions that are available for all, including zoo keepers, and that involve a qualitative step in giving the correct importance that our profession deserves and in the exterior projection of it.

In the past the work of the zoo keepers was to clean and feed, nowadays in more and more institutions the caregiver is involved in plans of enrichment, training, formation and education. It is this preferential position that must be used to promote good environmental practices to our fellow worker, visitors and our immediate environment. And it is this commitment that should not be restricted to our work but try to apply it in our day to day.

We must be aware of the different problems that we have in our environment: animal trafficking, climate change, deforestation due to palm oil cultivation, the use of coltan in mobiles, just to mention a few. And transmit those values, get involved in projects, recycle, reduce consumption and reuse, travel respectfully and ethically with respect to animals, express our opinion, and something that is certainly dangerous, be aware of the impact of social networks. Of course, if we join together we can do wonderful things.