

The importance of the Keepers in Wildlife Veterinary Medicine

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The zookeeper is the first link in the care and prevention of diseases for animals under human care. The zookeeper is that person who works every day to provide optimal welfare to animals in their care. Therefore, the zookeeper must know the animal's biology (to understand and comprehend the needs of different species because it will be totally different when working between reptiles, mammals or fish); know their diets and how to present them (which will have an impact in its acceptance and consumption); be able to detect abnormal behaviors (to determine whether it is due to a behavioral problem or physical pain, since their approaches and solutions are totally different); create the most natural conditions possible in their enclosures (enabling the animal to be comfortable and perform natural species behaviors); know the normal appearances of their stools (since fecal matter is a result of the food digestion process, they must be able to determine if the stools are not normal for the species and therefore detect problems); be able to know the individual characteristics of the animal under their care (because every animal is unique, and in some species of animals, especially ones with more intellectual development, being able to detect behavioral, postural or attitude changes can indicate the presence of a pathogenic).

Considering the ecological triad, which states that to be free of disease there must be a balance between health, the host and the environment; an imbalance in any of these points will allow the development of disease. Of the three points mentioned above, the keeper can basically have an influence in the environment. It is very important to consider what this means. Since better conditions for animals, the incidences of diseases will decrease.

Another important part of the zookeeper's work is training, because it decreases the use of anesthetic drugs for different procedures (dispensing drugs for treatments); as well as an animal's participation in physical or chemical restraints, which together allow for the development of the best veterinary care possible.

And last but not least, there must be team work between the zookeeper and the veterinarian, since the success of preventive medicine as a cure depends on the joint work and efforts of these two parts.