



Gondwana Park Zoo Escaped Animal Policy

This document describes the policies, procedures and responsibilities in the event of an animal escape. Below are the three most critical terms and roles in an escaped animal scenario.

Animal escape code

A zoo's 'escape code' is a radio code signifying an animal is out of its primary enclosure. Gondwana Park Zoo's escape code is 'GPZ 99'.

Person-in-exhibit code

This code signifies that an unauthorised visitor, intruder or staff member is in an animal enclosure and is at risk from the animals in the exhibit, or that the animal is at risk from the person. Gondwana Park Zoo's person-in-exhibit code is 'GPZ 11'.

Recapture supervisor

The recapture supervisor is the curator. If the curator is absent the recapture supervisor is the area's senior keeper. If the area's senior keeper is unavailable, the keeper who is the most familiar with the animal becomes the recapture supervisor until another animal supervisor arrives. In the event of an animal escape in or from the animal hospital, the veterinarian or veterinary technician becomes the recapture supervisor.

GPZ's policy is that the appropriate radio code be called for any animal escape or person-in-exhibit incident.

Responsibilities

General manager, animal care department

- establishes and implements the policies, procedures and responsibilities relating to animal escape
- ensures this directive is reviewed annually in conjunction with all keepers and supervisors, CEO, GPZ board and committee members and GPZ security department
- ensures the animal care staff emergency telephone list is regularly updated and circulated within GPZ.

Recapture supervisor

- is primarily responsible for requesting the appropriate level of response depending on the species and the individual animal, its location (e.g. outside

its primary holding area but secondarily confined or approaching perimeter fence), time of day and proximity to visitors

- maintains control of all radio transmissions and employees during the event
- may designate another individual to assist with event logistics, including perimeter control and liaison with staff not directly involved with the recapture.

Veterinarian

- ensures that the veterinary staff maintains an animal escape protocol for equipment readiness, which shall be posted for hospital staff and revised annually and which shall include anaesthetic dosages for all species considered potentially dangerous at GPZ
- ensures that drugs and drug delivery systems suitable for recapture are available to the veterinary staff, that the veterinarians are trained for their use in escapes and that contact numbers for the veterinary emergencies telephone list is current and available to the appropriate animal staff, veterinary staff and security
- assists with the recapture supervisor as necessary
- works with the recapture supervisor when chemical mobilisation is required
- in some cases (e.g. in the absence of appropriate curator, supervisor, keeper, animal escape from the hospital or quarantine area) assumes the role of recapture supervisor.

Security department

- ensures these procedures are reviewed annually with each member of the security staff
- ensures each new security employee be given a copy of this directive along with the animal escape contact list
- ensures the animal escape contact list is always available to the security manager in the event of an escape at night
- ensures suitable calibre weapons and ammunition are available to the security team and that security officers or curatorial and animal care staff are trained and qualified to use them to kill or immobilise escaped animals.

Animal care (keeper) staff

- discusses passive containment strategies for their departments and ensures all staff are familiar with behavioural management techniques that allow animals to return to their home enclosures after an escape (e.g. graded response via passive opening of gates to allow animal to return on its own, baiting of the animal with food, negative reinforcement or 'herding' of non-dangerous animals, veterinary use of tranquilizer darts or finally destruction of a dangerous animal to protect a human life).

Discovery and notification

The person who discovers an escaped animal shall attempt to keep it under observation from a safe distance. Announcements of an animal escape shall occur as follows:

The person who discovers an escaped animal should announce the appropriate code on the radio to alert all GPZ staff of the situation. The initial announcement shall be made on the GPZ's animal radio channel.

Information to be conveyed

The first person to spot the escaped animal (whether a keeper or not) should state in the initial escape code radio announcement:

- the caller's name
- the escape phrase: 'code GPZ _ '
- the best possible description of the animal including species, age, sex and number of animals if there are more than one
- the animal's specific location and any direction in which it may be heading
- whether medical attention is needed
- the level of response requested, if known.

The first keeper or animal care supervisor responding to this call should confirm by repeating the transmission.

Actions by recapture supervisor

The recapture supervisor should then announce the animal's escape over the radio and request immediate perimeter gate closure if necessary. They should then request any necessary assistance from keeper staff, veterinarians, security, facilities staff and hospital staff. The recapture supervisor should request that both the vets and the security team be contacted by telephone if immediate assistance is required. Recapture supervisors or their designee should contact GPZ CEO to apprise them of the situation.

Response team

The following employees should respond to the code announcement as requested by the recapture supervisor (to keep the escape scene as clear and unencumbered as possible, employees should not report unless requested): keepers, animal care staff and managers, veterinary staff, security staff, hospital personnel and facilities staff.

Escape code contacts

The CEO's office / assistant shall notify GPZ personnel and marketing/publicity department as necessary using the contact list.

Immediate action by animal staff

The discoverer of the escaped animal should keep it under observation and not attempt to recapture it. The on-scene senior animal keeper with knowledge of the animal is the recapture supervisor until the arrival of the unit curator or manager who shall then assume the role of recapture supervisor. All keepers from the escaped animal's area should report to the scene but approach cautiously and listen for directions from the recapture supervisor. No attempt should be made to capture the animal until the recapture supervisor initiates a plan. Nets, gloves and other capture equipment should remain hidden at this time so it doesn't scare the animal into fight or flight mode.

Excess and unrelated radio traffic must be avoided. Once the recapture supervisor is in place, he or she shall control the radio traffic and may repeat the following:

"A {escape code} has been announced so radio traffic is hereby restricted. No persons may send or acknowledge radio traffic on the code channel except those involved in the code action"

After the initial announcements, GPZ's general manager, animal care shall rebroadcast the restriction announcement as required.

All other animal care supervisors should report to the scene only but stay at a safe distance until needed. All other animal keepers should await instructions and report to the scene only if requested by the recapture supervisor. They may be asked to form a perimeter or otherwise assist in the recapture. Nets, gloves and other capture equipment must remain hidden until requested by the recapture supervisor. The initial goal is to establish a wide perimeter around the escaped animal to try and contain it while a recovery plan is being formulated and to keep people safely away. Others may be involved in supervising the evacuation of visitors.

Recapture supervisor:

- directs keepers by radio in establishing the perimeter and requesting security assistance as necessary
- advises other supervisors to keep visitors and non-involved staff at a safe distance, inside buildings if necessary
- closes the perimeter gates by instructing other supervisors to have them closed if necessary (this should be done for any escaped carnivore or large primate)
- chooses a keeper with radio to assist the vet in carrying equipment during the recapture effort
- formulates a recapture plan and communicates details of that plan as necessary, requesting additional staff and recapture equipment as needed and delegates any of the above actions to another staff member in order to focus directly on the recapture effort calls off the 'code' when the animal is recaptured and secured.

Keeper:

- The escaped animal's unit should immediately implement a passive containment plan to allow the animal to return on its own to a home enclosure and/or to prepare an enclosure for the escaped animal after it is recaptured.
- If the escaped animal is outside the secondary containment and poses a risk of entering another animal enclosure appropriate keepers should immediately try to shift all bears, big cats, wolves, apes or other dangerous animals into their secure holdings.
- The primary enclosure from which the animal has escaped must be checked for breaches and cage mates, if any, should be counted and secured.
- At the direction of the recapture supervisor, keepers on the scene should be counted and secured.
- At the direction of the recapture supervisor, keepers on the scene should begin to establish a perimeter.
- There should be no premature attempt to recapture the animal and no nets, gloves or other capture equipment should be visible to the animal unless directed by the recapture supervisor.
- In the case of a dangerous escaped animal (e.g. a bear, big cat, ape or large monkey), only keepers and supervisors with radios should initially help to form the perimeter. In some instances this response must be made in vehicles affording protection to the responders. The perimeter should be well beyond the animal's flight distance. Other zoo staff may be asked to help form the perimeter.
- Once the perimeter is established, the recapture supervisor may direct the keepers to adjust the perimeter to allow or encourage the animal to return to its home enclosure on its own. The animal should not be approached closely

and there should be no waving, shouting or sudden movements that may alarm the animal.

Veterinary staff

- Veterinarians shall respond as quickly as possible if they judge they are needed or if they are requested to do so by the recapture supervisor.
- If capture or immobilizing equipment is needed the veterinary staff shall assemble the equipment and transport it to the scene.
- The vets shall work with the recapture supervisor to capture the animal.

In the case of night escapes, available security officers or building engineers should help to safely monitor the animal's location until appropriate curators, keepers and vets arrive.

After recapture

All GPZ staff should remain on standby in alert status until the stand-down order is given. When the escaped animal has been recaptured and secured, the recapture supervisor shall give a direct stand-down command, upon which the gates may be opened and the public may be allowed to use GPZ grounds. The recapture supervisor shall make an immediate verbal report to the CEO and assist marketing and publicity in preparing a statement for media if necessary. The recapture supervisor will request a debriefing of all staff involved immediately after the event. The recapture supervisor shall provide a written report of the incident to the director within 48 hours.

This document was adapted from the following book:

Irwin, M; Stoner, B; Cobaugh, A. 2013. *Zookeeping: An introduction to the Science and Technology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pages 82-84

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