

## ➤ ANIMAL HEALTH

The health care service is a joint responsibilities of the curators, keepers and the Zoo Veterinarians. Captive animal health care should not be restricted to the Veterinarians, medication and administration usually at sick points alone.

The whole health care services begin with the daily routine jobs of each captive wildlife keeper. He keeps the cage or enclosure of the species clean, uses various disinfectants on the floors, regularly, as well the moats and pools chlorination, observes the animals in order to discover its complaints since animals don't talk in human articulate speech.

To do these effectively, he must maintain a good relationship with the life animals as well have sound knowledge of the species life history and behavioural traits. The keeper actually is the first person to discover when an animals is sick through his daily routine observations. The Veterinary doctor depends very much on his information and the animal's life history records for diagnosis and medication.

In most Zoos of the World where there are Veterinary hospitals built and medically equipped within the Zoos, the teamwork is much more easier than when health care administrations are usually attached to outside location Veterinary hospitals. Whichever is the arrangement, the veterinarian diagnose and medicate while the keeper is the 'nurse'.

## ➤ HANDLING AND CARE OF WILD ANIMALS IN CAPTIVITY

The species keeper is the best handler. The way and manner the keeper handles an animals depend on his personal experience.

Good relationship between the keeper and the captive animals i.e friendship mentality in both parties, the aggressiveness or docility of individual animals, age and dynamism of the species will all determine the level of success in wildlife handling.

Yet captive animals require handling either during diagnoses or transfer to enable cage repairs or inter-zoo loans. Animals generally exhibit funny traits and behaviours which must be carefully noted. Individualism and uniqueness in handling wildlife cannot be over-emphasised. Observations and experiences reveal that members in the same enclosure, same species and age may behave differently.

A good illustration is the case of two male mangabey monkey *ceriocebus torquatus* in University of Ibadan Zoo. These animals were of the same parenthood and over 6 years in same captivity. The behavioural differences showed that while one will allow keeper direct entrance and body contact within the enclosure, the other is such readily aggressive and will not allow it has to be separated into the inner rooms.

Some Zoo inmates are fairly domesticated and their handling simple. For example, the peafowl – *Pava cristatus* and Donkeys could move around in free range as observed in wildlife Parks, Jos and University of Ibadan Zoo respectively.

## ➤ HANDLING FACILITIES

However, there are various facilities in Zoos usually for handling the inmates when necessary. These include capture net, for the capture of birds, and small mammals, trap cage usually small and movable, Quarantines-for new animals arriving Zoos and separation of sick ones for treatments. The hand gloves and safety boots are worn by both vet doctors and keepers etc.

- **The Quarantines:** These are special cages so to say in Zoos usually for the accommodation of new animals arriving g the zoo. They need to be quarantined for some time be it animals on transfer

from another Zoo, new purchase, or when hunters have just brought them out from the wild, there is the need to separate them.

The period of separation enhance the keepers and veterinary doctors the opportunities to study the uniqueness in such animals, the state of their health as well as the level of aggression or docility. These animals in themselves too, need to acclimatize to their new home and check on their new neighbors and species.

- **Trap Cages:** They are usually movable, transferable cages for the capture of Zoo inmates whenever there is need to do so. This happen when an animals is to be taken out of its species group perhaps on breeding loan to another zoo or just mere separation from others to enhance medical diagnosis and treatment.
- **Capture Nets:** These are particularly designed for the capture of smaller animals such as birds, small mammals and reptiles. They are built into different sizes. There is a long strong handle into which the net will be hanged. The long handle keeps the handler at a distance from the animals especially in species that are completely dangerous.