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POSTER

SHIFTING FROM REACTIVE ANIMAL WELFARE TO PROACTIVE ANIMAL WELFARE

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ABSTRACT

Driven by an increasing awareness and concern by the public about animal welfare, the importance of welfare for animals under human care has grown considerably over the past few decades. This resulted in increased pressure on animal carers to move from avoiding negative welfare to providing positive welfare for animals to justify keeping them under human care. Zoological institutions recently started to recognise and embrace positive animal welfare practices as a necessity to operate. The lack of information and proper structure behind animal welfare practices in wildlife institutions has often hindered the adoption of good animal welfare practices. Therefore, Mandai Wildlife Group (MWG) established a structured framework to transform our internal animal welfare practices. Our framework focused on shifting from a reactive to proactive mindset through three key pillars: (1) changing and enhancing staff perception, (2) overhauling animal welfare policies and guidelines, and (3) actively assessing animal welfare within our parks. These initiatives included equipping staff with basic animal welfare knowledge and welfare assessment techniques, introducing a targeted geriatric care plan, and starting an in-house animal welfare assessment to identify potential animal welfare issues. While this framework remains a work-in-progress, we observed that some initiatives worked well while others required further development to better realise their full potential. Moving ahead, we will continue to keep our staff engaged regarding animal welfare best practices, to evolve our guidelines, and to ensure that our animal welfare assessments are kept updated. These would be key to further enhancing the welfare of the over 1000 species and 15,000 individual animals that call Mandai home.

BIOGRAPHY

Claudia Tay is an Assistant Manager (Animal Welfare) at Mandai Wildlife Group (MWG), home to Singapore Zoo, Night Safari, River Wonders, and Jurong Bird Park. She leads the Animal Welfare Scientific Advisory Group at MWG, guiding staff to achieve positive welfare for all animals. She is also a member of World Association of Zoos and Aquariums' (WAZA) Ethics and Welfare Committee, South East Asian Zoos Association's (SEAZA) Animal Welfare and Ethics Committee, and European Association of Zoos and Aquaria's (EAZA) Animal Welfare Working Group. Additionally, she is currently a PhD Candidate from the University of Adelaide, studying the impact of humans on animal welfare in zoos.