

ORANGE COUNTY ZOOS

SUMMARY

Orange County is the only county in California that has two independently accredited zoos, the Santa Ana Zoo at Prentice Park in Santa Ana, operated by the City of Santa Ana, and the Orange County Zoo located inside the Irvine Regional Park, owned by the County of Orange.

Public information regarding them does not address veterinary services, the welfare, safety, care and feeding of the animals, or how the safety of the public is protected. The Grand Jury believes that the public has a right to be informed of the operation and management of our zoos, as well as the safety of the public, and the welfare of the animals.

Federal and state laws regulate the display and exhibition of animals. Accredited zoos must also comply with regulations regarding the operation and management of animals. The study of the two zoos revealed that both are managed suitably well, but the Grand Jury found that:

- the Santa Ana Zoo has no formal written training plan for zoo staff;
- the Orange County Zoo has no public restroom within the confines of the zoo; and
- the Orange County Zoo has a problem with declining attendance which accounts, at least in part, for the decrease in revenues.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

The Grand Jury interviewed zoo management and staff, toured the facilities, researched the federal and state statutes regarding animals and reviewed the accreditation agencies' regulations. During the tours, the Grand Jury:

- examined the animal exhibits and their enclosures;
- observed the staff's interaction with the animals;
- noted the cleanliness of the animals;
- inspected the hospitals;
- reviewed the operating guidelines; and
- reviewed the maintenance areas and the zoo grounds in general as to the safety of the public.

BACKGROUND

Zoos have been in existence for about 3500 years, the first one having been in Egypt in 1500 BC. Today, zoos abound on every populated continent. The first one in America was located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and opened on July 1, 1874, while the first one in California reportedly was the San Francisco Zoo that opened in 1889. In 1949, J. E. Prentice donated 12 acres of his citrus ranch to the city of Santa Ana with the stipulation that the city must keep 50 monkeys at all times. Construction of the Santa Ana Zoo was soon started and in 1952 it was open to the public.

The Orange County Zoo traces its roots back to 1905 when the red fox was introduced into the Irvine Park region. A small collection of animals was started in 1920 and a bird exhibit

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was added in 1935. The current modern zoo officially opened to the public in 1985 as the Irvine Park Zoo and has since changed its name to the Orange County Zoo. It is five acres in size and displays animals native to the southwestern United States.

During the course of the study, officials and staff of both zoos were interviewed and management hosted tours that included behind-the-scene activities such as birthing and maintenance areas, the hospitals, and offices.

Permits from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), California Department of Fish and Game, and the United States Department of the Interior are required to operate any California zoo. Inspections by the USDA, Orange County Fire Department, and the county Health Care Agency are done annually. These inspections are limited to the interests of each inspection agency; therefore, overall inspections as to the broader aspects of zoo operation are not regularly done. Accordingly, the Orange County Grand Jury launched a study of the management and operations of the two zoos.

SANTA ANA ZOO



The Santa Ana Zoo (SAZ) now occupies 20 acres within Santa Ana's Prentice Park and is operated by the City of Santa Ana Parks and Recreation Department. The original 12 acres donated by J.E. Prentice were supplemented by land acquisitions and purchases.

The exhibit area is 12 acres in size and currently displays about 250 neo-tropical mammals, reptiles, amphibians and birds, primarily from the Americas. There are also a few animals from Africa and Asia. The SAZ obtains most of its animals from other zoos, private breeders and animal brokers and from park rangers who rescue injured animals. Some exotic animals are bred at the SAZ in keeping with their animal conservation program. All other newly acquired animals have mandatory 30-day quarantine for disease control. The

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quarantine building is separated from all other buildings and has an outdoor pavilion. Veterinary and animal feed services are contracted from local providers. Nutrition guidelines published by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) are followed and specialty veterinarians are consulted for exotic animals.

There is a small hospital for animal quarantine and for medical treatment. Animals are vaccinated against disease by the contract veterinarian or by the sending agency. The hospital also has an X-ray room, surgery suite and two treatment rooms. A portable X-ray is available for on-site diagnostics. The staff reported an average of 25 deaths per year over the most recent four years. When an animal dies, the contract veterinarian performs a necropsy (animal autopsy) on those of small and medium size in order to determine the cause and manner of death. Necropsies are done in the surgical suite; however, a new necropsy resource is under construction and will be housed in a separate structure. Necropsies of large animals are not performed at the SAZ but are sent to the state facility in San Bernardino.

There is a special section at the SAZ called the Crean Family Farm featuring domestic farm animals that the patrons can view close-up. Some limited touching of these animals is allowed. Hand washing stations are available for those that touch the animals. This is a requirement for accreditation and is for the health and safety of the public. The SAZ is accredited by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) and is due for a re-accreditation in March of 2007. Curators are not licensed by the state of California, but the SAZ curator has a fellowship from the AZA.

The SAZ admission fee is \$6.00 for adults and \$3.00 for children ages three to twelve and for seniors. A train ride through the SAZ costs \$3.00 and children under three are free. On the second Tuesday of each month, free train rides are offered to all patrons in addition to free admission for all Santa Ana residents.

Annual operating budgets, revenues and attendances for the past three years are as follows:

	OPERATING BUDGET	REVENUE	ATTENDANCE
2003/2004	\$1,776,205	\$655,143.95	238,589
2004/2005	\$1,988,665	\$748,096.64	251,464
2005/2006	\$2,080,940	\$746,044.20	255,450

Since the annual operating expenses exceed the revenue, the balance of the operating costs is borne by the Santa Ana Parks and Recreation Department.

The most recent fire inspection was done in July 2006, and the most recent USDA inspection was done in August of 2006. The SAZ has a safety committee that assesses the safety of operations and reports to the Santa Ana Risk Management agency. The Santa Ana Parks Commission provides management advice. The SAZ management reported that it is a balancing act to provide safety to the patrons while allowing close visual access to the animals on display.

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During a tour of the SAZ, the Grand Jury observed wheelchair access in the restrooms and ramps to assist the disabled in elevated areas. Water fountains also are arranged for disabled access. Wheelchairs are available from the entrance ticket booth. A disaster plan and escaped animal plan have been developed and emergency drills are scheduled on a quarterly basis.

There are 15 full time staff and about 26 part time staff. Volunteers clean cages and feed the animals daily. All staff is vaccinated against rabies. The SAZ does not have a formal, written staff-training plan but does send some staff to special training presented by the AZA. The SAZ curator produces guidelines as internal training aids. Overall, the grounds were well kept and the staff was helpful and professional.

The SAZ does not participate in research projects but does have college students who observe animal behavior. The SAZ has many educational programs for its patrons and is focused on the education of small children and teens. Docent-led tours explain the habits of the animals. Some programs include interactive interpretations of animal skeletons and archeological artifacts. An interesting feature is the “Overnight at the Zoo” program whereby patrons and their children spend the night in a secured area under tents and are provided with an outdoor dinner in the evening, breakfast the next morning and a private tour. The SAZ also has a Zoomobile that brings the Zoo into neighborhoods.

Future expansion plans call for a new exhibit called “Tierra de Las Pampas” and will feature Llamas, Guanacos, a Giant Anteater and other South American animals. This exhibit is also forecast for 2008 and may occupy at least some portion of undeveloped space within SAZ boundaries. Funding will be through private donations and grants.

The Zoo’s website contains a map of the zoo showing the location of animals. A map of the exhibits is available at the entrance along with a list of animals on display. Information in English and Spanish can be found on www.santaanazoo.org

THE ORANGE COUNTY ZOO



The Orange County Zoo (OCZ) is owned by the County of Orange and is staffed and operated by the Harbors, Beaches and Parks division (HBP). It is a five acre zoo located within the Irvine Regional Park of which 2.5 acres are dedicated to the display of animals. The Grand Jury had difficulty in locating the Zoo entrance because directions are not clear. Indeed, OCZ management indicated that patrons had commented that the OCZ was a “well kept secret,” “hard to find,” or “not well known.”

On display there are 32 different species of animals, native to the southwestern United States, in naturalistic habitats in order to encourage natural behavior. In addition to animals, there is an extensive collection of native plants. The more dangerous animals such as bears and cougars are caged beyond human reach. This is to provide safety to the public as well as the animals. Signs provide botanical information and traditional Native American usage of the individual plants. The Grand Jury observed that some of these signs could not be read due to overgrowth of the surrounding vegetation. During the tour of the OCZ the tour guide indicated that it was sometimes difficult to balance the competing interests of public safety and accessibility to view, close-up, the animals on display. The animal food preparation and storage area was clean and special dietary information was clearly displayed. Veterinary and feed services are contracted from local service providers. Insects, worms, frozen mice, etc. are obtained from specialty providers. The contracts are for a three-year renewable period.

There is a barnyard area that features a variety of domestic farm animals, many of which are available for touching through the fence by children. Grain may be purchased by children to

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feed certain animals. Only one hand washing station is available and that is near the entrance. Restroom facilities and a drinking fountain could not be located inside OCZ. However, restrooms and drinking fountains are located in an adjacent area outside OCZ's main gate.

The Zoological Association of America (ZAOA) accredited the OCZ in 2004 for a five-year period.

A unique feature of OCZ is the on-line video camera system. There are four cameras; one at the bear exhibit, one at the beaver exhibit, one at the mountain lion exhibit and one at the entrance. The web-cams display video at one frame per four seconds and, as such, the pictures appear as a series of stills. A crafts room located inside the main building has a screen for displaying these videos. There are also displays of stuffed animals and animal skeletons as part of their educational program in this area.

Admission is \$2.00 per person ages three and over. However, since OCZ is located inside the Irvine Regional Park, an additional fee for entrance to the park is assessed per car. Wheelchairs are available for the disabled at the ticket booth.

The operating budget is funded by HBP. It should be noted that the budget is increasing, but the revenue from gate receipts is declining despite an entrance fee increase in 2004.

	OPERATING BUDGET	REVENUE	ATTENDANCE
2003/2004	\$762,917.80	\$123,447.00	163,732
2004/2005	\$982,486.93	\$189,707.00	108,909
2005/2006	\$978,108.28	\$163,959.00	102,296

The staff reported that an average of six animal deaths per year for the most recent five years had occurred. When a death occurs, the contract veterinarian performs a necropsy on the small and medium sized animals in the OCZ hospital in order to determine the cause and manner of death. Necropsies of large animals are not done at the OCZ hospital but sent to the state facility in San Bernardino. The hospital is small but adequate for the number of animals exhibited.

A written disaster plan and an escaped animal plan have been developed and approved by management. Safety inspections by the fire department are done annually, the most recent in October 2006. Inspections by the United States Department of Agriculture were done in June and November 2006.

OCZ information is available at www.oczoo.com .

FINDINGS

In accordance with California Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05, each finding will be responded to by the government entity to which it is addressed. The responses are to be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court. The 2006-2007 Orange County Grand Jury has arrived at the following findings:

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F-1. The Santa Ana Zoo has no formal written training plan for zoo keepers. It relies on the ability to get the new employees trained either by the existing staff and/or the courses/seminars offered by the AZA. This could lead to problems in the proper care and feeding of the animals if the key staff were to leave.

F-2. There are no public restroom and drinking fountains inside the Orange County Zoo. The public is not well served (especially children) when the restrooms and drinking fountains are not readily accessible.

F-3. The Orange County Zoo has a declining attendance which will ultimately require more funding from the citizens of Orange County or it will be closed.

A Response to Finding F-1 is requested from the City of Santa Ana Parks and Recreation Department.

Responses to Findings F-2 and F-3 are requested from the Harbors, Beaches and Parks division of the Orange County Resources and Development Management Department.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In accordance with California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, each recommendation will be responded to by the government entity to which it is addressed. The responses are to be submitted to the Presiding Officer of the Superior Court. Based on the findings of this report, the 2006-2007 Orange County Grand Jury makes the following recommendations:

R-1. That Santa Ana Zoo management develops a formal written zookeepers' training plan.

R-2. Make the zoo grounds of the Orange County Zoo more user friendly by providing a public restroom and a drinking fountain inside the zoo.

R-3. Develop ways to increase Orange County Zoo patronage, i.e. by providing better signs and maps to the public depicting the OCZ's location within the park, and promoting the park's attractions to entice more visitors.

A Response to Recommendation R-1 is requested from the City of Santa Ana Parks and Recreation Department.

Responses to Recommendations R-2 and R-3 are requested from the Harbors, Beaches and Parks division of the Orange County Resources and Development Management Department.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

The California Penal Code specifies the required permissible responses to the findings and recommendations contained in this report. The specific sections are quoted below:

§933.05(a) For purposes of subdivision (b) of Section 933, as to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:

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- (1) The respondent agrees with the finding.
 - (2) The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.
- (b) For purposes of subdivision (b) of Section 933, as to each grand jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:
- (1) The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.
 - (2) The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.
 - (3) The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.
 - (4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.