

Welfare Assessment of Mixed Species Aquariums

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Globally Zoo and Aquarium Associations are continually seeking to provide value to their membership and demonstrate to the general public that their members maintain a high standard of animal welfare for all animals in their care.

Aquariums in particular maintain unique and diverse populations of aquatic species often in single exhibit spaces and seek an industry-relevant approach to assessing and managing animal welfare.

The Zoo and Aquarium Association in the Australasia region has developed an Accreditation Program to substantiate its members' animal welfare and supporting practices.

Whereas traditional assessments of animal welfare have relied on avoidance of negative states, the ZAA Accreditation program has employed a body of knowledge called the Five Domains and actively investigates positive experiences for individual animals. The assessment tool has been developed to facilitate assessment of any species in any scenario.

SEA LIFE operates 4 large public aquariums within the ZAA membership and has worked with the ZAA Accreditation team in applying the Five Domains welfare assessment program to assess welfare states of animals in large ocean tank mixed species displays.

This presentation describes the implementation of an assessment tool that has enabled aquarium staff to gain an appreciation of external factors that likely influence and animal's welfare state and provides examples where SEA LIFE staff have gained a better understanding of areas where welfare may have been compromised and or enhanced.