

COMMISSARY STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT

The Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden (CZBG) developed the “standards and assessment program” (S&A) as a coaching tool to assist the curatorial staff and supervisory keepers in animal operations at the zoo. This program tailors each section to meet the needs of that animal area following the standards set up by United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Association of Zoo and Aquariums accreditation standards. The S&A will ensure that the supervisory staff is knowledgeable regarding all standards and that this knowledge can be transferred through the proper operations of their facility. The S&A was intended to provide staff with an assessment of how the area is performing in reference to set operating standards, recognition for maintaining high standards for the animal collection, and feedback to improve operating standards.

Introduction

Zoos need to provide food and supplies to the animals they exhibit. Every zoo has a different process or procedure but those zoos with a Commissary need to have an operating protocol and follow guidelines set internally as well as externally by the USDA and if that zoo is accredited then every five years by AZA (AZA, 2011; USDA, 1999).

For the Commissary at CZBG, the S&A was developed to achieve the best operating standards. It focuses on issues that are important in the process, procedure of ordering, handling, delivering, and service of food and supplies. This program will develop a solid team approach within the Commissary staff that results in the improved care of the animals and facilities to provide the best care of the animals leading to the best visitor engagement.

Pre-Inspection

The first step in the process of developing the standards and assessment document was to review and update, if needed, the Commissary standard operating procedure (SOP). Following the review and update of the SOP categories were outlined for the S&A. These categories (listed in Table 1) may be different at every institution but should cover all aspects of the duties of the Commissary. All Commissary personnel were provided with electronic and hard copies of the Commissary S&A program, prior to conducting any on-site inspections. Only Commissary supervisory keepers should be present during any inspection not all staff. The SA outline and checklist must be readied prior to the inspection. Sections of the SA involving any question and answer requirements should be completed during the initial phase of the examination which involves a few minutes at the beginning of the inspection to ask the supervisory keepers the knowledge questions.

Curatorial Staff conducting the S&A should take responsibility for preparing for the assessment, using the materials provided. During the process of the inspection, ask staff to help identify issues and opportunities to develop a plan to correct these issues and/or implement positive options for the future. Recognizing improvement and celebrating any identified success make this assessment meaningful to all involved. Feedback is provided to each member of the staff and any modifications are incorporated into operating procedures daily. During this entire process maintaining a positive influence for the staff and ensuring that any agreed upon actions are carried out in a timely manner has made the program successful.

A scoring system, weighted towards high priority articles, in association with the checklist was developed to be tallied upon the conclusion of the assessment. Any benchmarks achieved by the team should be recognized appropriately.

Inspection

Table 1 outlines the steps for the whole process of the standards and assessment program. These steps should be tailored to each facility developing this program. The sections used for the Commissary at CZBG were knowledge, equipment, Commissary building, hay barn, safety, people, and records/ordering.

The knowledge section was designed to ask at least 5 different questions in each inspection that cover the working knowledge of the facilities as well as cleaning/sanitation practices. Additionally, the staff should be knowledgeable on the SOP for all work areas including equipment. The equipment section checklist would cover all aspects of the equipment that the staff oversees in the Commissary. Table 2 shows an example used at CZBG. The Commissary building section would include all parts of the exterior and interior of the building. The checklist may list items from exterior doors in good condition to pest control measures in place and much more. This section also may include making sure the Commissary is clean and organized and all food is rotated first in first out. The hay barn section may have similar items in the check list as the Commissary building section. The CZBG hay barn section was tailored for our set-up and included items like no smoking signs present and readable to lights functional. The safety section was designed by our Safety Manager to meet the protocols and procedures that have been established zoo-wide. Some items included on our checklist were safety manual clear visible, MSDS folder up to date, cut gloves available and used, and exits properly marked. The people section covered everything to the physical appearance of the staff and interaction with internal/external personnel. While the records/ordering section went over our protocols for ordering and tracking items.

Debriefing and Follow-up

Once the inspection is completed the facilitator writes up the inspection results, comments and places the point values in the table. A total value is calculated and a list of all issues is developed. As with all sections other than knowledge some of the inspection process documented items for change or repair that will need to be discussed or budgeted as well as scheduled. Any item listed that can be changed or fixed immediately should be completed. Since feedback and follow-up was very important to the whole process making this list and

meeting with the Commissary staff is the last step. It is the intention of CZBG to complete 2-3 inspections per year.

REFERENCES

AZA accreditation standards and related policies 2011. Pp.9-10. www.aza.org

USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture). 1999b. Title 9 Code of Federal Regulations, Animals and Animal products, Part 3 – Standards. Washington, DC: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

Table 1. Step-by-step inspection guidelines

Plan Your Visit	Ensure that you have your materials readied and the key personnel are available during the time and date of your visit
Assemble	Greet your staff and state the purpose of your visit and the S&A.
Knowledge	Conduct the question and answer section applicable to the area of focus
Outside	Walk the outside of the facilities and cover all buildings
Evaluation	Begin the checklist portion of the S&A
Observation	Monitor staff during normal operations, if possible
Data	View data entry systems and ordering procedures.
Review	Re-examination of S&A checklist to determine and document means for improvement.
Follow-up	Return to the area with the action plan to ensure positive outcome
Archive	All reports and action plans will be on file in appropriate place

Table 2. An example table for the equipment section

Check	INSPECTION OF EQUIPMENT	Comments
	Truck is clean and free of trash and papers etc.	
	Truck lights work properly – interior and exterior	
	Truck hitch works properly	
	Truck license plate registration in date	
	Golf cart works properly	
	Browse trailer is clean and no major holes	
	Browse trailer hitch and lights work properly	
	Browse trailer license plate registration in date	
	Completed daily forklift checklist are on file	
	All pallet jacks are functional	
	Browse cooler temperature is accurate and at refrigeration temperature (33° to 40°F)	
	Browse cooler light is functional	
	Browse cooler is on a schedule to be cleaned once per week with a sign off sheet	
	Band Saw “point of contact” guard is in place	