

ANIMAL HANDLING GUIDES

Animals in the Children's Zoo:

Goats
Sheep
Sardinian donkeys

Llama
Alpaca

Animals in the Habitat:

Hissing cockroaches
Tarantula
Emperor scorpion
Snakes
Skink
Tortoise

Frogs
Hedgehogs
Chinchilla
Ferrets
Guinea pigs

GOATS AND SHEEP

Most of the goats and sheep enjoy being brushed or petted. Occasionally some of the individuals will reject the attention and this is ok. Volunteers are encouraged to spend time with them in their enclosure whenever they would like, but must have permission to do so and follow a few simple guidelines given by Children's Zoo staff. If a volunteer wants to take a goat or sheep **out** for walks, they must receive proper training from area keeper staff. It is very important to learn proper haltering and handling techniques and each animal's individual personalities. A volunteer must be able to demonstrate the ability to properly halter the animal. They must show ability to handle and control it before they will be considered a trained handler. Only trained handlers will be allowed to walk with a goat or sheep outside of its enclosure.

1. The public may touch and pet the animal only if the handler feels certain they have complete control.
2. They are NOT to be walked around the cat loop, Asian Adventure, or through the Patagonian Realm.
3. It is always very important to keep a firm hold on the lead rope at all times as these animals can spook and try to bolt for any number of reasons. Generally if you hold tight and remain calm they will settle back down. Try to always keep a hold should they try to bolt, but in the event that one of the animals escapes, it is very important to remain calm, try to gently walk up to it, grab the lead rope, and regain control. If that is not possible and you are carrying a radio then immediately call on the radio to "all Z units we have a CODE GREEN" sheep or goat and give the location and direction of travel. Wait for a response and listen for directions. Supervisors or the head keeper will facilitate in the recapture. If you are not carrying a radio then send someone to call for a keeper and stay with the animal until a keeper shows up. Remember to stay calm.

DONKEYS

The donkeys love attention and love to be brushed or petted. They can be worked within their enclosure quite easily without being haltered by most volunteers. The requirement for this is simply having an area keeper teach a few simple guidelines. JZC must still obtain permission to do so each time. If a JZC volunteer wants to take a donkey out for walks they must receive proper training from area keeper staff. It is very important to learn proper haltering and handling techniques and each animal's individual personalities. The JZC volunteer must be able to demonstrate the ability to properly halter the donkey. They must demonstrate ability to handle and control each animal before they are to be considered a trained handler. Only trained handlers will be allowed to walk with a donkey outside of its enclosure.

1. When walking the donkey, it is important to always walk with them on your right-hand side. This means you are on the animal's left. Always hold the lead rope securely in your right hand close to the donkey with the remaining slack in your left hand. For safety reasons NEVER wrap the rope around your hands or arms. Instead, hold the excess rope in a folded manner.
2. The donkey should know where you are at all times. If you need to walk around them, talk to them and slide your hand across their body as you walk around so they will know where you are. Donkeys can kick and/or bite, but as long as you don't startle them they are not likely to. Always be cautious of where their feet are so you do not accidentally get stepped on.
3. When walking a donkey outside the enclosure and around public, it is important to have another volunteer along to assist with crowd control and to keep people from spooking the animal. Up to two guests at a time may pet the donkey on the neck, shoulder, or back area. Do not allow anyone to walk behind the donkey. If for some reason you feel the animal is not in your full control it is perfectly fine to not allow touching by the public.
4. Each animal is different and will have certain personality and mannerisms that will require certain handling techniques.
5. Donkeys are NOT to be walked around the cat loop, Asian Adventure, or thru the Patagonian Realm.
6. It is very important to keep a firm hold on the lead rope at all times as these animals can spook easily and try to bolt. If you hold tight and remain calm they will usually settle back down. Try to always keep a hold should they try to bolt, but in the event that one of the animals escapes, it is very important to remain calm, try to gently walk up to it, grab the lead rope, and regain control. If that is not possible, then immediately call on the radio "all Z units we have a CODE GREEN donkey" and give the location and direction of travel. Wait for a response and listen for directions. Supervisors or the head keeper will facilitate in the recapture. If you are not carrying a radio then send someone to call for a keeper and keep the animal in sight until a keeper shows up. Remember to stay calm.

LLAMA and ALPACA

Although very curious, llamas and alpacas can be somewhat flighty and anxious of being touched. However, they are fun to work with and great to use in all of our education programs. Please use caution when working around them, and if you have questions, ask a staff member. After being taught a few guidelines, JZC volunteers may enter the llama/alpaca enclosure without an animal keeper to lead or groom it inside the enclosure. However, they must still ask for permission first and the llama or alpaca **MUST** be haltered inside the barn only. If a volunteer wants to take a llama or alpaca **out** for walks they must receive proper training from area keeper staff. It is very important to learn proper haltering, handling techniques, and each animal's individual personalities. They have different mannerisms and stubborn behaviors. A volunteer must be able to demonstrate the ability to properly halter each animal. They must **ALSO** show ability to handle and control each animal before they will be considered a trained handler. Only trained handlers will be allowed to walk with a llama or alpaca outside of its enclosure. A staff keeper must be present when you halter or unhalter the animals, and this must always be done in the barn.

1. When walking the llama or alpaca it is important to always walk with them on the right. This means you are on the animal's left. Always hold the lead rope securely in your right hand close to the animal and the remaining slack in your left hand. For safety reasons **NEVER** wrap the rope around your hands or arms, but hold the excess rope in a folded manner.
2. The llama/alpaca should know where you are at all times. If you need to walk around them, talk to them and pat them on the body as you walk around so they know where you are. They can kick, bite, or spit, but as long as you don't startle them they are not likely to.
3. When walking the llama/alpaca outside, it is important to have another volunteer along to assist with crowd control and to keep guests from spooking the animal. The public must stand back and just look.
4. They are **NOT** to be walked around the cat loop, Asian Adventure, or through the Patagonian Realm.
5. It is always very important to keep a firm hold on the lead at all times as these animals can spook and try to bolt for any number of reasons. If you hold tight and remain calm they will usually settle back down. Try to always keep a hold should they try to bolt, but in the event that one of the animals escapes, it is very important to remain calm, try to gently walk up to it, grab the lead rope, and regain control. If that is not possible and you are carrying a radio then immediately call on the radio to "all Z units we have a **CODE GREEN**" llama or alpaca and give the location and direction of travel. Wait for a response and listen for directions. Supervisors or the head keeper will facilitate in the recapture. If you are not carrying a radio then send someone to call for a keeper and stay with the animal until a keeper shows up. Remember to stay calm.

Listed below are the commands to be used when handling the llama and alpaca. Consistency is very important. Please use these commands and do not deviate from or change any of them. Failure to use commands will result in the denial of llama/alpaca handling privileges.

STEADY:	To hold the body in its current position. For example: lying down, standing, etc.
MOVE UP:	Move forward, continue moving forward
CUSH:	Lie down, sit. They are allowed to raise their head for comfort
ALL RIGHT:	Release a command. For example, to stand from cush or to release from control
GOOD:	Word of praise. Use this word whenever the animal does anything good. Llamas respond only to positive reinforcement.

MADAGASCAR HISSING COCKROACHES

*** HIGH RISK OF ESCAPE!!! ***

May be used outside when it is 65 - 92°F. This animal is fragile and the risk of injury if dropped is high. Volunteers are only allowed to display the cockroaches in the clear plastic terrariums. Staff are allowed to handle the cockroaches outside of the terrarium with caution.

1. **Use only adults cockroaches.** The small ones are too fast!
2. **Pick up the body with your thumb and finger in midsection with the palm of your other hand under the animal. If this technique is not possible, instead curl your fingers under the body and hold in your palm.** Do not squeeze! Remember, it might hiss when disturbed.
3. **Transport in a plastic terrarium with wet substrate** (paper towel, newspaper, wood chips, or moss). Keep them moist and warm.
4. **During cold weather transport in appropriate, labelled styrofoam container.**
5. **Make sure you are in a shady spot if outdoors.** As with all animals, and especially those in a terrarium, do not leave them in direct sunlight. They will overheat.

IF STAFF IS HANDLING, THE PUBLIC MAY TOUCH WITH ONE FINGER. USE YOUR JUDGMENT BASED ON THE TYPE OF AUDIENCE YOU HAVE. IT MIGHT BE BETTER JUST TO TAKE THE ENCLOSURE AROUND FOR VIEWING.



TARANTULA and EMPEROR SCORPION

*** Extremely fragile! Handle gently! ***

May be used outside only when it is 65 - 92°F. Both arachnids are EXTREMELY fragile and can be killed by even a short fall – Be gentle! Carry terrariums level and carefully!

1. The tarantula or scorpion are **never to be handled with bare hands** by volunteers. Trained staff is working to acclimate the scorpion to being handled but it will be a very long process.
2. As with all of our animals, **do not leave them in direct sunlight**.
3. **To remove:** Use an appropriately small transport box. Place the bottom of the container on its side in the animal's aquarium in front of the animal. Then very gently touch the arachnid on the legs with the lid and encourage it to crawl into the container. Once the arachnid is inside the container, slowly remove the container from the aquarium and very slowly ease it into an upright position, then put the top on the container. Be sure the lid is secure! Emperor scorpions are tropical animals and require you keep their habitat moist. **If cold weather, transport an arachnid in a styrofoam box by putting the terrarium inside with hot water bottle and pack towels around to prevent sliding of the smaller terrarium.**
4. **NEVER pick up a container by the lid or handles.** If the bottom slips out and the container drops, the tarantula or scorpion will be injured. Tarantulas are so fragile that their exoskeleton will shatter almost like glass. This results in a slow, agonizing death of the animal. Scorpions are slightly more hardy but can easily be deformed for life due to accidents
5. **Do NOT disturb during or within a week of molting.** Molting usually takes a few hours at most, but they will be extremely fragile afterward and should not be disturbed in any way for at least a week until their new exoskeleton hardens. When a tarantula is preparing to molt, it will flip over on its back or side. It is extremely rare for a tarantula to do this for any other reason. Dying spiders generally curl their legs under them. When a tarantula flips on its back, do not touch it.
6. When showing arachnids to the public, we encourage you to hold the container high enough so visitors can look under it and see their undersides. Both have very fascinating undersides!
7. **To return the arachnid to its aquarium** unclasp the lid and place the container in the aquarium. Gently tip the container on to its side and allow the tarantula or scorpion to exit on its own. **DO NOT** dump the animal out or shake it out. These are easily scared creatures who may be more inclined to continue hiding inside the transport box instead of leaving. You may touch it very lightly on the rear legs with tongs or snake hook if significant time has passed without exiting. However, keep in mind that this may cause the scorpion in particular to become even more scared/stubborn, as they have legs designed for holding on tightly. The most common defense for the scorpion will be to use her large, powerful pinchers to keep herself safe. This species of scorpion's stinger is extremely mild, like a bee sting, and should be secondary in your focus compared to the distance from her pincers to your skin.

FROGS

Do not use outside if the temperature is below 70° F. Minimize exposure and transport in styrofoam container in winter.

1. **Remove all rings, bracelets, watches, and anything else on your hands or wrists.**
2. **Wash your hands and forearms *thoroughly* with soap and water**, making sure to remove any remnants of lotions, perfumes, cleaning products, etc. that may have been on your skin. Amphibians have highly permeable skin which will absorb chemicals and kill them.
3. **Make sure your hands are very wet.** Wet your hands from the “frog water” bottle.
4. **Pick up the frog with both hands.** Cuddle the animal’s face into the palm of your hand. These are slippery little devils! If they see a way to make a break, they’re going to try to jump out of your hand.
5. **Transport these animals in small terrariums with a wet paper towel on the bottom. If the animal is to be out for an extended time (more than 30 minutes) place wet moss on top of the paper.** Remember to bring a small spray bottle of frog water with you at all times. **In cold weather, place the small carrier inside a styrofoam container.** Pack the styrofoam with towels to ensure the small container holding the frog will not slide around during travel. A hot water bottle is recommended for fall/winter and spring programs! Imagine how you would feel if you were outside, wet, in the cold!
6. **Do not remove the frog from the terrarium.** Children can see it just fine through the clear container. **If you want to hold the animal up for people to get a better look, use a larger terrarium but do not lift the animal out.**

NO PUBLIC TOUCHING!!



SNAKES

Do not use any reptile outside if the temperature is below 70° F. All reptiles must have 2 handlers at all times when taken out on grounds – one person to hold the animal and the second to dispense hand sanitizer.

1. **Do not use a snake that is beginning to shed** if the eyes are opaque or skin coloring is dull. A snake's skin is more sensitive to damage at this time. Also, a snake's eyesight is impaired when they are shedding and therefore they may be more easily startled and likely to strike.
2. **Do not use a snake that has eaten within 48 hours.** They will vomit. Check the feeding log
3. **Try to handle the snakes BEFORE handling other animals. Wash well between snakes.** Remember, the kingsnake eats other snakes in the wild! Any of our 3 snake species may smell animal scent on your skin or clothing, mistake it for food, and bite you. If bitten, do NOT pull your hand back. Reacting will hurt you worse and seriously injure the snake.
4. **Open enclosure door slowly just in case the snake is right next to door. Always find the snake's head first so you can prevent escapes.**
5. **Always alert the snake to your presence before picking it up.** This should be done through a combination of making sounds while opening the enclosure AND very gently stroking the snake about midway down its body before picking it up. Do not touch its head or tail area.
6. After gently touching the snake along its midsection, if you need to reposition it with a snake hook before picking it up, you may very gently do so. Once ready, gently slide your hands under the snake, avoiding the head and making certain you are supporting its weight evenly. Snakes are very nervous about having their heads or tails touched because this is where a predator would attack them. They may act defensively if you scare them. **BE CONFIDENT WITHOUT BEING SCARY!** We are the size of Godzilla to them, waking them up from their beds in their nice warm homes, and snakes are easily scared. If you feel nervous or hold them tightly, they will become nervous. Do not make sudden, jerky moves; move smoothly.
7. **Support the majority of its weight at all times.** Smaller snakes should be supported by both hands or comfortably coiled about one of your forearms. Starting at the back, weave its body along your arm while controlling the direction the head faces. Let it lie loosely in your arms.
8. **DO NOT allow snakes to wrap around your neck!** If it is starting to coil around where you don't want it to, unwrap starting at the snake's tail end first. Their back halves are weaker.
9. **When showing a snake, control the direction the snake's head is pointed so that the head is not pointed at the audience.**
10. **Protect from temperature extremes (hot or cold).** Do not place near heating or air conditioning vents.

11. **To transport**, place the snake in a clean pillowcase by lowering the snake gently into the case while supporting its total body weight.
 - a) Pull the case over the snake instead of pushing the animal into the case. Have the entire animal in the case before releasing your grip.
 - b) Allow the snake to settle into the case before securing. Tie the top of the pillowcase in a knot or use the plastic clips. Take special care to not tie the animal in the knot.
 - c) Transport in a styrofoam cooler. A warm water bottle should be added during the winter.
 - d) To remove the snake, look into the bag and locate the snake's head, then lower the sack around the snake. Do not force it!

12. **To return a snake**, support the weight of the body until the snake's entire body is resting fully on the bottom of its enclosure. Allow it to move its front half off of your hand first and then you may gently remove the back half from yourself. Always be aware of the location of the head so that it can't escape. Always wash your hands after handling a snake.

13. **Lock up exhibit! They are escape artists!**

14. Put soiled pillow cases in the laundry bin and return transport boxes to their proper location.

THE PUBLIC MAY TOUCH SNAKES MIDWAY DOWN BODY, USING A MAXIMUM OF 2 FINGERS TO STROKE IN SAME DIRECTION OF SCALES ONLY IF THE SNAKE IS CALM AND UNDER CONTROL. AVOID ANYONE TOUCHING THE HEAD.

VOLUNTEERS MAY ONLY HANDLE THE SMALL SNAKES THAT LIVE IN THE HABITAT. LARGE SNAKES REQUIRE SPECIALIZED TRAINING!

Snake Bite Protocol:

1. Handlers should be able to assess beforehand whether a snake is uncomfortable and in danger of striking. Most snake bites can be easily prevented. Signs of fear include: open mouth, hissing, frantic movement, turning body upside down, or lifting front quarter of body. If a snake is not calm, immediately remove the source of anxiety and secure them.

2. If the snake strikes you, **STAY CALM!!** The cornsnake, kingsnake, and ball python can not seriously hurt you with their teeth. If the snake does not release and is trying to swallow part of you, **STAY CALM!** The cornsnake, kingsnake, and ball python do not have the ability to sever a body part nor the ability to kill you. **DO NOT PULL BACK!!** They have rear-facing teeth. Pulling will rip your skin, turning a tiny puncture wound into a cut. Pulling back is also likely to rip out their teeth. Squirt vinegar into the mouth of the snake. It will release its bite.

3. Be sure to instruct the public to stay calm. You can help by staying calm yourself. Explain **WHY** snakes bite – out of fear or mistaken identity. For the snake's safety, the public should stay back while you remove a snake that is latched on due to having mistaken you for food.

4. Administer first aid if necessary, but do not bandage. Bandaging tends to increase infection risk with punctures. For legal reasons, make sure to complete an accident report afterward.

BLUE TONGUED SKINK

Do not use any reptile outside if the temperature is below 70° F. All reptiles must have 2 handlers at all times when taken out on grounds – one person to hold the animal and the second to dispense hand sanitizer.

- 1. Pick up the skink with both hands and always support its full body weight.**
- 2. Grasp the animal under the shoulders to control the head and front legs.**
- 3. Adjust the animal so that it rests comfortably on your forearm. Secure its head between your thumb and index finger, and secure one leg between your index and middle finger.**
- 4. Transport in a pillowcase and styrofoam.** See snake section for pillowcasing instructions.
- 5. The animal can only be touched when the handler is holding it and only when the skink is calm and under control. THE PUBLIC MAY TOUCH ITS BODY IN THE DIRECTION OF SCALES ONLY, USING 2 FINGERS MAXIMUM. AVOID TOUCHING ITS HEAD.**



TORTOISE

Do not use any reptile outside if the temperature is below 70° F. All reptiles must have 2 handlers at all times when taken out on grounds – one person to hold the animal and the second to dispense hand sanitizer.

1. **Grip firmly on both sides of the shell and lift.**
2. **Do not hold too tightly, but tight enough to maintain complete control of the animal.** A juvenile's bottom shell may be somewhat soft and quite delicate and the pancake tortoise shell is hinged on the sides.
3. **You may rest the back legs on your forearms** for additional support while displaying but be very careful not to drop it.
4. **Present over a table or on the ground.** They will be severely injured by a fall.
5. **Use both hands to hold firmly if carrying around/through an audience.**
6. **Never turn a tortoise upside down because this can suffocate it.**
7. **Transport in a pillowcase inside the labelled, small styrofoam container. A hot water bottle wrapped in a towel and additional towel layers may be included in cold weather.**
8. Since these animals sometimes urinate or defecate when held, you may use a paper towel underneath the hindquarters when picking it up.
9. The animal can only be touched by the public when a handler is holding it. **THE PUBLIC MAY TOUCH THE SHELL AND LEGS ONLY. NOT THE HEAD OR TAIL.**



AFRICAN PYGMY HEDGEHOGS

1. **Use gloved hands or a towel to gently pick up the animal.** Their spines will not harm you, but a barrier is needed to insure you don't drop the animal if it startles or jumps.
2. **Use both hands to handle securely or place on a flat surface on a towel.**
3. **These are timid animals and must feel relaxed and secure or they stay rolled in a ball.**
4. Transport in a carrier lined with newspaper and with a towel for it to hide under. Use a carrier cover when it's cold outside.
5. Since these animals sometimes urinate or defecate when held, you may use a paper towel underneath the hindquarters when picking it up.

PUBLIC MAY TOUCH ONLY WITH TWO FINGERS AND ONLY IF IT IS CALM.

CHINCHILLA

*** HIGH RISK OF ESCAPE!!! ***

Do not take outside if the temperature exceeds 80 degrees! These are nervous, timid animals and are easily stressed in crowded or chaotic situations. Chinchillas should be kept in a moderately cool environment. Temperatures approaching 90 degrees are fatal for them. All doors and windows should be closed before handling this animal.

1. **Hold hand out towards chinchilla and gradually slide under chest and abdomen to lift.**
2. **Bring the chinchilla towards you while securing the base of its tail between your index and middle finger.** The chinchilla will be sitting on your palm, facing your forearm with its tail tucked in your fingers.
3. **DO NOT grab the animal by the tail EVER!** Injury to the animal is possible and may result in loss of their tail!
4. **If necessary, a towel may be used to capture the chinchilla.**
5. Transport in a paper lined carrier with a towel for it to hide under. Cover carrier if it is cold.
6. Chinchillas will release their fur easily as a defense mechanism. Some chinchillas nibble on fingers but they generally do not bite. Be careful not to drop the animal. If the animal is flighty or restless, it is either scared, is being held too tightly, or may need to eliminate. Let the chinchilla rest in your hand while stroking it. This may help soothe an excited animal.

THE PUBLIC MAY TOUCH THE BODY WITH A MAXIMUM OF TWO FINGERS BUT ONLY IF THE CHINCHILLA IS CALM. NO TOUCHING OF ITS HEAD.

FERRETS

Ferrets are very active and curious. When holding and handling ferrets it is important to make the ferret feel comfortable and secure. Allow your hands to move with the animal. Do not restrain it too severely.

1. **Ferrets should be picked up from behind using two hands. Hold them with one hand cradling their chest and place the rest of the body along your forearm with its back legs on either side.** The ferret can be given additional support against your body. Support their full body weight at all times. You may allow your arm to rest on the table while presenting.
2. **A ferret should never be grabbed at or be picked up by its tail.** It hurts them and the ferret may bite if you do.
3. **Do not attempt to pick up ferrets when they are hyperactive** or rough-housing with each other. Speak to them calmly and confidently until they settle down.
4. Only demonstrate the flexibility of the spine if the animal is fully relaxed. **DO NOT FORCE.**
5. You must use the leash and halter if taking the ferret for a walk or presentations. The ferret should be exercised on the leash, in a ball, or in the exercise pen. Do not allow the animal to run loose in the Habitat.
6. Transport in a carrier and include a fleece blanket for it to hide under. Be mindful of fabric material used since ferrets can die from chewing fabric. Cover carrier when it is cold.
7. While the animal is on the ground/exercising, the public cannot touch. The animal can only be touched when a handler is holding it. **PUBLIC MAY TOUCH THE BODY WITH TWO FINGERS ONLY. FERRETS CAN BITE SHARPLY SO BE SURE TO ALWAYS KEEP THE HEAD AWAY FROM AUDIENCE**

BITING

Ferrets have thick, tough skin and play roughly with each other, which includes playful nipping. They need to learn they cannot bite their handlers. It is up to us to teach acceptable behavior. A ferret should never be hit for nipping because that may make it more aggressive.

1. At the first sign of nipping, the ferret should be redirected by moving its head away from your skin and saying, “no” firmly. If necessary reposition the animal in your arms.
2. IF the ferret continues to nip, say, “no” again and hold the ferret by the loose skin on the back of the neck until he settles. Afterwards, hold him comfortably and securely and talk soothingly. Rewarding good behavior is far more effective than punishing bad behavior.
3. If you feel it is not responding or represents a biting danger to the handler or the public, immediately return it to its enclosure/carrier and notify animal staff.

GUINEA PIGS

1. **Support guinea pig with both hands against your body. Do not allow any feet to dangle.** These are extremely timid animals and must feel secure in your hold.
2. Guinea pigs are docile, social animals. Stroking the head can calm the animal if it is stressed. As with all rodents, guinea pigs can bite hard if scared, but they are not likely to.
3. Transport in a small carrier lined with newspaper and a towel for it to hide under. Cover the crate when it is cold outside.

THE PUBLIC MAY TOUCH THE BODY WITH A MAXIMUM OF TWO FINGERS ONLY WHEN THE ANIMAL IS CALM, BEING HELD, AND THE HANDLER HAS CONTROL. NO TOUCHING THEIR HEAD IS ALLOWED.

