

## The Barn: Protocols and Messaging

### Mission in Action

When guests visit the The Barn, they will:

<b>Feel:</b>	<b>Safe</b> while visiting our parks
	A sense of <b>belonging</b> - developing a sense of community
	An <b>emotional connection</b> and <b>empathy</b> for wildlife
<b>Learn:</b>	The stories of individual animals in our care (e.g., name, age, personality, etc.)
	<b>Excellent animal wellbeing</b> is a top priority
<b>Act:</b>	<b>Connect with, and appreciate nature</b> – be a respectful wildlife observer

We will meet these outcomes by:

- Welcoming guests to The Barn (**belonging**) and setting up expectations using positive language, so guests know what to expect during their visit and what is expected of them (**safety and respectful wildlife viewing**).
- Observing throughout the habitat to ensure guests are behaving appropriately and the animals are comfortable (**safety and respectful wildlife viewing**).
- Demonstrating for guests how to be a respectful wildlife observer and modeling appropriate behavior (**respectful wildlife viewing**).
- Learning about the guests through observation and asking them questions. Sharing stories of our animals that are likely to be relevant or of interest to them (**belonging; empathy**).
- Thank the guests for visiting and being respectful of the animals and their habitat (**belonging**).

**Meeting these outcomes supports our mission: Empowering People. Saving Wildlife.**

### Hours of Operation

Intended hours of operation are below and are subject to change.

Dates	Indoor	Contact Yard	Notes
January 6 – February 28	10am – 4pm	CLOSED	
March 1 – 27	10am – 5pm	CLOSED	*Contact Yard is temperature-dependent, must be 40 degrees
March 28 - 31	10am – 5pm	WO*	
April 1 – 30	9am – 5pm	WO*	
May 1 – 22	9am – 5pm		May 30, 9am – 3pm (RendeZoo)
May 23 – August 16	9am – 6pm		
August 16 – 31	9am – 5pm		
Lantern Festival	7:30pm-10:30pm	CLOSED	
September 1 – 30	9am – 5pm	WO	
October 1 – 31	10am – 5pm	WO	
Boo at the Zoo Weekends	10am – 6pm	WO	
November 1 – 18	10am – 5pm	CLOSED	
November 19 – December 31	12pm – Close	CLOSED	Including Wildlights hours

## **Procedures, Policies and Protocols**

### **General Protocols:**

- Permitted items: wheelchairs and other mobility devices
- Items **not** permitted for animal wellbeing: food or drink (must be stored away), strollers, wagons,
- All guests must have on a shirt and shoes to enter.
- Guests may touch the animals and use the brushes on them if the animals choose to participate.
- No picking up, restraining, riding, chasing, or touching the horns of the animals.
- Respectful wildlife viewing will be demonstrated by walking and avoiding loud noises.
- Only Animal Care team members should feed the animals. This includes the hay or other browse provided inside the yard. Leave these items on the ground or feeding surface.
- No climbing on the stumps, logs, benches, platforms, or fences in the petting area. Feet should remain firmly on the ground, and parents are not allowed to hold their children over the fences.

### **Protocols for Education Volunteers and Staff:**

- The Barn requires a member of Animal Care to staff the double-door entrance and exit into the outside contact yard. It does not require a volunteer to staff the area.
- Education Team Members should not sign out a radio for The Barn. Animal Care Staff will usually be in the area with a radio, or you can use your cell phone to call the Daily Contact in the Education Office, if needed.
- Any injuries should be reported to an Animal Care staff member who will take on responsibility for the appropriate response.
- ZooAides should not be the only team members present in the contact yard at the Barn, but they can be the only Education team members. ZooAides can work alongside the Animal Care staff without an Adult Volunteer, Docent, or Interpreter present.
- Bags and other team members' items should be placed in the entry vestibule or should be kept with them. Bags and other items should not be left unattended in the Contact Yard.
- Water bottles should remain with team members.

### **Cold Weather Policy**

- For the wellbeing of our team members, the outdoor yard at the Barn will not be open if the temperature is below 40 degrees.
- Closures of the Barn will be communicated on the Visitor Engagement Portal.

### **Hot Weather Policy:**

- The Contact Yard at the Barn will not be open if the temperature is above 92 or the heat index is above 98. The indoor area of the Barn will remain open.
- If these accommodations do not meet your needs, or you have health concerns regarding the heat, please contact us to cancel your shift as early as possible

### **Emergency Weather Response:**

If potentially dangerous weather conditions are imminent, a Level 2 weather emergency will be announced on all radio channels as a Security Alert, and the outdoor Contact Yard at the Barn will close until the alert is

cleared. North America Animal Care staff will close and lock the Contact Yard.

ZooAides:

- For thunder and lightning: seek shelter inside the indoor Barn or return to the Education Building
- For tornadoes or severe weather: immediately seek shelter in the Prairie Outpost bathrooms or inside the Education Building
- Once in a safe space: call or text 614-724-3420 to let the ZooAide Supervisor know your location.

Adults (volunteers or interpreters):

- Clear the Contact Yard at the Barn of guests and encourage them to seek shelter, if appropriate.
- Seek shelter inside the indoor Barn for thunder and lightning, or the Prairie Outpost bathrooms or the Education Building for tornadoes or severe weather.
- Once in a safe space: call or text 614-724-3483 (or radio on channel 8) to alert the Daily Contact of your location and the team members who are with you.

**Emergency Response:** Refer to Safety and Security Training

**Service Animal Policy:**

- Service animals are permitted to enter anywhere that guests have access at The Barn. Animal Care will monitor animals for adverse signs and handle any situations that arise due to the presence of the service animal. If you notice any adverse behaviors, please contact the North America Animal Care team members at The Barn.

**Team Member Roles**

**Education Team Members (Volunteers and Staff):**

- Engage and educate guests by introducing the animals and providing interpretive messaging. Let the moment guide the message and gauge the interest of the guest.
- Demonstrate and encourage guests how to be a respectful wildlife observer by walking, using a quiet voice, and giving the animals space who choose not to interact with guests.
- Monitor any ornery animals and help advise parents of young children to move on to another animal, if necessary.
- Encourage guests to be respectful of the habitat by storing food and drink out of sight and disposing of trash and recyclables appropriately.
- Demonstrate to guests how to touch the animals safely and encourage them to use the provided brushes/combs, when appropriate.
- Sweep up droppings as they occur. The broom is near the southwest part of the yard, behind the fence.
- Thank the guests for visiting and encourage them to put back the brushes/combs and wash their hands after exiting.

**Animal Care Team Members:**

- Opening and closing The Barn yard for guests.
  - Unlocking gates for the day.
    - If the gates are locked when Education team members arrive for their first shift, they will wait outside until the Animal Care staff members are ready to open.
  - Clearing the yard and locking the gates at close.
- Monitor the double-door entrance/exit into the contact yard

- Communicate rules and guidelines to guests as they enter the yard
- Monitor the area to ensure it does not get too crowded, and adjust guest flow based on the number of active animals in the yard.
- Encourage guests to wash their hands upon exit
- Complete animal husbandry tasks
- Monitor and enforce expectations for animal or human safety

## **Team Member Training**

**Education Team Members:** An online training session is required yearly. The operations protocol is discussed in detail during training.

**Animal Care Team Members:** North America Trek Animal Care staff members receive training on all aspects of The Barn, husbandry of animals, and disease recognition. Animal Care Staff members receive an initial training period upon hire and utilize department-specific training to ensure they have full knowledge of the Contact Area and the animals that are in this area.

## **Animal Wellbeing: Choice and Control**

Animals in The Barn habitat are allowed to occupy any area in their habitat, both in the contact yard (outside) and inside the barn structure. Animals in The Barn are monitored for stress and always have access to their indoor area. They have ample areas to move out of reach of guests.

A substantial portion of the contact yard is shared with guests. Animals have the choice to interact directly or occupy space where guests can potentially interact with them. The physical interactions are brushing, combing, or petting. Guests are given instructions on interacting with the animals before entering the contact yard. If an animal does not want to interact, they can choose to move inside fenced-off areas.

Inside the barn, the animal spaces and guest spaces are separated by wooden fencing or rope (for feeding sessions). Animals have the choice to interact directly or occupy space where guests can potentially interact with them. If an animal does not want to interact, they can choose to move inside fenced-off areas. Guests may be given instructions on how to interact with the animals inside the barn itself.

## **Guest Engagement Examples**

### **Zoo Hoof Trim Program**

Mission-based Outcome: Learn that the CZFP is a trusted authority on animal wellbeing.

- Goats and sheep have hooves that act like built-in shoes, supporting them as they move. Because hooves grow nonstop, they need regular trims—just like fingernails—to keep the animals comfortable and healthy. Here at the Columbus Zoo, the Animal Care staff partners with experts from the Zoo Hoof Trim Program to learn the best ways to care for animal hooves. North America Trek staff use these skills to care for goats, sheep, reindeer, and moose.
  - Patty (one of our goats who has since passed away) had some issues with a crack in her hoof. Throughout her life, she received personalized care, which included custom-fitted “shoes”.
  - Link to learn more: <https://youtu.be/qbsW70gBKlc?si=jMI0z2nelJqHGMtE>

### **“Socializing” (Choice and Control)**

Mission-based Outcome: Feel empathy for wildlife.

- Sheep and goats are herd animals, meaning they generally prefer to be in groups. This helps them feel

safer and offers protection from predators. However, like people, some sheep and goats are outgoing and playful, while others prefer their own quiet corners. The Barn yard is able to offer the animals lots of room to roam and pick where and with whom they want to hang out.

- o Many of our barn animals enjoy being petted, combed, and brushed by our guests. This helps remove loose hair, increases blood flow, and may feel good for the animal. But this isn't just a spa day; it is also an enriching social interaction!
- o Sometimes, you might see goats or sheep butting heads or acting a little wild with each other. Don't worry—this is totally normal! Young animals often bump heads just for fun and to practice their moves, while older animals do it to figure out who's in charge. It's their way of talking and sorting things out, kind of like how people might play or have friendly arguments.