



# Animal Welfare Toolkit

## AITO Sustainable Tourism

AITO is committed to encouraging a sustainable approach to travel and this has always been part of the Association's DNA. Within AITO there is the Sustainable Tourism (ST) Committee, an in-house members forum responsible for supporting all members and affiliates in the wide ranging areas of responsible and sustainable tourism. AITO recognises the existential climate emergency and the need, now more than ever, to re-emerge from the global pandemic we have all faced and create a more sustainable future for customers, communities and the natural world. In 2021 AITO ST committee will be launching a series of free toolkits which are designed to help us all build back better during our resurgence. Our approach is one of collaboration and transparency and we welcome members questions, support and feedback gladly. Please contact us on [sustainabletourism@aito.com](mailto:sustainabletourism@aito.com)

## AITO Sustainable Tourism Committee Members



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## AITO Animal Welfare Toolkit: Build Back Better

**“Our economies, livelihoods and wellbeing all depend on our most precious asset: Nature”**  
- The Dasgupta Review, February 2021

2021 is providing the world with an opportunity to reset, a cleaner slate from which to rebuild our business and holidays. Now is the time to Build Back Better, and we need to do this for our natural world as much as our economies and societies.

Animals are intrinsic in many of our holidays; from safaris in the wild or in captive environments such as sanctuaries, through to using domesticated animals for riding or carrying. Tourism has the potential to help protect animals and nature, but without appropriate safeguards in place the result can be poor welfare, with not only the long term sustainability at risk, but company and destination reputation.

This toolkit has been created by the AITO Sustainable Tourism Committee for all AITO members to use freely. The resources have been constructed to help you design your own animal welfare policy, tips on implementation as well names of those you can contact directly that can help with the whole process if required. It is important that you use this resource as a guide and you ensure the end policy is personal and relevant to your own company.

## Thank you to ANIMONDIAL and FOUR PAWS for their help in creating this Toolkit



**Daniel Turner, Co-Founder and Director of ANIMONDIAL** Daniel has worked with the global travel industry for almost two decades, initially as tourism-lead at the Born Free Foundation and most recently as Director of the specialist consultancy, ANIMONDIAL. Taking a more pragmatic approach, he has been at the forefront of travel industry guidance and policy development and advocates animal-friendly travel where tourism is part of the solution.

**Emily Wilson, Head of Campaigns, FOUR PAWS UK** Emily has been campaigning for the welfare of wild, farmed and domesticated animals worldwide over past decade, and is currently heading up the campaigns team at FOUR PAWS UK, the British branch to the global animal welfare organisation FOUR PAWS.

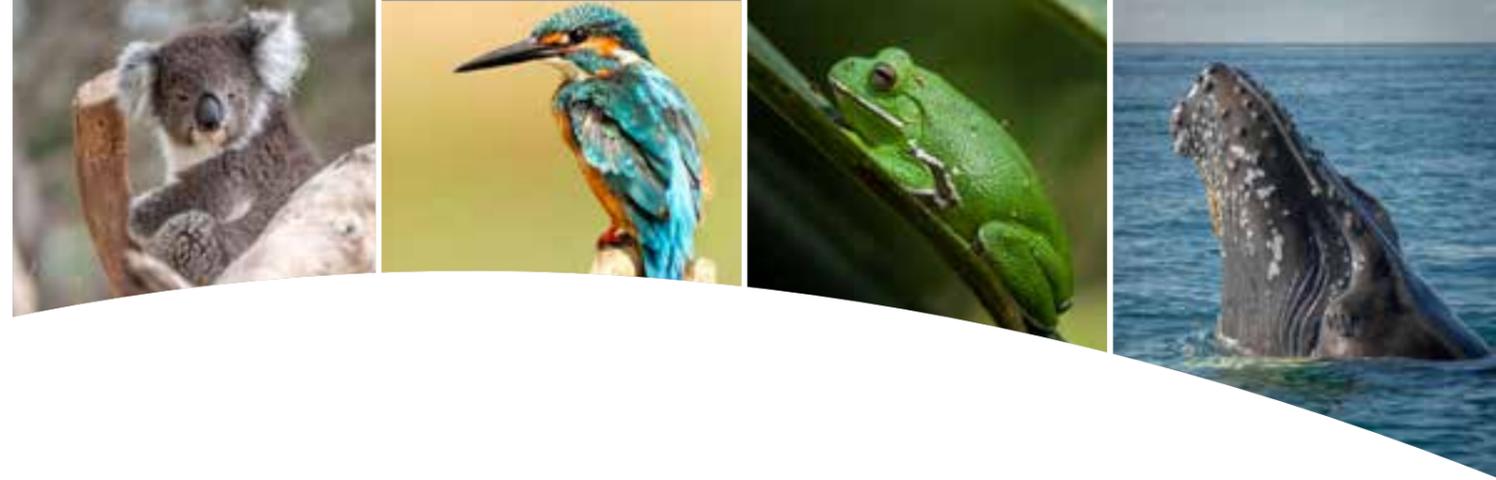


## Why Write an Animal Welfare Policy?

- ✔ It provides clear guidance for your staff and suppliers when designing and operating a holiday and will manage the expectations of your customers when they travel.
- ✔ The process of creating or updating a policy is itself a type of audit, a point of reflection to make improvements. It can be used to train staff and suppliers, educate customers, and also learn from their feedback so we can all move towards a fairer future.
- ✔ It is a great reason to communicate with your customers about the positive changes you are making as a company; The customer demand is changing in our new pandemic world; don't be left behind!

## Steps To Take Before You Write an Animal Welfare Policy

- 1. Understand what animal welfare is.** Animal welfare refers to the quality of life experienced by an animal and is most often influenced by the relationships they have with humans. Understanding the needs of animals and the impact tourism can have on their welfare is fundamental when first identifying and later managing any associated risks.
- 2. Read existing animal welfare policies** both in the travel industry and outside. You will be able to identify areas that are relevant to your own company and those which are not, allowing you to create one best suited to your needs. There are examples included in the RESOURCE section of this toolkit.
- 3. Meet with the relevant internal teams** involved in creating and executing the policy to ensure full support and engagement throughout the company.
- 4. Speak to your suppliers** about animal welfare, understand what needs improvement or monitoring by those running your holidays, who know the area best.



## The Structure of an Animal Welfare Policy

An animal welfare policy can be very simple, you can also copy and edit existing animal welfare templates (such as that provided by Intrepid). It is worth bearing in mind who will be reading the policy. Not all customers will want to know the intricate detail behind why a decision was made, however this would be useful to other teams who are communicating the changes internally and externally. A basic structure should include;

### 1. The company's aim or overall objective

This should be short and simple, a digestible sentence with your overarching goal.

### 2. An overview

A short paragraph detailing the key points from your policy.

### 3. A glossary of terminology

A glossary isn't strictly essential but it does allow for clarity, avoiding using similar words interchangeably which might mean different things in different countries or cultures. It is useful to define the difference between wild, domestic and tame animals and the different uses of domestic animals in tourism (riding, draft and pack). An example can be found in Explore's policy.

### 4. The guidelines

The guidelines themselves highlight how your values and principles will be translated in to clear practices, what is and isn't acceptable.

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## The Animal Welfare Guidelines

Guidelines should be relevant to the type of animal experiences available on your trips, your company ethos and pertinent to your customer base. Guidelines in each country or national park can also vary and should always be adhered with as a minimum. Examples include if you must stay on footpaths or roads whilst in national parks, how close you can be to an animal or how long you can stay in one place.

Some companies choose to segment their guidelines clearly with acceptable and unacceptable practices. Others might separate experiences with wildlife from those in captivity.

To maintain high standards in animal welfare the following practices are **acceptable** when the noted conditions are met and can be adapted to your own animal welfare guidelines:



## Wildlife Viewing in Vehicles, Boats or on Foot:

1. Always allow for an appropriate distance between animals in the wild and humans.
2. Do not have contact with, or feeding of, free-roaming animals in the wild.
3. Never manipulate or interrupt the natural behaviour of wild animals by, for example, provoking, chasing, cornering, calling or splitting herd animals or family units.
4. Removing wildlife or interfering with ecosystems can have a detrimental effect and should always be avoided. Examples include corals and sponges and plant life.
5. Avoid engaging in any trade of endangered wildlife products. Examples include eating shark fin soup, ivory, tiger teeth. It is also worth researching if your company currently includes trips to restaurants which specialise in bushmeat or pet meat. Bushmeat has been proven to contribute to poaching and can lead to tracts of virgin forest being removed to ease access to pockets of wildlife. Animals such as dogs and cats have endured unimaginable cruelty to end up on your plate, and both pets and bushmeat can transmit disease.

## Captive and Working Animals

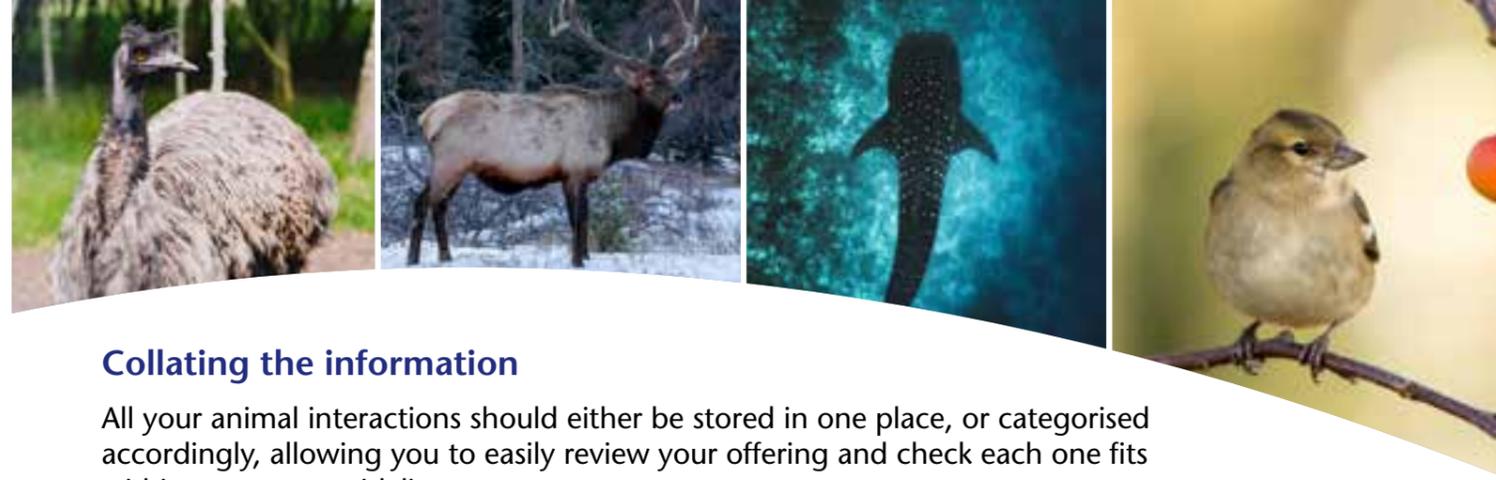
1. Any animal facility that is visited must meet the Five Domains of Animal Welfare as a minimum. The Five Domains model examines four physical aspects (domains) of an animal's wellbeing which, when combined, allow us to analyse the last domain - the psychological wellbeing of an animal. This model allows us to objectively assess an animal's quality of life. Sanctuaries and rescue centres do not breed or commercially exploit animals in their care. Anywhere where this happens should not be visited.
2. Working animals should carry loads equivalent for their size and ability. All equipment should fit properly and animals should have good access to food, water, rest and shade where needed.
3. Avoid all activities where animals are required to perform unnatural behaviours, where they are abused or harmed for entertainment purposes. Examples include circus shows, begging, bull-running, selfies with animals, walking with animals.

## Implementing Your Policy

Once you have created your guidelines you need to communicate your policy, implement the changes and ensure you have appropriate feedback mechanisms in place to continually monitor your animal experiences.

### 1. Audit Your Existing Animal Experiences

Auditing your existing offering is crucial, helping avoid greenwashing (words with no actions) and highlighting amazing projects you already offer in one accessible place. At the beginning of the process you would have met with the relevant teams to ensure that any guidelines created can be actively put in place, and now is a good time to start the audit process if you haven't already (or at the very least be clear in your communications that change is underway but does take time).



## Collating the information

All your animal interactions should either be stored in one place, or categorised accordingly, allowing you to easily review your offering and check each one fits within your new guidelines.

This can be in a simple spreadsheet which is accessible to any relevant team. It should include the date when the activity was last reviewed, perhaps indicating the type of activity and if it still is permissible with your new guidelines and the reasons behind this decision.

This gives transparency to all teams so that a similar activity in the future doesn't find its way back into your product offering by mistake. The customer sales team can also provide this information if they were asked by a customer why an itinerary has changed or if they could take part in a certain activity whilst away. It is a great source of information to the team developing new and exciting holidays who can reference if certain experiences should be offered, if they have in the past and if they should be included in the future.

It is worth including areas where you are not in control of the animal experiences (such as visiting a sanctuary or riding a camel), but where the customers might still be in contact with animals. For example visiting a market where animals are known to be sold (and could be caged, badly treated with risk of disease transmission), a town square known to have animals used for begging or certain restaurants selling pet meat or bushmeat. A commitment to animal protection is not just about curative measures but preventative.

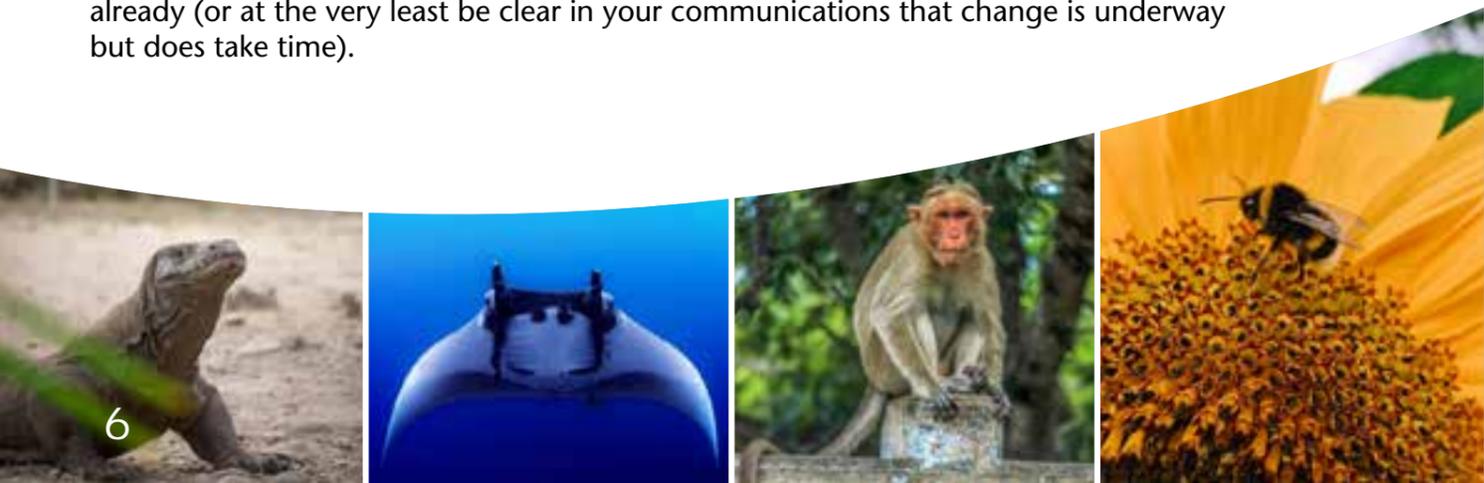
## An example can be found below:

Key	
	Interaction has been confirmed acceptable when company guidelines are adhered with (such as proximity to animals, length of stay, means to access them)
	Interaction that has to be checked with the supplier, or to give the customer guidelines as to how to interact with the animals
	Interaction confirmed as unacceptable practice. Company will need to work with the supplier to change what they do, with timelines, and then remove the product if standard is not met.

Country	Location	Type of Interaction	Trip Code	Flagged	Date of Review	Key notes (dated)	Date of Follow Up	Date Removed from Sale
Egypt	Cairo	Working animals - camels	AA		Jan-21	Camels are used in Cairo and we are checking with our agents about their care. We have agreed to check every six months.	Jul-21	n/a
Canada	Calgary	Animals in entertainment	BB		Jan-21	Calgary stampede - unacceptable	n/a	Jan-21
Tanzania	Serengeti National Park	Free roaming animals	DD		Jan-21	Drive safari - we have checked with our supplier, our own guidelines and the local guidelines are met and we are happy to assume this will be an ethical experience (Jan 21)	n/a	n/a

## Acting on your audit

In your guidelines section you will have outlined the steps you will take if you find acceptable and unacceptable experiences in your holidays. It is beneficial to expand on those steps alongside your audit spreadsheet so that everyone in the business, and externally if necessary, can follow them clearly.





### Acceptable Experiences

All experiences with animals that fall within your guidelines as acceptable might be given the green light but you still need to assess how frequently you need to review the same experiences. We know customer expectations change, our knowledge on protection issues changes, and as a result our guidelines and audits should change. The process you put in place should accommodate this.

### Unacceptable Experiences

All experiences with animals that fall outside of your acceptable guidelines need scrutiny. We do not recommend removing them from your offering immediately (unless they are harmful to the animal or customer). Instead it is advisable to speak to your suppliers, understand why any experience is substandard and how you can all work together to raise animal welfare and protection. Only through mutual understanding can we all make the improvements that are needed within animals in tourism. Give your suppliers reasonable time to make the changes they need and ensure you follow up with them in that time frame. If you do not see improvement, then remove the experience. If you are concerned that customers are booking on a holiday that you know might have an experience that is unacceptable then be open about this. Add a note in their communications or on itinerary notes which says “we are currently working alongside xxxx to raise their animal welfare standards. We have asked that the animals in enclosure B have easier and more frequent access to fresh water. We will be reviewing the improvements in 3 months time” (for example).

### The Grey Experiences

It is likely that some of your animal experiences will fall somewhere in between acceptable and unacceptable, and that's fine. These are the experiences that often need the most monitoring because you can't just cross them off your list, and you can't assume they are safe. They need to be part of an annual audit in the least. Examples might include visiting a sanctuary, riding animals, visiting a market place, eating in a restaurant known to sell bushmeat. Experiences where you know there will be direct contact with animals and where there could be weakness in their protection, even if you have been visiting the same place for years. Recognise that your business can also help to influence and encourage more appropriate product, delisting may be your immediate thought, but this doesn't necessarily deliver the desired result. Working with your suppliers to modify the experience will likely end in a win win for all, and a great PR story!

### Note

Your business doesn't need to use the phrases “acceptable” and “unacceptable”, it is just important that you can clearly categorise experiences to those you are confident are safe for all involved, those which are absolute no's and those that need more careful monitoring.

## 2. Communicate Your Policy

Create versions of your policy for the relevant teams highlighting their specific roles and responsibilities. There should be a succinct customer facing document that can be easily accessed on your website as well as access to the full version if they would like to see it. The customer sales team is likely to need some of the background information so they can understand fully the decisions that have been made and talk to customers about them if asked. Identifying animal-friendly alternatives to inappropriate products where possible.

Launch the policy to your staff and suppliers, using the opportunity to train and educate everyone so you are all familiar with the changes or new details. At the beginning of the process you should have gathered feedback from suppliers about their concerns or priorities and this is the opportunity to show how you have woven those into your guidelines, and if not why not. That transparency will be well received.

Launch the policy to your customers. This is a great opportunity to send a positive message to your customers and provide inspiration to your peers in the industry.

## 3. Feedback and Reviewing Your Policy

Developing a policy is not a linear process with a definitive ending. You will need to provide mechanisms for feedback from all angles and opportunity therefore for improvement.

**Pre Holiday:** Ideally information should be provided to clients prior to departure. For example, do you visit a sanctuary which you know is slightly substandard but you are currently working with the sanctuary to make improvements. Providing this transparently to customers from the beginning is the best option.

**On Holiday:** Customer documentation that they carry with them on holiday should provide a simple email address or contact number for them to report anything seen or experienced which you need to act on. It is also useful to provide the details for anyone (customer, staff or supplier) to raise the red flag with animal welfare charity Born Free who will investigate all animal welfare issues reported on their website; and this doesn't have to be connected with the customer's holiday at all, but provides that route for anyone to whistleblow on poor welfare standards.

**Post Holiday:** Tour leaders, guides and customers should be able to provide feedback on all aspects of their holiday after it has finished and a simple question included on animal welfare at this stage will prompt everyone to consider this issue and feedback to you - both positively and negatively. Embracing the feedback and making necessary changes openly and honestly is crucial.

**Suppliers:** Your suppliers (and tour leaders, guides, hosts) are your eyes and ears on the ground and their feedback is vital. Ensure there is a way to receive regular updates from those witnessing any animal experiences alongside your customers for a balanced perspective.



## Resources

### Independent Consultants and Animal Welfare Specialists

All of those listed below have worked alongside travel companies to help guide animal welfare policies or audited existing activities to ensure robust measures are in place. They can help you create or enhance your own commitment to animal welfare and some can perform the audit on your animal interactions.

**[ANIMONDIAL](#)** – Animal welfare consultants for the travel industry. They can provide guidance when creating your policy, or create a bespoke one on your behalf, support when integrating the policy in the business or completing an audit on your current animal experiences and interactions.

**[FOUR PAWS](#)** – The global animal welfare organisation for animals under direct human influence, which reveals suffering, rescues animals in need and protects them.

**[World Animal Protection](#)** – Our vision is a world where animals live free from cruelty and suffering.

**[Wild Welfare](#)** - Animal welfare specialists looking to inspire change, working with facilities to support long term change and challenge wild animal practices that compromise welfare.

**[Brooke](#)** - International charity that protects and improves the lives of horses, donkeys and mules. Useful resource for any company that offers riding in their activities and want to ensure the welfare of these working animals.

**[Born Free](#)** - International charity that is passionate about wild animal welfare and Compassionate Conservation. Their aim is to stop the exploitation and suffering of individual animals living in captivity or in the wild.

### Policy Examples in the Travel Industry

[Explore Worldwide](#)

[Exodus](#)

[G Adventures](#)

[Intrepid Travel](#)

### Templates

[Intrepid's Animal Welfare Policy Toolkit](#)

This toolkit provides a template which should be personalised to your own company and provides an excellent starting point.



### Additional Guidelines and Resources

[ABTA Animal Welfare Guidelines](#)

ABTA's Animal Welfare guidelines (2019 edition) and its supporting guidance manuals build upon the principles of the extended Five Domains Model (developed by Mellor & Beausoleil (2015), originally based on the Farm Animal Welfare Council's Five Freedoms (FAWC 1979)) and the Welfare Quality® criteria.

Full guidelines are available for ABTA members in their member zone and for non ABTA members for a fee. The overview manual is available publicly for FREE on their website.

[ANIMONDIAL Animal welfare in tourism starter kit](#)

The Starter Kit consists of a guidance manual for business-wide use, and a film specifically produced to aid product management and sales teams. It isn't free but does include a free consultation.

[ATTA International Adventure Travel Guide](#)

This FREE guide has been created for tour leaders and guides and the first section focuses on sustainability. Within this there is a section on animal welfare, page 10.

[CITES the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora](#)

An international agreement between governments which aims to ensure trade in species of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. This resource will be of particular interest for those offering experiences which includes elephants, tigers, primates and marine animals.

[FOUR PAWS Animal-friendly travel welfare guidelines](#)

These FREE guidelines have been developed to help your company develop your own animal-friendly travel policy.

[IUCN Red List](#)

The IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria are intended to be an easily and widely understood system for classifying species at high risk of global extinction. It divides species into nine categories: Not Evaluated, Data Deficient, Least Concern, Near Threatened, Vulnerable, Endangered, Critically Endangered, Extinct in the Wild and Extinct.

[Wild Welfare](#)

Wild welfare offer a range of resources on their website, some of which are detailed here:

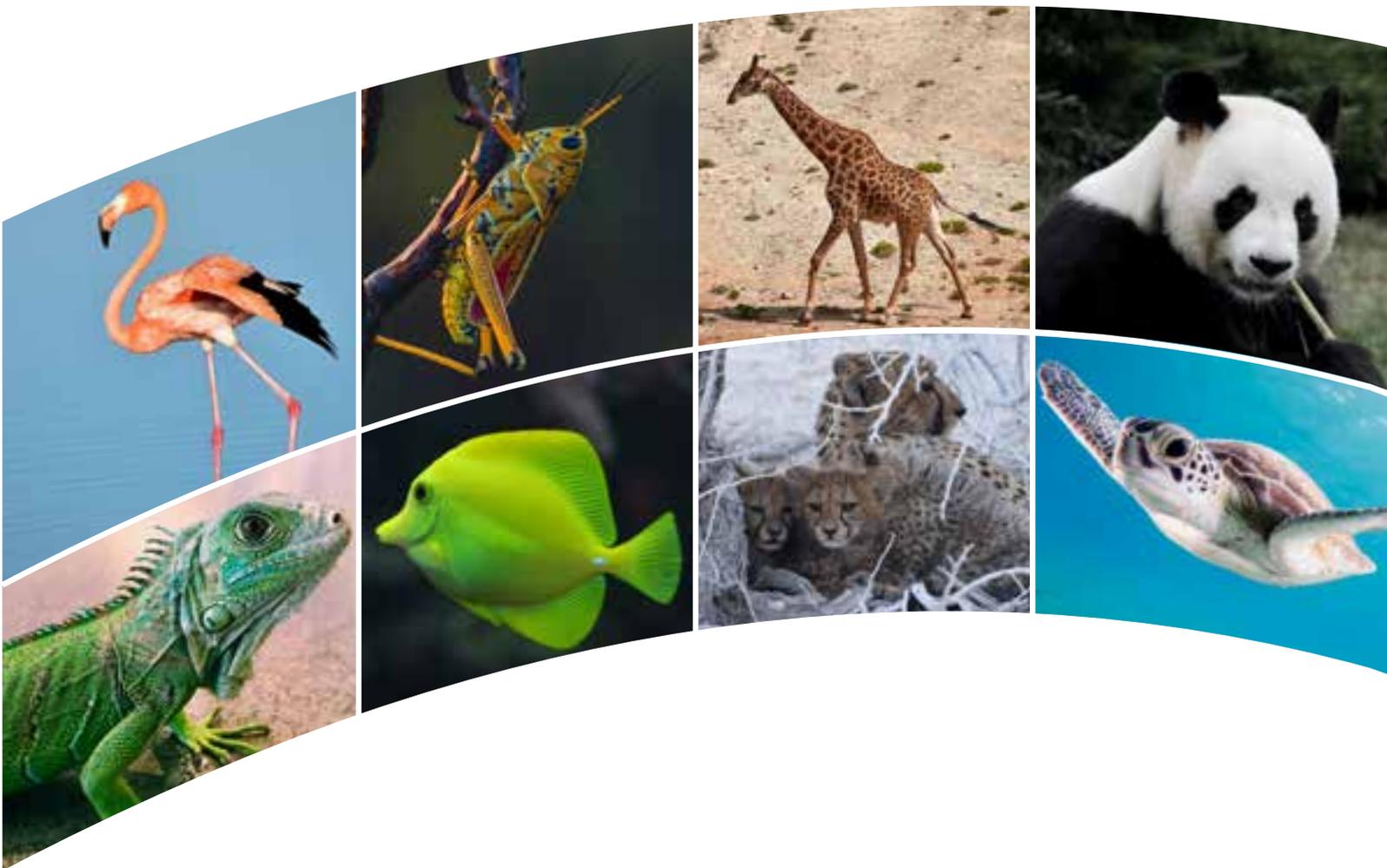
[A guide on animal welfare in tourism](#)

[Care for Us Documents](#) provide foundation guidelines on species specific care, such as koala, lemur and lions.

[What is animal welfare?](#)

# AITO

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