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ave you ever waved to a giraffe, laughed at a chimpanzee, or gotten splashed by a killer whale? Chances are, you met the animal at a zoo, aquarium, or theme park.

Some animal rights activists believe that no animal—not even dogs and cats—should ever live in captivity, but this is an extreme view. At the other extreme are very early zookeeping practices. From the 1890s through the 1930s, zoo animals often lived alone in small cages with concrete floors. Today, treating an animal that way seems wrong. But how should we treat animals? What is OK, and what isn't?



Why Zoos?

We keep animals in zoos or as pets for many reasons. Sometimes the motivation is to rescue an animal or a group of animals. Hawks that fly into windows, black bears that roam through human towns, and harbor seals that swim into propellers often end up in zoos. Other times a species, such as the Asian elephant, is endangered in the wild. Zoo populations help ensure that these rare animals survive. We also keep animals in captivity because we enjoy seeing them and spending time with them.

But do they enjoy spending time with us? Are they happy? Animals likely don't experience emotions the same way we do. But if you have a pet dog at home, you know the difference between a tail-wagging

“happy” dog, and a tail-between-the-legs “sad” dog. “Professional zookeepers know their animals as well as people at home know their dogs,” says Don Moore. He works at the Smithsonian National Zoological Park in Washington, D.C. He feels that our moral responsibility is to give animals the best lives possible. At his zoo, they have programs to make sure each species gets the best and most natural food, water, shelter, and care possible. “We enrich their bodies and minds on a daily basis for all animals, from ants to zebras,” he says.

Conversations about the way animals **should** be treated are ongoing. Each of the following stories raises ethical questions. Read them and decide for yourself—did the people involved do the right thing?