

Carcass Feeding....It's for the Birds

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Letter to the editor...

“Something needs to be done at the zoo. Every time I go there, the animals are sleeping. Can’t we give them medicine to make them sleep at night? The zoo keepers could prod them with a stick to help make them more entertaining.”

Ed. Note: Research indicates the animals are bored with the quality of the visitors.”

Enter Enrichment...

*A dynamic **process** which structures and changes an animal's environment in a way that provides behavioral **choices** to animals and draws out their **species-appropriate** behaviors and abilities and enhances their **welfare**.*

AZA Behavioral Advisory Group, 1999



Lunch in the wild



Lunch in the wild



Complex and time consuming feeding

Lunch at the Zoo



Zoo or Wild?



Raptor Feeding Strategies



Program Goals

- Improve animal welfare
- Increase natural behavior on exhibit
- Increase visitor stay time at exhibits
- Promote visitor support of the natural feeding program.



Program Steps

- Staff buy-in – build a case
- Multi-departmental participation - Roles
 - Animal Care, Education, Marketing/PR, Interpretive Services, Visitor Services
- Proactive problem solving – What issues might you encounter???
- Educational messages - Don't apologize
 - Great welfare, We are carnivores (i.e. eat animals) too
- Data collection
 - Visitor stay time
 - Visitor opinion
 - Animal behavior



Longer stay time
More \$\$

Benefits of Carcass Feeding

1. Opportunities for natural feeding and social behavior.
2. Increased length of feeding and processing time
3. Oral health: benefit to teeth and gums (mammals)
4. Increased muscle tone due to the physical demands of manipulating a carcass
5. Increase in grooming time through cleaning following feeding.
6. Reduced boredom or stereotypical behavior.

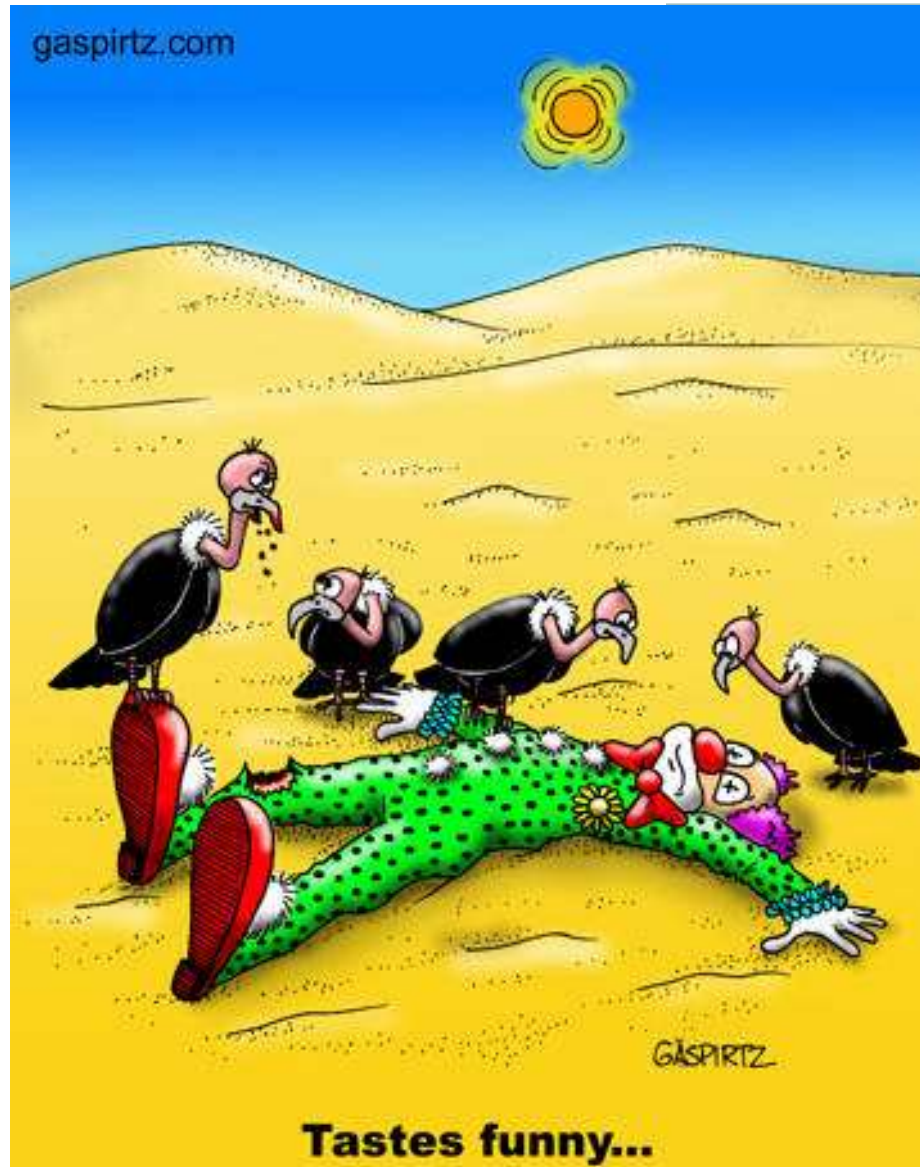
Benefits of Carcass Feeding

7. Mental stimulation through processing of the carcass - defurring/defeathering, tearing into, burying, etc.
8. More active animals on exhibit.
9. *Increased viewing time at exhibits*
10. *Provide public with a better understanding of species natural history.*
11. *Increased educational opportunity with a captive and curious audience.*

Potential Risks of Carcass Feeding

1. Potential for aggression during social feedings
2. Impaction, obstruction, perforation (caused by bones, fur, feathers).
3. Possibility of contaminated meat - bacteria or other parasites.
4. Negative visitor reaction.

gaspirtz.com



Tastes funny...

Potential Risks: Aggression



- Evaluate each animal group for potential of aggression
- Ensure that all have opportunities to participate.
- Increase # of carcasses if necessary

How much aggression is appropriate?

Potential Risks: Impaction, obstruction, perforation



- Recognize that carnivores are adapted to this type of feeding
- Observe animals with their carcasses to ensure well being
- No cooked bones

Potential Risks: Contamination: Criteria for Carcasses

- Known cause of death (if questionable, then not fed out)
- No chemical euthanasia or drugs prior to death
- May not be thawed and refrozen
- Staff inspect externally and internally
- Anti-bacterial wash?
- Eviscerate?



Potential Risks: Negative Visitor Reaction

- “Natural Feeding Program”
- Proactive - Buy-in from Director, Board, Staff, Media
- Highlight in the media to get *your* message out
- Live interpreters
- Signage



“Warning Signs”

- Entrance gates
- In front of exhibits
- Time and location
- Explanation of carcass in exhibit



Complex and time consuming carcass feeding





Don't Forget About Program Raptors!

- Pieces and Parts
- Weight management



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