Handout: Normal Behaviour for Species from the Range

Understanding the normal behaviour of animals, both in their natural habitats and in captivity, is crucial for their care and well-being. This handout explores the typical behaviours of various species, including social behaviour, activity levels, sleeping patterns, eating and drinking habits, and mating and pregnancy. Additionally, it addresses how environmental factors such as companionship, seasonal changes, and accommodation can influence these behaviours.

Normal Behaviour of Animals

1. Social Behaviour

Natural Habitat:

- **Lions:** Live in prides with complex social structures.
- **Wolves:** Form packs with a clear hierarchy.
- **Elephants:** Live in matriarchal herds, with strong social bonds.

Captivity:

- **Lions:** Can exhibit stress if isolated; benefit from enrichment activities.
- **Wolves:** Require social groups to maintain natural behaviours.
- **Elephants:** Need ample space and social interactions to thrive.

2. Activity Levels

Natural Habitat:

- **Cheetahs:** High activity levels, sprinting for short bursts during hunts.
- **Sloths:** Very low activity, spending most of their time resting.
- **Dolphins:** Highly active, swimming long distances and engaging in playful behaviours.

Captivity:

- **Cheetahs:** Require large enclosures to simulate natural hunting behaviours.
- **Sloths:** Maintain low activity but need varied structures to climb.
- **Dolphins:** Need large, enriched environments to engage in natural swimming and social behaviours.

3. Sleeping Patterns

Natural Habitat:

- **Nocturnal Animals (e.g., Owls):** Active at night, sleep during the day.
- **Diurnal Animals (e.g., Zebras):** Active during the day, sleep at night.
- **Crepuscular Animals (e.g., Deer):** Most active during dawn and dusk.

Captivity:

- **Nocturnal Animals:** Enclosures should allow for undisturbed daytime sleep.
- **Diurnal Animals:** Need access to sunlight and natural day-night cycles.
- **Crepuscular Animals:** Enclosures should accommodate activity peaks during dawn and dusk.

4. Eating and Drinking

Natural Habitat:

- **Herbivores (e.g., Giraffes):** Graze or browse throughout the day.
- **Carnivores (e.g., Tigers):** Hunt and eat large meals less frequently.
- **Omnivores (e.g., Bears):** Forage for a variety of foods.

Captivity:

- **Herbivores:** Need constant access to appropriate vegetation.
- **Carnivores:** Require diet similar to natural prey and feeding enrichment.
- **Omnivores:** Benefit from a varied diet and opportunities to forage.

5. Mating and Pregnancy

Natural Habitat:

- **Monogamous Species (e.g., Swans):** Form lifelong pairs.
- **Polygamous Species (e.g., Lions):** One male mates with multiple females.
- **Seasonal Breeders (e.g., Deer):** Breed at specific times of the year.

Captivity:

- **Monogamous Species:** Should be housed with their mate if possible.
- **Polygamous Species:** Need appropriate social groups for natural breeding.
- **Seasonal Breeders:** Environmental cues can help maintain natural breeding cycles.

Environmental Factors Influencing Behaviour

1. With or Without Companionship

- **Companionship:** Social animals (e.g., primates, parrots) thrive in groups, while solitary species (e.g., tigers) may prefer isolation.
- **Without Companionship:** Can lead to stress, anxiety, and abnormal behaviours in social species.

2. Time of the Year / Seasonal Changes

- **Seasonal Changes:** Influence breeding cycles, migration patterns, and activity levels.
- **Example:** Deer become more active during the breeding season (rut).

3. Accommodation Size and Design, Including Temperature

- **Size and Design:** Enclosures must be large and complex enough to allow natural behaviours (e.g., climbing structures for monkeys, swimming areas for fish).
- **Temperature:** Must mimic natural habitat conditions to support normal behaviour (e.g., heat lamps for reptiles, cool environments for penguins).