



Zoo Inspection Report

Date of inspection: 27 to 28/05/2025 Date report completed: 08/06/2025

Name of applicant or current licence holder: Dr Christoph Schwitzer

Name and address of zoo: Dublin Zoo
Phoenix Park
Dublin 8
Eircode: D08 AC98

Contact email (name): info@dublinzoo.ie Miguel Bueno

Telephone number: 014748900 Licence number: ZOO/Z/DZO/2024

Date of last inspection: 08/04/2024 Type of last inspection: Full

Current licence period: 31/12/2025 This inspection type: A

The inspection type falls into one of three focus categories where a operational area of the zoo remains unchanged annually and is therefore assessed every three years, allowing additional time to assess animal welfare and management. However, where an issue arises or is part of an enforcement action other areas of the zoo may be assessed at the discretion of the zoo inspection team.

Inspection focus: (A) Conservation, Research and Education | (B) Public Safety | (C) Operational Practices

Mandatory: Animal welfare, including husbandry; population management; and enforcement action assessments (S11)

Name of inspector(s)	Title
Dr Michael Griffith MRCVS	NPWS Zoo Inspector
Dr Neil Forbes FRCVS	NPWS Zoo Inspector

Name of zoo representative(s)	Title
Dr Christoph Schwitzer PhD	Zoo Director
Miguel Bueno	Zoo Curator
Marc Enderby	Assistant Zoo Curator
Dr Frank O'Sullivan / Dr Emma Flynn	Zoo Veterinarians

Inspector's checklist:

Arrival time: 2 day Finish time: 2 day Total inspection time: 13hrs 30m

Inspection findings reviewed with zoo representative: Yes ☒ No NA
Inspection report complete: Yes ☒ No NA
Inspection report under went peer review: Yes ☒ No NA
Inspectors signed and dated: Yes ☒ No NA
Original sent to NPWS: Yes ☒ No NA

Report peer reviewer: JC

Peer review date: 14/07/25

Please note peer review is an internal process of peer review of the contents of the inspection report and does not refer to a peer review of the zoological collection itself. It is used by the inspectors to ensure consistency and robustness in reporting.

When this form has been completed and signed the original must be sent to Zoo Licensing, National Parks and Wildlife Services, 90 King Street North, Dublin 7, D07 N7CV or by email to zoos@npws.gov.ie

Preamble to inspectors' report

Preamble to inspector's report, this might include general background about the zoo (type of collection, size, etc.) and any relevant information or comments from the pre-inspection audit.

Dublin Zoo was founded almost 200 years ago and is operated as a charity governed by the Council of the Zoological Society of Ireland. It is situated on a 28 hectare site in Phoenix Park near the centre of Dublin and is one of the most visited tourist attractions in Ireland.

As the zoo counts down to its bicentennial in 2031, there is an ongoing push to meet the ambitious 10 year vision outlined in their Dublin Zoo 200 document published in 2021. This vision is based on five main objectives and the inspectors are impressed with the progress that has been made across all of these areas in the period since the vision was released. In particular, the newly renovated Society House which acts as the base for Dublin Zoo's role as an IUCN National Centre for Species Survival, for which an MOU has been signed with the IUCN.

In addition to dedication to conservation, the zoo continues to strive to continually improve animal habitats within the zoo, with a clear focus on animal welfare.

NB The inspection was carried out over two days, 27th and 28th May 2025. The first day focused mainly on inspecting the veterinary department, the stores and a tour of the site. The second day focused in the morning on the elephants specifically and then the education, conservation and research activities of the zoo.

Findings at inspection

Guidance note: Where possible a Yes, No or Not Applicable (N/A) answer should be given. Where not all criteria are met for a particular question, comments and clarification should be made indicating where any deficits occur. If appropriate, means of correction or improvement should be included as Conditions or Recommendations under 'Additional conditions' or 'Additional space' towards the end of the form.

Part 1: Mandatory To be completed at all inspections

1. Provision of food and water	Marking Yes/No/ NA	Comments
1.1 Are animals provided with a high standard of nutrition?	Yes	Commended for dietary research, for example, lemurs and elephants for vitamin D3.
1.2 Is food and drink that is supplied appropriate for the species /individual?	Yes	
1.3 Are diets recorded and reviewed with an appropriate person?	Yes	Noted that good external advice has also been obtained from zoo nutritionalists and other specialists
1.4 Are supplies of food and water: (a) kept hygienically?	Yes	High standard of kitchen hygiene including new user friendly SOPs. Impressive attention to detail from all staff.
(b) prepared hygienically?	Yes	
(c) supplied to the animal hygienically?	Yes	
1.5 Has natural feeding behaviour been adequately considered to ensure that all animals have access to food and drink?	Yes	
1.6 Are feeding methods safe for staff and animals?	Yes	
1.7 Have the documented methods for the management of frozen meat been implemented?	Yes	New HACCP meat management and food hygiene procedure which has been externally verified by a DipECZM.
1.8 Is feeding by visitors permitted?	No	
(a) if 'yes', is it properly controlled?	N/A	
2. Provision of suitable environment		
2.1 Are the animals provided with an environment well adapted to meet the physical, psychological and social needs of the species to which they belong?	Yes	Excellent new cutting edge automated temperature and humidity recording for all vivaria and it is planned to roll this out across all the zoo enclosures. South America House currently undergoing major renovation.

2. Provision of suitable environment (continued)	Marking Yes/No/ NA	Comments
2.2 Are the following environmental parameters appropriate:		See recommendation but despite excellent monitoring of temp and humidity it is also important to monitor the basking temperature at animal height. This applies specifically to the Sulcata tortoises.
(a) temperature?	Yes	
(b) ventilation?	Yes	
(c) lighting?	Yes	
(d) noise levels?	Yes	
(e) any other environmental parameters	Yes	
2.3 Are there satisfactory measures in place to prevent the escape of animals?	Yes	
2.4 Do animal enclosures have sufficient shelter and refuge areas?	Yes	Noted excellent new wet weather shelter for Asiatic lions.
2.5 Do animal enclosures provide sufficient space?	Yes	
2.6 Are backup facilities for life support systems adequate?	Yes	
2.7 Is the cleaning of the accommodation satisfactory?	Yes	To a high standard.
2.8 Is the standard of maintenance adequate for:	Yes	It is recommended that the floor in isolation room 2 is repainted and that the vivaria are placed on mobile boards to allow for easier cleaning.
(a) buildings?		
(b) the fences?	Yes	
2.9 Is all drainage effective and safe?	Yes	
3. Provision of animal health care		
3.1 Are the animals provided with a high standard of animal husbandry?	Yes	See comments. Two older chimps appear relaxed and healthy and are well provided for with good indoor and outdoor enclosures and an active enrichment program.
3.2 Do animals on display to the public appear in good health?	Yes	Some ongoing issues but under regular veterinary review
3.3 Are observations of condition and health made and recorded?	Yes	Wide use of written and, increasingly, electronic recording with observations promptly recorded on ZIMS.
3.4 Do animals receive prompt and appropriate attention when problems are noted?	Yes	Noted that this, when appropriate, extends to zoo and vet team members working outside of normal hours to rapidly deal with issues.

3. Provision of animal health care (continued)	Marking Yes/No/ NA	Comments
3.5 Are enclosures designed and operated in such a way that social interaction problems are avoided?	Yes	Very good. e.g. changes made to allow the gibbons access to their own island (at height) so allowing them to share with the ground level orangutan without friction.
On site facilities 3.6 Are catch-up and restraint facilities adequate?	Yes	
3.7 Is darting equipment satisfactory?	Yes	
3.8 Are on-site veterinary facilities adequate?	Yes	Excellent. New more portable anaesthetic machine and increasing amount of on-site diagnostics available.
Veterinary care 3.9 Are the animals provided with a documented and maintained programme of preventative and curative veterinary care and nutrition?	Yes	Enthusiastic veterinary team who are very keen to engage with the various zoo staff to achieve outcomes and who also coordinate well with international colleagues when required. There is an obvious willingness throughout the whole team of vets and nurses to continue to learn and adjust protocols as new techniques and technology becomes available.
3.10 Is there a system for the regular review of clinical and pathological records?	Yes	Outstanding clinical path review within vet team which is shared with the wider zoo staff at a prearranged meeting.
3.11 Are appropriate veterinary records kept?	Yes	
3.12 Are medicines kept, documented and disposed of correctly?	Yes	
3.13 Are <i>post mortem</i> examination arrangements satisfactory?	Yes	Some on site others by local university and State lab.
Isolation and containment 3.14 Are policies in place outlining quarantine and isolation procedures?	Yes	Good comprehensive screening and isolation used when appropriate. Quarantine accommodation now appropriately used and managed.
3.15 Is adequate reserve accommodation available for isolation of animals for:		Well managed.
(a) assessment?	Yes	
(b) treatment?	Yes	
(c) recovery?	Yes	
(d) quarantine (where required)?	Yes	
3.16 Is refuse and clinical waste disposed of correctly?	Yes	

3. Provision of animal health care (continued)	Marking Yes/No/ NA	Comments
Sanitation and control of disease		
3.17 Are satisfactory measures in place to prevent the intrusion of pests and vermin into the zoo premises?	Yes	New pest control contractor has started recently but ongoing efforts need maintaining to keep rodent and magpie populations under control.
3.18 Does it appear that general sanitation and pest control are effective?	Yes	
3.19 Is there a documented zoonoses management policy in place for both staff and visitors?	Yes	Updated as necessary but signed off on an annual basis by all staff.
4. Provision of an opportunity to express most normal behaviour		
4.1 Do the accommodation and management regimes encourage normal behaviour patterns and minimise any abnormal behaviour, taking into account current enrichment and husbandry guidelines?	Yes	Animal behaviour is monitored closely and animals are offered an active bespoke enrichment program. New Behavioural and Welfare Scientist has been appointed, who is heavily involved in the new Animal Welfare Master Plan, this appointment is commended.
4.2 Are the animals provided with an active and documented enrichment programme?	Yes	Active program with staff engagement across the zoo.
4.3 Are animals of social species normally maintained in compatible social groups?	Yes	Solitary tiger and orangutan have partners arriving
4.4 Where present does the zoo have a lone animal policy and plan to resolve?	Yes	
5. Demonstration of mental consideration		
5.1 Can the zoo demonstrate adherence to it's welfare statement and a commitment to positive animal welfare?	Yes	Behavioural and welfare scientist on staff. Awarded Global Humane Certified Zoo status.
5.2 Are the animals provided with an active process of animal welfare assessment?	Yes	All animals periodically, those at increased risk, more often. Aye-aye lemurs under active review.
5.3 Does the Animal Collection Plan demonstrate consideration of animal welfare?	Yes	Formal Animal Welfare Master plan has been developed and published.
5.4 Are the animals handled only by or under the supervision of experienced staff?	Yes	
5.5 Is physical contact between animals and the public consistent with the animals' welfare?	Yes	Good assessment of 'hippo reaction' to visitor proximity and action taken to improve

5. Demonstration of mental consideration (continued)	Marking Yes/No/ NA	Comments
5.6 Does the zoo have a documented animal training methods policy?	Yes	
5.7 Has an ethical review process been established and implemented?	Yes	Some in person, some online, agenda & minutes.
6. Transportation and movement of live animals		
6.1 Can the zoo demonstrate a knowledge of, and compliance with, the regulations covering transportation of animals, and provide copies of certificates to show compliance when transportation has occurred?	Yes	
6.2 Can the zoo demonstrate that: (a) transport and movement equipment is in good order?	Yes	
(b) facilities suitable for lifting, crating and transportation of all the types of animals kept within the zoo to destinations both inside and outside the zoo are readily available?	Yes	
(c) catching and transportation techniques take account of the animal's temperament and escape behaviour in order to minimise injury, damage and distress?	Yes	
(d) adequate provision is made for the animal's and the public's safety and well-being while the animal is being transported or kept away from the zoo?	Yes	
Part 01. Animal welfare and management		
General comments		
In general terms the inspectors were impressed with on going improvements in a range of areas from reptile environmental monitoring, research into Vitamin d in various species, forward planning in respect of improved and enhanced animal welfare, solitary animals, Behaviour and Welfare Scientist appointment and on going assessments and improvements.		

Part 2: Type A Inspection Conservation, Research and Education

7. Conservation, education and research		
7.1 Is the zoo participating in at least one of the following:		
(i) research from which conservation benefits accrue to species of wild animals?	Yes	Centre for Species Survival with IUCN on site. Involvement in worldwide projects. Native Species Weekend organised at the zoo and also working with native crayfish, curlew and dunlin. Some early work ongoing with IWDG to establish guidelines for post-mortems (has been risk assessed for zoo). Zoo is about to start trialling SENS monitors. As well as financial support of programmes, staff are actively engaged with some projects by visits and/or by attendance in meetings such as Sulawesi Crested Macaque project. Commended Native Irish Conservation involvement.
(ii) training in relevant conservation skills?	Yes	
(iii) the exchange of information relating to the conservation of species of wild animals?	Yes	
(iv) where appropriate, breeding of wild animals in captivity?	Yes	
(v) where appropriate, the re-population of an area with, or the reintroduction into the wild of, wild animals?	Yes	
7.2 Are the research efforts adequate for the resources of the collection?	Yes	
7.3 Where appropriate are animals managed in a way consistent with the conservation needs of the species, (such as exchange between zoos, accommodation to encourage natural behaviour and breeding, etc.)?	Yes	
7.4 Is captive breeding properly managed?	Yes	
7.5 Can the zoo demonstrate the implementation of it's Conservation Strategy?	Yes	Selection matrix is used to ensure best use of allocated funds. Five conservation partners a year will have a deeper review to ensure best use of funds
7.6 Can the zoo demonstrate the effectiveness of it's conservation efforts?	Yes	
7.7 Are the conservation efforts adequate for the resources of the collection?	Yes	Good see 7.5

7. Conservation, education and research (continued)	Marking Yes/No/ NA	Comments
7.8 Is the zoo promoting public education and awareness in relation to the conservation of biodiversity, in particular by providing information about the species of wild animals kept in the zoo and their natural habitats?	Yes	Commend Native Irish Conservation output and messaging. Animal signs under review at present to try and increase effectiveness
7.9 Can the zoo demonstrate the implementation of it's Education Strategy?	Yes	The education impact and reach, in particular with use of their volunteer program, is exceptional, targeting not only the general public, but all stages of education requirement
7.10 Can the zoo demonstrate the effectiveness of it's Education Strategy?	Yes	
7.11 Are on-site education facilities adequate for the resources of the collection?	Yes	Extensive education department.

Part 02. Conservation, research and education general comments

General comments

Dublin Zoo is actively reviewing the welfare of a number of exhibits spear headed by their new Behavioural and Welfare Scientist, working collaboratively with keepers and associated staff. The Dublin Zoo Volunteer Educationists program is exceptional with applicants far in excess of the numbers that can be taken on, yielding a volunteer work force which targets the education of all sectors of society. Dublin zoos commitment to Conservation of Irish National Wildlife is applauded and they are congratulated for not only doing this but enthusing visitors in respect of Irish Wildlife Conservation. In short in all these areas the zoo is performing very well.

Part 3: Type B Inspection Public safety

8. Public safety	Marking Yes/No/ NA	Comments
8.1 Are there satisfactory measures in place to be taken in the event of any escape or unauthorised release of animals?	N/A A insp	
8.2 Are escape drills carried out (e.g. four times a year), recorded and regularly reviewed?	N/A A insp	
8.3 Will the perimeter deter unauthorised entry and aid the confinement of zoo stock?	N/A A insp	
8.4 Do stand-off barriers appear adequate?	N/A A insp	
8.5 Are adequate warning signs provided?	N/A A insp	
8.6 Are prohibited areas appropriately signed?	N/A A insp	
8.7 Are exits clearly marked and accessible?	N/A A insp	
8.8 Do public areas, walkways and buildings appear safe?	N/A A insp	
8.9 Are trees regularly inspected and appropriate remedial action taken?	N/A A insp	
8.10 Does the zoo have a Health and Safety policy including an effective accident reporting system?	N/A A insp	
8.11 Are effective risk assessments and safe operating practices in place, where appropriate?	N/A A insp	
8.12 Have appropriate risk assessments for direct contact by the public with animals been carried out?	N/A A insp	
8.13 Can the zoo demonstrate an effective envenomation policy and drill log (where applicable)?	N/A A insp	

8. Public safety (continued)	Marking Yes/No/ NA	Comments
8.14 Can the zoo demonstrate effective risk assessments and safe operating practices for working with category one hazardous animals?	N/A A Insp	
8.15 Are the special safety requirements for walk-through or drive-through exhibits adequately met?	N/A A Insp	
8.16 Is adequate Public Liability Insurance in place and current?	N/A A Insp	

Part 4: Type C Inspection Operational practices

9. Records	Marking Yes/No/ NA	Comments
9.1 Are there up-to-date records of the zoo's collection, including records of:		
(i) the numbers of different animals?	N/A A Insp	
(ii) acquisitions, births, deaths, disposals and escapes of animals?	N/A A Insp	
(iii) the causes of any such deaths?	N/A A Insp	
(iv) the health of the animals?	N/A A Insp	
9.2 Are daily diaries maintained, and do they contain appropriate information?	N/A A Insp	
9.3 Are individual or group animal records clear and up-to-date?	N/A A Insp	
9.4 Are annual stock records completed in the correct format and submitted as part of the pre-inspection audit?	N/A A Insp	
9.5 Are animal source and destination records kept?	N/A A Insp	
9.6 Are archived records secure?	N/A A Insp	

9. Records (continued)	Marking Yes/No/ NA	Comments
9.7 Can the zoo demonstrate an effective artificial environmental management policy and its implementation for species where it is essential for their welfare?	N/A A insp	
9.8 Can the zoo demonstrate the efficacy of their UVB lighting management policy?	N/A A insp	
9.9 Can the zoo demonstrate an effective water quality management policy and its implementation?	N/A A insp	
10. Training		
10.1 Is the management structure and organisation of staff adequate to ensure compliance with current zoo legislation?	N/A A insp	
10.2 Do staff numbers and training of staff appear adequate?	N/A A insp	
10.3 Are staff training records complete and up-to-date?	N/A A insp	

Mandatory

Part 1: Mandatory To be completed at all inspections

11. Associated legislation (continued)	Marking Yes/No/ NA	Comments
11.1 Is the current licence or a copy on public display at each public entrance?	Yes	
11.2 Have any Additional licence conditions, if issued, been met?	Yes	
11.3 Have any directions, if issued, been met?	N/A	
11.4 Does the zoo appear to comply with the European Invasive Alien species legislation as implemented in Ireland?	Yes	

11. Associated legislation (continued)	Marking Yes/No/NA	Comments
11.5 Does the organisation appear to comply with current CITES legislation with regards to (i) the living collection	Yes	
(ii) museum specimens and parts and derivatives used for educational purposes	Yes	
11.6 Does the zoo have a current S41 Bird of Prey Possession Licence (where applicable)?	N/A	
11.7 Do the zoo staff have a current S41 Falconry Licence (where applicable)?	N/A	

Additional space

The following space is provided for:

- additional notes and comments on the answers to the earlier questions
- recommendations (other than in respect of grant or refusal of a licence and any specific conditions recommended for a licence) including those based on comments already made to earlier questions
- any general remarks which the inspecting team may wish to record

The inspectors would like to thank all of the staff at Dublin Zoo for their hospitality and time during the inspection. The inspectors were pleased to see the progress that is being made to achieve the zoo's objectives.

It was noticeable that there is a very active and keen desire to constantly improve and refine the care that the zoo provides to its animals. It is to the zoo's credit that this effort involves all members of staff, whether involved directly or indirectly in animal care. Considerable effort is made to allow staff to feedback their experiences and for information to be shared with staff.

The zoo is to be commended with the appointment of a dedicated Behavioural and Welfare scientist. Welfare is an obvious priority for the collection and that staff are trained in what welfare means. A novel zoo Animal Welfare Master Plan is in development, focal welfare assessments are taking place. There is a holistic approach to husbandry, welfare and behaviour and a multi disciplinary effort to identify and solve challenging animal management situations.

As well as the care that the zoo offers its animals, it is also aware of the affect that the death of elderly, long term animals can have on staff. The zoo is to be commended for providing specialist external support to staff at these times.

There is an impressive and oversubscribed friends of the zoo team, numbering about 130 volunteers. A three day induction course is held and their beneficial presence was noted around the park.

The zoo has developed many Master Plans, not only for the strategic development of the zoo but also for other areas such as Sustainability and Conservation and that these plans are publicly available. The needs of disabled visitors are considered with various schemes. There is a Changing Place Toilet, the annual Dream Night event, some disabled interns in the shop, a link up with Deaf Village Ireland and also CHIME, a sign language initiative which is due to commence shortly.

Additional space

There are some single animals present in the zoo. The zoo is aware of these and is actively trying to bring in companions for these animals, e.g. another orangutan is currently undergoing pre-movement tests prior to moving to Dublin. The inspectors recognize that many reasons outside of the zoo's control can delay the arrival of new animals. However, it is important that the zoo continue to ethically review and welfare assess these solitary animals and make appropriate modifications to their care were necessary.

The following recommendations are made:

1: That the floor in isolation room 2 is repainted and that the vivaria are placed on mobile boards to allow for easier cleaning.

2: The zoo could consider Quite Hours or similar out of hours programs for autistic visitors.

END RECOMMENDATIONS

Inspecting team’s recommendation to NPWS

Having inspected (name of zoo)

Dublin Zoo

on:

27 to 28/05/2025

the inspecting team make the following recommendation:

- it is recommended that a licence be refused.....
- it is recommended that the above collection be licensed in accordance with the Act subject to the Standard Conditions..... ✓
- it is recommended that the above collection be licensed in accordance with the Act subject to the Standard Conditions and the following Additional Conditions.....

Additional Conditions (if appropriate)

No Additional Conditions

Additional Conditions (if appropriate)

Intentionally blank

If additional conditions continue on separate pages please tick here:

If no separate pages used please tick here: ☒

Please note that where used separate pages listing conditions form part of the complete zoo licence inspection report

Number of additional pages:

Total number of pages to the report:

0

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Inspector(s) signature(s)	Date signed
Muir A. Fokes	08/06/2025
ET Griffith	08/06/2025

Note

The National Parks and Wildlife Service is committed to protecting and respecting your privacy and employs appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect your information from unauthorised access. The Department will not process your personal data for any purpose other than that for which they were collected. Personal data may be exchanged with other Government Departments, local authorities, agencies under the aegis of the Department, or other public bodies, in certain circumstances where this is provided for by law. The Department will only retain your personal data for as long as it is necessary for the purposes for which they were collected and subsequently processed. When the business need to retain this information has expired, it will be examined with a view to destroying the personal data as soon as possible, and in line with Department policy. Further information on Data Protection can be found on our website at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/648102-data-protection/>