

Full Time Animal Keeper

Job description:

Wildlife Prairie Park has often been referred to as a jewel in the Midwest. Located just outside of Peoria, IL, this 2,000-acre zoological park is home to over 180 animals/60 different species that are native to Illinois. Our guests come to learn about wolves, bison, waterfowl, black bears, elk, cougar, otters and much more. The park opened in 1978 and since its inception, Wildlife Prairie Park has strived to promote its mission of conservation, education, and recreation.

In the role of Animal Keeper, the position will play an essential role in creating meaningful connections between visitors and wildlife while ensuring the highest standard of care for the park's diverse animal residents. In this hands-on role, you'll go beyond basic animal care, contributing to the animals' health and enrichment and inspiring public appreciation through interactive programs and educational outreach.

Essential Duties

- Collecting specific food items and creating diets for all animals.
- Develops and implements species-appropriate enrichment programs to promote the psychological and physical well-being of animals, in alignment with established welfare standards and institutional guidelines; regularly evaluates and documents enrichment effectiveness.
- Assist in the care, handling, and training of raptors, reptiles, amphibians, small mammals, large carnivores, hoof stock, farm animals, and education animals.
- Assist in the execution of all public and private educational programming and Keeper chats.
- Present daily interpretive programs to school groups and the general public.
- Assisting staff with large events as they relate to animals and the visitor experience.
- Maintain animal record keeping systems including utilizing to the extent required, ZIMS Species 360 to track animal health, diets, behavior, and vet care, especially for the animals related to their lead keeper roles.
- Responding to guest questions and ensuring rewarding guest experiences.

- Perform all aspects of animal husbandry including cleaning enclosures.
- Helping with opening and closing trails in the park.
- Assist in bison and elk herd management including spring and fall roundups.
- Participate in and contribute to safe capture training sessions.
- Assisting veterinary staff with exams, vaccinations, and training.
- Perform regular, routine inspections of animal enclosures and exhibits, animal kitchen, diet and food supplies, pasture, park grounds, fencing, and equipment to assure proper care and maintenance of animals and facilities.
- Participate in the maintenance and repair of animal exhibits and related systems as needed and originate work orders as needed.
- Communicate information regarding animals and education opportunities and related matters to the public in an educational and entertaining manner; coordinate appropriate presentation of exhibit animals in various formats.
- Ensure the animals, staff and the visiting public are safe and protected from injury or mishap.
- Operate and maintain a variety of related tools, vehicles, and equipment including computers.
- Enclosure maintenance and safety checks.
- Participate in relevant meetings, workshops, and conferences to stay current with best practices.
- Other duties as assigned.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities Required

- Strong knowledge of animal care, behavior, and welfare practices including species-specific dietary, health and enrichment needs.
- Familiarity with ZIMS (Zoological Information Management Software) or similar system for tracking animal health, diet, and behavior records.
- Understanding of basic veterinary care and animal first aid to monitor animal health and administer medications as needed.
- Knowledge of wildlife conservation, native species and natural habitats.
- Understanding of best practices in interpretive and educational program delivery for various age groups.

- Proficient in safely handling, training, and working closely with animals, including the use of positive reinforcement.
- Strong observational skills for recognizing subtle changes in animal behavior, diet, and health.
- Able to deliver engaging, informative presentations for public programs and educational events.
- Efficient in prioritizing daily tasks, animal care routines, and program schedules while ensuring all animals receive proper care.
- Diligent in following precise animal care, health, and dietary protocols and maintaining accurate records.
- Able to lift 50-100 lbs as a team lift
- Must be able to work outdoors in all weather conditions.

.Minimum Requirements:

- Bachelor's degree in environmental science, Wildlife Biology, Ecology, or related field and or equivalent experience.
- Minimum 1-2 years of experience in environmental education, interpretation, wildlife, or a related field.
- 1-2 years of experience as a veterinary technician is highly desirable.
- Previous farm experience is preferred, illustrating practical knowledge in animal care and management.
- Experience conducting programs for diverse audiences such as school groups, families, and the general public.
- Valid Driver's License required.

Interpersonal Skills:

- Skilled in listening to audience questions and feedback, allowing for responsive and meaningful interactions during programs and presentations.
- Demonstrates a deep respect and care for animals, fostering a positive environment for their well-being.
- Responds to changing needs, unexpected challenges, and diverse animal behaviors with a calm and solutions-oriented approach.

- Demonstrates a welcoming, positive attitude that encourages visitor interest and creates memorable learning experiences.
- Sensitivity to cultural differences and the ability to communicate in a respectful and inclusive manner.
- Willingness to support coworkers and volunteers, offering help and cooperation to achieve shared goals.

Job Type: Full-time

Non-Exempt

Pay: From \$16.00 per hour

Benefits:

- Dental insurance
- Employee assistance program
- Employee discount
- Health insurance
- Life insurance
- Paid sick time
- Paid time off
- Vision insurance
- Park Perks

Schedule:

- 8 hour shift
- Day shift
- Holidays
- Weekends as needed

Education:

- Bachelor's (Required)