

EARS visitor policy

This policy sets out the requirements for all EARS Partners in terms of visitor activities at their facility.

Allowing visitors at an EARS Partner facility should not:

- a) adversely affect the welfare of its animals or
- b) promote a negative or erroneous public perception of wild animals.

In addition, rescue centres and sanctuaries can play a role in promoting the protection of wildlife through education of the public. Thus, during the screening process visitor activities will be assessed by the two main criteria of animal welfare and educational messaging.

Visitor activities can be placed into two broad categories: **passive** and **interactive**:

Passive means watching, looking at or listening to the animals in a way that does not engage disturb or stress them.

Interactive means an activity that engages, disturbs or stresses the animal.

Interactions between captive wild animals and humans, especially those unfamiliar to the animal, have the potential for negative animal welfare outcomes. While they are necessary for functional reasons (care and management of the animals by staff or volunteers) the same cannot be said for interactions with the visiting public. Therefore it is highly likely that interactive visitor activities at Partner facilities will result in Partner status being refused during the screening process.

Having said this we accept there may be visitor activities that have an element of interaction but that have no negative welfare impact and do not provide a negative or erroneous message to the public. Thus, as mentioned above, visitor activities will be assessed by the two main criteria of animal welfare and educational messaging.