



City of Racine Police Department  
**Policy and Procedure**

**Number: 1913**

Subject: <b>Escaped Zoo Animals</b>		
Date Issued: <b>12-18-98</b>	Effective Date: <b>09-01-11</b>	Revision Number: <b>4</b>

**POLICY:**

Police may be called to respond to the Racine Zoo for an escaped animal or a person in danger in an animal enclosure. The safety of the public, zoo staff, and police personnel takes precedence over all other considerations. Do not endanger yourself, zoo staff or the public in your attempt to contain an escaped animal.

Animals loose on Zoo grounds are the responsibility of the zoological staff. If at all possible, responding members and supervisors should allow the zoological staff to determine the appropriate response. The zoological staff has a zoo evacuation procedure that they have practiced and will implement if they feel it is necessary. The zoological staff also has capture nets, dart guns, shotguns and other specialized equipment along with the training to utilize them.

If the animal leaves the Zoo property, the Racine Police Department will have the responsibility for both the safety of all concerned as well as the recovery or termination of the animal.

Remember that any animal can be dangerous and unpredictable in unusual circumstances. It is best to observe the animals' actions from your squad car; utilizing your radio to maintain contact with zoological staff. Consulting with zoo staff may avail to you specific information on the behaviors and threats of certain individual animals or species.

**DEFINITIONS:**

***Non-Dangerous Animals*** – are those that will normally run away from, rather than confront people but may be capable of inflicting injury if cornered or injured. These include all primates (excluding apes), hooved mammals, wallaroos, kangaroos, llamas, Alpacas wolves and smaller carnivores, and birds.

***Dangerous Animals*** – are those that must be considered aggressive and prone to attacking people if allowed loose. These would include all large cats, (tigers, lions and snow leopards), rhinoceros, bears and orangutans and during the fall, bull hooved mammals in rut.

**PROCEDURE:**

When the Department is notified that a Zoo animal has escaped from its enclosure or a person is endangered in an animal enclosure, the following steps shall be taken:

**COMMUNICATIONS UNIT:**

1. Attempt to determine if the animal falls in the non-dangerous or dangerous category of animals. Consulting with zoo staff may provide valuable insight into this determination.
2. Dispatch officers and a supervisor, as necessary, to assist the zoological staff.
3. The officers and supervisor should be sent to the zoo office located at 200 Goid Street.
4. Be sure to advise responding personnel of the type of animal, last known location, and any endangered persons, if known. This includes a person endangered in an animal enclosure.
  - a. If the Zoo is open, contact the zoological staff and advise them of the situation as reported.
  - b. If the Zoo is closed, dispatch necessary officers and a supervisor, and then contact the zoological staff on file.
5. Notify the Shift Commander.

**MEMBER:**

1. Should you receive a citizen's complaint of a loose zoo animal, ensure that you are advised of the type and location of the animal. Staying inside of your squad, check the area outside of the fenceline until the animal is located. It is not advisable to enter the grounds with a vehicle unless you have checked in with the zoo staff at 200 Goold St to ensure that the vehicle won't startle or flush the animal, thwarting any attempt to dart the animal by zoo staff.
2. Notify Communications of the animal's location, apparent health and activity. If possible, do not startle or chase the animal.
3. As long as there is no immediate threat to citizens or members, do not initiate any shooting. If you determine that it is necessary to kill the animal, accurate shot placement is critical; a wounded animal is far more dangerous and unpredictable.
4. If Communications has notified you that there is an animal that has left its enclosure and may still be on the grounds:
  - a. Unless directed otherwise, report to a police supervisor outside the gate near the office of the Racine Zoo located at 200 Goold St.
  - b. Consult with the police supervisor and follow his or her directives.
  - c. By the time Communications has been notified about the escaped animal that may still be on the Zoo grounds, the protocol of the Zoo requires that all gates into the grounds are secured and normal entry prohibited.
5. Whenever the decision has been made to confront one of the zoo's animals that may be a threat to a citizen or another Department member, the recommended action includes:
  - a. Two officers should double-up in a vehicle.
    - 1) The passenger officer should be armed with an AR-15. (Handguns or other firearms using handgun cartridges, generally will not have any effect on a large animal).
    - 2) They should drive as close to the animal as possible without endangering themselves. (Position the vehicle so the animal is on the passenger side.)
    - 3) The passenger should shoot the animal continuously until it is dead.
  - b. Several rounds of .223 rifle ammunition may be effective, even on large animals.
  - c. Keep in mind that the circumstances and timing may not permit this means of confrontation and other avenues of approach (on foot using cover or high ground) may be more appropriate.
  - d. If options exist to extend the weapon out of the vehicle passenger compartment when firing, this would reduce the chance of hearing problems.
6. Once the incident has been stabilized, ensure that the zoological staff on-scene have been identified for inclusion in your reports.
7. Complete a supplement indicating all facets of your involvement in the animal recovery or stabilization and forward them to your supervisor for review.

**SUPERVISOR:**

1. Once Communications has notified you that there is an animal that has left its enclosure and may still be on the grounds:
  - a. Report to the gate outside the office of the Racine Zoo located at 200 Goold Street and wait the arrival of the dispatched officers.
  - b. Consult with the zoo personnel that meet you to establish the nature and circumstances of the animal at large.
  - c. Remain in contact with a zoo Response Leader throughout the incident to ensure that adequate coordination between their efforts and those of the Department continue.
  - d. Understand that the protocol of the Zoo with an animal at large requires that all gates into the grounds are secured, and normal entry without escort will not be permitted for safety reasons.
  - e. Ensure that a perimeter around the zoo has been established.
    - 1) Members should conduct this perimeter while remaining in their squads, but should be close enough to be within sight of the entire fenceline or treeline for which they are responsible.

- 2) With the bike path along the east fence line (lakefront side) officers can view the entire east side of the zoo from their squad car.
- 3) This plan may need to be modified depending on the number of officers available and the extent of overgrowth that may restrict visibility.
2. While the animal remains on the Racine Zoological Gardens property, the actions taken with regards to the animal are primarily the responsibility of zoo personnel and their expertise should be considered when any police action is taken.
3. Once the animal leaves the zoo property, the safety of persons in the community as well as the recovery or termination of the animal at large, is the responsibility of the Racine Police Department. The zoo personnel will continue to provide assistance in the form of personnel, equipment, and input.
4. Ensure that long guns (Colt AR15s) are deployed as necessary to ensure that the most effective weapons are readily available for use.
5. Keep the Shift Commander advised on the circumstances and request additional assistance in the form of weapons, ammunition, or personnel as necessary.
6. Once the situation has been stabilized, work with the zoo personnel to establish whether there is a need for any type of police-related investigation into the circumstances surrounding the escape of the zoo animal.

**SHIFT  
COMMANDER:**

1. Keep in contact with the on-scene supervisor and ensure that any requests for additional weapons, ammunition, or personnel are addressed.
2. Consider initiating a partial SWAT callup to bring in SWAT snipers with their heavier weapons.
3. Ensure that all paperwork relative to the incident is completed and forwarded as prescribed in procedure.

[Table of Contents](#)