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## **Ratings of animal personality as a tool for improving the breeding, management and welfare of zoo mammals**

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### **Abstract**

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*The effect of individual differences on the behaviour and reproduction of zoo animals has long been recognised by zoo biologists, yet only recently has the quantitative assessment of personality been used to investigate some of the challenges faced in zoo animal management. We review the findings of animal personality studies carried out in zoos since 1995. Our results reveal that zoo animal personality is most commonly assessed using observer ratings, where people who are familiar with the animals are asked to rate them on various personality traits. The reviewed studies indicate that zoo keepers are able to reliably rate animal personality traits, and these ratings are valid and related to behaviour. We identify promising areas of development in zoo animal personality research and suggest applications of personality profiling to zoo animal welfare and management. We argue that a validated personality questionnaire is a valuable tool for zoo professionals and advocate the implementation of personality assessment into existing zoo management practices to inform decisions on welfare and captive breeding.*

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**Keywords:** animal behaviour, animal personality, animal welfare, captive breeding, conservation, zoo