



Updated data entry standard for specimens euthanized for non-medical reasons or used as feed stock

Topic originally discussed on pp. 38 and 91 of standards for data entry and maintenance of North American zoo and aquarium animal records databases, 1998

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Because there was no other appropriate transaction at the time, the Standards for Data Entry and Maintenance of North American Zoo and Aquarium Animal Records Databases, page 91, advocated 'Term-Free Disposition' for accessioned specimens used as feed stock or those euthanized for non-medical reasons.

Beginning with the June 2003 version, ARKS4 incorporates a new Circumstance of Death called "euthanasia: cull". As occurred during development of the Standards for Data Entry, there was much debate about this subject within the Data Entry Standards Taskforce and within the Small Population Management Advisory Group (SPMAG), from whom the Taskforce sought input. There remains the opinion that because of human intervention these are 'unnatural' deaths and recording these events as deaths affects statistical analysis. However, the final decision by the Data Entry Standards Taskforce was that the inabilities of population management software used to analyze these circumstances in ARKS data should not prevent the recording of the actual facts in institutional animal records.

Data entry procedure for non-medical-euthanasia and specimens fed-off:

When a specimen is euthanized for non-medical reasons (culled) or used as feed stock,

- On the [Visits] tab, record the death of the individual.
- Select the Death Codes button and from the pop-up menu
 - o select 'euthanasia: cull' on the <Circumstances of death> menu
 - o in the <Carcass Disposition> field
 - ☐ Select the appropriate disposal method if known and available on the menu
 - ☐ Select 'Unknown' for specimens fed off, when the actual method is not available, or when carcass disposition is not known
 - o select 'No necropsy planned' from the <Necropsy – Topological> menu
- On the [Notes] tab, record a Death Note (code NX) documenting the reason(s) for the death;
 - include carcass disposition information if 'unknown' was selected for <Carcass Disposition>. The use of standard text or phrasing within the institution is advised to facilitate search capabilities.

The use of notes is particularly important to document the reasons for these actions. It is suggested that key words such as "fed off", "culled", or "non-medical euthanasia" be incorporated into these notes so that when ARKS provides the appropriate carcass disposition, a note retrieval search on these words will generate a list of records that will

need to be edited.

Existing records should be corrected and notes added as the opportunity arises.

In the cases of species in which culling or feeding off is used, death notes should always be selected for inclusion on taxon reports sent to studbook keepers.

Clarification

The Standards for Data Entry, page 38, state “Specimens purchased solely for use as feed stock” are not accessioned. Cases in which an institution removes one or more specimens from a feeder colony to become part of the collection, or collection animals are removed to start a feed stock colony, are beyond the scope of this document.

Standardization of these situations is under discussion, but until such time as definitive procedures are decided, we recommend that explanatory notes include key words such as “feeder colony” as a means of locating these records in the future.

Data Entry Standards Taskforce

Jean Miller, Buffalo Zoological Gardens
Chair

Beth Bahner, Philadelphia Zoological Garden
Glenous Favata, The Toledo Zoo
ISIS: Nell Bekiares, Elisabeth Hunt, Ross Snipp
David Littlehale, New Jersey State Aquarium
Lynn McDuffie, Disney's Animal Kingdom
Adrienne Miller, Roger Williams Park Zoo Linda
Robledo, Audubon Zoo
Andrew Snider, Detroit Zoological Park
Wendy Wienker, Woodland Park Zoological Gardens