

Care For Us Lion (Panthera leo)



Animal Welfare

Animal welfare refers to an animal's state or feelings. An animal's welfare state can be good, neutral or bad.

An animal's welfare has the potential to differ on a daily basis. When an animal's needs - nutritional, behavioural, health and environmental - are met, they will have good welfare.

A good life in captivity might be one where animals can consistently experience good welfare throughout their entire life.

Understanding that animals have both sentient and cognitive abilities as well as pain perception, reinforces the need to provide appropriate husbandry for all captive animals, to ensure good welfare.

In captivity, the welfare of an animal is dependent on the environment provided for them and the daily care and veterinary treatment they receive.





Lions are instantly recognisable by all.

They are one of the four big cat species and are separated into two sub-species.

The African lion was once found across much of Africa, including North Africa. Now the population of between 20,000 and 40,000 lions is fragmented across sub-Saharan Africa. They are classified as Vulnerable by the IUCN.

The Asiatic lion is only found in the North-West of India and numbers approx. 600 individuals. They are classified as Endangered by the IUCN.

Lions are carnivores

Lions are members of the cat family and are obligate meat-eaters, which means they have evolved to only eat and digest meat. As carnivores, they have adapted to catching, killing and consuming prey animals. It is important that lions get a balanced and nutritious diet. This prevents them becoming overweight. Carnivores in captivity must not be offered live prey.

Positive behaviours to encourage

Offering lions a varied and appropriate diet will encourage natural feeding behaviours and keep them physically and mentally healthy. Carcass feeding is a good form of enrichment as it allows the lions to consume all parts of the animal. It increases the time they take to eat and keeps their teeth in good condition.



Lions like to rest

Lions have a reputation of sleeping for as many as 18 hours a day. Giving them choice of when and where they rest and giving them clean and dry bedding is important.

It is natural and normal for them to be inactive for long periods but when they are active, they need to have the appropriate social structure, enrichment and diet to encourage natural behaviours.

Positive behaviours to encourage

Lions are generally nocturnal and crepuscular which means they are active at night and during dusk and dawn. They will rest in the middle of the day, particularly in hot climates. By timing when you give food and enrichment you will encourage natural activity and resting behaviours.





Lions are social

Lions are the only member of the cat family which lives in a social structure called a pride. The pride is normally made up of related females and their young and unrelated males. Young male lions born in the pride leave when they near adulthood, the female sub-adults usually stay within the pride. The pride of lions will defend their territory and cooperate when hunting and looking after their young. The bond between the pride females is very strong.

Positive behaviours to encourage

Keeping lions in appropriate social groups is very important and encourages natural behaviours. To keep lions in a pride they need space so they can choose when and where they socialise with other lions in their pride.



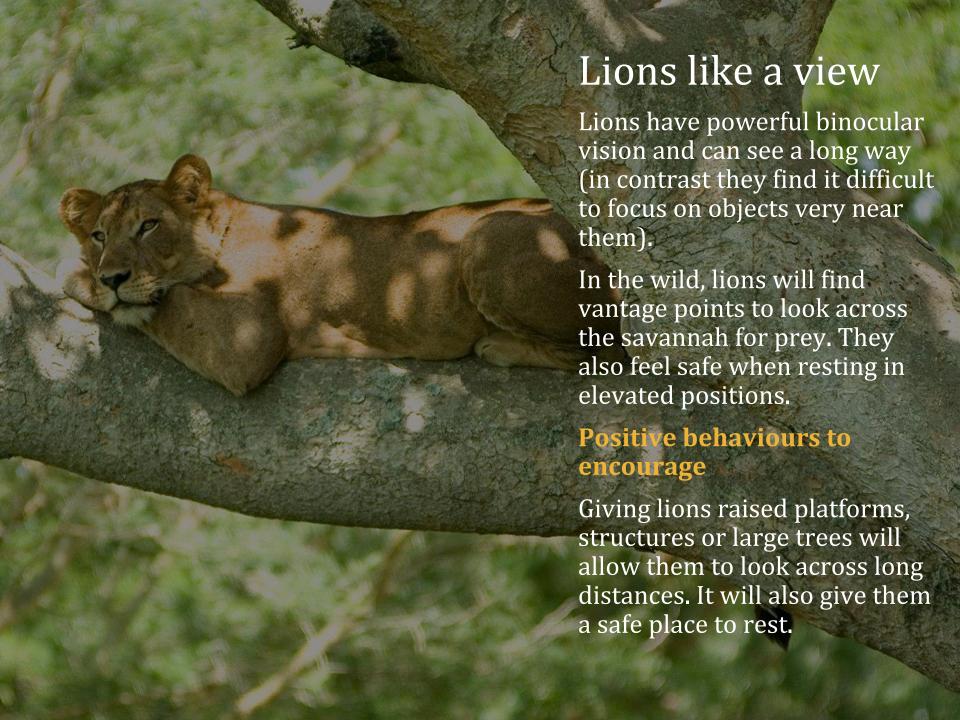
Lions like to use their claws

Lions are very strong and have powerful legs and paws with retractable claws. Lions like to keep their claws sharp and clean by clawing logs and trees. They also like to use their claws for climbing up trees, poles and platforms.

Positive behaviours to encourage

You can provide lions with logs, poles and trees to claw and climb. Wrapping trees trunks with thick rope protects the tree bark. Lions will happily climb poles and trees to find food. This is good exercise and replicates hunting behaviour.







Lions enjoy...

Patrolling their territory and scent marking, engaging in hunting behaviours by playing with enrichment and eating natural food such as whole animal carcasses.

They are a social species and need the company of other lions. It is important to remember that large social groups need the space and facilities to manage them well in captivity.

They also like to sleep!

