Managing a Plains Zebra Training Program

THE MARYLAND ZOO
IN BALTIMORE

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Challenges

- Daily routine issues
- Multiple zebras
- Multiple keepers
- Species-typical behaviors

Opportunities

- Enhance daily effciency
- Create keeper teamwork
- Reduce animal nervousness

Tyler
Dominant male

Blue
Food motivated

Ayanna
Recovering from injury

Trixie
Integration to zoo life

Zebra Stall

The African Watering Hole

Shifting onto Exhibit

Target Behavior

Where are the zebras?

On-exhibit Training

- Behavior was established while zoo was closed to public during the winter
- Importance of interpretation to guests

Increased Visibility on Exhibit

Established Basic Behaviors

What's next?

Develop a plan for each zebra based on individual needs and priorities

Tyler

- Has a dental issue that requires monitoring
- “Open mouth” for frequent visual inspections

Ayanna

- Consistent target
- Maintain interactions with keepers

Blue

- “Station” to help shift from stall to stall and to separate from herd

Trixie

- Integration into herd structure
- Protected contact environment

Advanced behaviors require innovative resources...

A Training Door

Howdy Door

Manufactured by Frey Brothers, Inc.

Gradual Introduction to the Door

Desensitization to the Door

Target

Dental Examinations

Intramuscular Injection Training

Integrating Additional Trainers

- Zebra goals
- Trainer goals
- Monthly evaluations
  - –Examples:
    - Maintain target behavior 2 times/week
    - Establish open mouth behavior

Conclusion

- Individual animal considerations
- Train for specific, prioritized goals
- Communication
- Collaboration

Many thanks to...

- African Watering Hole Keepers: Robyn Johnson, Becky Lynagh, Mallory Stone & Tanya White
- Colleen Baird, Julie Grove & Nadia Skinner

Questions?