**The Living Desert**

**Service Dog Protocol**

**The Policy**: The Living Desert welcomes any well-behaved service dog in the company of its owner onto The Living Desert grounds. We are happy to comply with state and federal laws to allow this access.

**Service Animal Definition:** Service Animals are defined as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform specific tasks for people with disabilities. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the American Disabilities Act (ADA).

In order to determine if an animal is a service animal, The Living Desert Zoo staff may ask the following questions:

* Is the animal a service animal required because of a disability?
* What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, only trained service animals are permitted on Zoo grounds. Pets, exotic species, therapy, or emotional-support animals are not permitted. Service animals in training are permitted into the Zoo with prior notification to the Zoo’s management team.

Regarding miniature horses, the Zoo will consider additional factors to determine, on a case by case basis, whether it is a reasonable accommodation to allow a person with a disability to be accompanied by a miniature horse who is a service animal. Those factors: (1) the type, size, and weight of the miniature horse and whether the facility can accommodate it; (2) whether the handler has sufficient control over the miniature horse; (3) whether the miniature horse is housebroken; and (4) whether the miniature horse’s presence in the facility compromises legitimate safety rules that are necessary for a safe operation.

**General Guidelines:** Under the ADA, service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal’s work or the individual’s disability prevents using these devices. In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls. The care and supervision of a service animal is the sole responsibility of the owner.

**Restricted Areas**: The Living Desert is responsible for the health and well-being of a vast collection of valued and, in many cases, rare and endangered species of animals. Because we are subject to stringent regulations pertaining to their protection, service animals are restricted from the following areas:

* **Petting Kraal and Lorikeet Feeding Experience exhibits**, State of California Penal Code 54.7 allows this exception where there is not a physical barrier between the collection animal and the service animal. The Living Desert will offer care of the service animal while the guest visits the Petting Kraal, and if necessary offer an escort to the owner while in these areas.

In the event that a services animal’s presence could theoretically cause collection animals undue stress or anxiety, or present the potential for injury, we reserve the right to designate some areas off limits, or to designate the area as sensitive and request that guests observe extra caution in these areas. Sensitive areas may be designated as a result of new births or hatchlings, nesting or breeding behaviors in progress, or new animals on exhibit. Zoo veterinarians, directors and animal care managers will determine whether special circumstances warrant restrictions on service animals in any areas.

**Guest Responsibilities:** Responsibilities of the guests with service animals include:

* To care for and supervise the service animal, including appropriately disposing of any service animal waste.
* To maintain control over the service animal at all times and adhere to leash laws as applicable.
* To refrain from taking the service animal into restricted areas.
* To remove the service animal when a conflict or potential conflict may occur. This includes free roaming birds and collection animals on walks with handlers.

The Living Desert does not require any surcharges for fees for service animals. However, the owner may be held liable (and charged as applicable) for any damage, injury or death caused by the service animal to the grounds, him/herself, the animal or plant collection, employees, or visitors to the same extent as others without service animals are held responsible or charged. Owners should also be aware that the nature of Zoo activities is such that service animals may be exposed to diseases of animals within the Zoo’s collection, and this risk is assumed wholly by the owner when bringing the service animal on site.

**Puppies in Training**: We are not required to admit puppies that are in training as service dogs. However, we will usually treat these animals and handlers as a working unit. Service Dogs in Training and their handlers will have to follow all the guidelines and responsibilities as a full trained service animal and are allowed in any public area of the park, except the Kraal Petting Area and Lorikeet Feeding Experience exhibitand the walk-through aviaries. We do reserve the right to deny admission to any puppy behaving in a manner that causes concern for our animal collection.

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