



The European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) has been approached for comment regarding the response by its Member Attica Zoological Park near Athens to the escape of two jaguars from their enclosure in November 2018. EAZA is glad to clarify its stance on the issue of the use of lethal force to protect visitors, local people and staff members.

1. While every effort is made to prevent the escape of potentially deadly animals, it is impossible to predict all possible circumstances, and occasionally, such animals do manage to leave their enclosures, causing a very real risk of injury or death to people in the vicinity.
2. In such instances, it is important to prevent a dangerous animal from causing injury or death to visitors, staff members, emergency service personnel, and outside the grounds of the institution, local residents. Responses to such circumstances necessarily differ from institution to institution due to the requirements of local emergency services; however, all such responses include the contingency of using lethal force.
3. Lethal force is chosen by zoo authorities or local police (depending on local legislation) when the threat to people is immediate. It should be noted that chemical capture methods such as tranquilizer darts do not represent an entirely reliable method for containing the threat posed by an escape; the effect of tranquilizer drugs varies from animal to animal, and depending on the circumstances; shooters may not be able to place a dart accurately where it will ensure that the animal is incapacitated; and drugs may not take effect quickly enough to prevent an animal from killing or seriously injuring a person it encounters. Indeed chemical capture can only be used if the animal does not pose an immediate threat, usually when it has been contained.
4. EAZA insists that where zoos are held responsible for shooting animals where necessary, that guns should be kept securely but available quickly if needed. Zoos must also demonstrate that they have personnel on site who are qualified to shoot, and who are up to date with the requirements of their local authority.
5. Attica Zoological Park is an accredited Full Member of EAZA and was inspected by the EAZA Accreditation Programme in 2017. The screening team, Membership and Ethics Committee and EAZA Council were all satisfied that the zoo meets the Standards expected by EAZA, which go beyond the requirements of the EU Zoos Directive.
6. Wherever humans and potentially dangerous animals are in proximity, whether at zoological institutions, field conservation projects, or in range communities, the risk to both parties is contained by sensible measures that almost always include a last resort option to use lethal force to protect human life. Indeed in Europe, there is usually a legal obligation for any institution or group with potential exposure to these risks to demonstrate that they have the ability to use lethal force if needed.
7. EAZA has seen no evidence that the procedure followed by Attica Zoological Park, or any of its staff were at fault during this incident. Following the incident, the zoo immediately contacted both EAZA and the Jaguar EEP population management programme Coordinator, in line with best practice.

**David Williams-Mitchell**

**EAZA Director of Communications and Membership**