A Workshop was organised jointly by the Central Zoo Authority & Wildlife Institute of India at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi from 7th to 9th May, 2003. The theme of the Workshop was ‘Healthcare Management of Wild Animals in Zoos.’ The main objective of the workshop was to evolve a strategy for up grading the skills of the zoo personnel, particularly veterinarians in disease diagnostics and healthcare of wild animals.  

The Central Zoo Authority invited participants from various fields: scientists from National Wildlife Health Centre of USGS, USA; Chief Veterinarian, Los Angeles Zoo; Director (Veterinary) Singapore Zoo; Vice Chair of IUCN, Veterinary Specialist Group, Vice Chancellors of Veterinary Universities, Chief Wildlife Wardens, Deans and Professors from Veterinary Colleges, scientists from ICAR, expert veterinarians, Zoo directors, zoo veterinarians and NGO’s who are engaged in the healthcare management of wild animals. A total of 70 persons participated in the workshop. 

The workshop was inaugurated by the Hon’ble Minister of Environment and Forests, Thiru. T.R. Baalu, Shri. Dilip Singh Ju Dev; Minister of State, Environment and Forests was the Guest of Honour.  

Thiru T. R. Baalu, in his inaugural speech, said that it was for the first time since inception of the Central Zoo Authority, that an international workshop was being organised to work out implementable strategies for healthcare management of wild animals in zoos. This Workshop was of great significance, keeping in view the mounting threat to the very survival of the wild fauna in their natural habitat. The mortality of animals in the zoos should remain within the acceptable limits, for which a high degree of expertise among veterinarians and curators of zoos was needed. In his closing remarks the Hon’ble Minister said that the output of this workshop should provide the Central Zoo Authority a framework for future course of action in healthcare of wild animals in zoos. 

Shri Dilip Singh Ju Dev, Hon’ble Minister of State, Environment and Forests spoke about the rich biodiversity of the country and the efforts the zoos in India are making towards the conservation of wild fauna. He emphasized that the zoo managers and veterinarians should use modern tools and techniques for better healthcare management of wild animals in their custody. 

The Secretary (E & F) spoke about the importance of zoos in the changing world and said that the main focus of zoos should be to educate the masses on conservation of wild animals. He said that inspite of so many limitations, the veterinary officers in zoos are doing a yeoman service in maintaining the healthcare of wild animals, which is really praiseworthy. 

The DGF and SS in his welcome speech emphasized the need to identify critical areas for improvement of animal healthcare and upgradation of the technical skills of zoo personnel. 

After the inaugural function, Dr. Pradeep Malik, Workshop Coordinator introduced the workshop sessions and explained the role and responsibilities of the Chairpersons and facilitators. 

The first speaker, Dr. Milton Friend, Ex-director, National Wildlife Health Centre, USA gave a presentation on the infrastructure needs for wildlife health management. His presentation focused on the increasing challenges in the field of wildlife health and evolution of programs to meet the challenges. He said that there was a need to look into the wildlife health in association with domestic animal health and human health for actual prevention and control of diseases affecting wild animals. His presentation was followed a talk by Dr. Richard Kock, Vice Chair, IUCN Veterinary Specialist Group. Dr. Kock gave an insight into the various steps that needed to be considered before undertaking animal translocations. Dr. F. Joshua Dein from the National
Wildlife Healthcare Centre, USA emphasized the need for maintaining records/information on wildlife health. He said that it is not always necessary to record information in computerized form. Information as it is, should be maintained for use in proper decision-making. He informed the delegates about the kind of information the zoo veterinarians should maintain and said that networking and exchange of such information should be carried out among the zoos. Dr. Robert M. Cooper, Chief Veterinarian, Los Angeles Zoo, gave an overview of the existing health care facility in the North American zoo. He also presented a paper on Role of zoos in conservation of wild animals. Dr. Paolo Martelli, Director (Veterinary), Singapore Zoological Park, gave an overview of the healthcare facilities existing in Singapore Zoo. He showed the delegates as to how veterinary services in a zoo should operate.

The second day of the workshop began with a presentation by the Member Secretary, Central Zoo Authority, on the overall scenario of healthcare management of animals in zoos of the country. Individual Zoo Directors and Veterinarians were invited to give a presentation on existing health services in their zoos.

Later, during the afternoon, scientists from ICAR, Veterinary Colleges and Universities shared their experiences on the issues involving education, networking, training and overall capacity building of veterinarians in Indian Zoos.

On the final day of the workshop, 6 groups were identified related to: (1) Philosophy, ethics and value; (2) Networking and information management; (3) Human resources; (4) Disease assessment; (5) Diagnostic capabilities, and (6) Facility and management of resources. The delegates were requested to prioritize the issues listed under these groups, so that a strategy can be formulated for achieving/solving these issues.

**Major issues which were identified are:**

1. Support regional diagnostic laboratories.
2. Creation of database for diagnostic support - Resource directory.
3. Address career advancement problems for wildlife veterinarians.
4. Training and continuing education for zoo managers/veterinarians/curators/zoo staff.
5. Create national database for wildlife health.
6. Facilitate access to drugs and vaccines.
7. Encourage and increase availability of funding for research.
8. Support role of zoos in conservation and interdependence with free-ranging population and protected areas.
9. Develop policies for disposition of excess animals.
10. Develop standard protocols for sanitation, carcasses disposal and zoonoses prevention.
11. Develop standard (model) sampling, survey and monitoring programs for wildlife diseases.
12. Develop standard protocols for vaccination for individual species.