

Bear Husbandry and Habitat



Why is the environment important to bear health and well-being?

All bear species dig, climb, swim, and den. Offering bears ways to engage in these natural behaviors is crucial to their health and well-being in captivity.



DIG

NATURAL SUBSTRATE

- Allows bears to dig
- Is softer and easier on joints
- Enables bears to build nests from leaves and branches
- Encourages bears to explore when there's a variety of substrates



PRACTICAL TIP



Soil, grass, gravel, sand, leaves, hay, and mulch are good substrate options to use in bear enclosures.

CLIMB

CLIMBING STRUCTURES

- Create opportunities for exercise and exploration
- Create high vantage points for bears to rest, offering both enrichment and a sense of security



SWIM

WATER FEATURES

- Allow swimming or bathing
- Help bears regulate their body temperature
- Promote play and overall movement



DEN

QUICK TIPS

- Individual dens for adult bears help reduce aggression and competition
- Proper bedding in dens increases bears' comfort and well-being
- Comfortable temperatures in dens are vital for bears' health

DID YOU KNOW?

Bears use marking as a way to communicate with other animals by both sight and smell.

HABITAT

Allowing bears access to **areas that are shady throughout the day** helps bears to cool off and maintain comfortable temperatures.

Visual barriers or partitions offer privacy, increase bears' sense of security, and minimize aggression.

Logs or structures allow bears to scratch, rub, mark, or forage for insects. These are all natural, motivated behaviors.



This Animal Care Aid is part of a series developed to provide information about bear health and care. Refer to the other topics covered in the series for more information on bear care.

Questions? Email us at CenterforAnimalWelfare@usda.gov

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