



Toronto Zoo Plastics Statement

Why is the Toronto Zoo concerned about Plastic?

Since the beginning of mass production of plastics around the 1930s, the global plastic production has grown to over 300 million metric tons each year; and plastic has become a part of the consumer mainstream lifestyle. The distinct malleable nature of plastic as it can be molded into solid objects combined with low production costs and reduced transportation costs has resulted in a significant contribution of plastics to packaging and food & beverage service known as single-use plastics.

Single-use plastics, are deliberately designed to be used only once before they are thrown away. Although made from natural sources, the vast majority of plastics are not biodegradable, therefore disposal of plastics is via a landfill or recycling. Of the 300+ million tons of plastic produced each year, approximately half is disposable, and only 5% is recycled. In a landfill, petroleum based plastic is buried, and releases toxic chemicals such as flame retardants, phthalates, bisphenol-A (BPA) and dioxins which can make their way into our food and water supply. If not disposed of properly, plastic will find their way into local water courses polluting streams, rivers, lakes and eventually the ocean. It is estimated that 8 million metric ton of plastics end up in the ocean each year.

Wildlife become entangled in plastic debris, such as fishing nets, bags, 6-pack sleeves and iced cup lids, resulting in impaired movement and feeding, injury and death. Some animals ingest plastic mistaking it for food, making the animal feel full, but providing no nutritional value. Over time, these larger plastics will degrade into tiny particles called microplastics. The tiny, broken down pieces of plastic are displacing the algae needed to sustain larger aquatic life who feed on them. These harmful interactions between wildlife and plastic is increasing significantly as the volume of plastic in the environment increases and the impact is reduced ecosystem productivity and contamination of the food web.

Toronto Zoo Position

The Toronto Zoo has a responsibility to reduce the generation of plastic waste and increase awareness of the impact of plastics in our local watersheds, freshwater streams and rivers and the Great Lakes.

Toronto Zoo Action

The Toronto Zoo believes that the use of plastics, in particular single-use plastics, results in pollution, loss of biodiversity and diminished ecosystem productivity. Following the 3Rs, the Toronto Zoo shall invest in infrastructure, seek innovative approaches and inspire our community to:

- reduce the amount of plastics used and sold at the Toronto Zoo;
- where reduction is not possible, create options to reuse plastic at the Zoo; and
- as a last option, ensure that plastics are recycled.

The Toronto Zoo supports the following strategies to engage guests and stakeholders to reduce the volume of plastics entering the aquatic environment:

- lead by example by following the 3Rs:
 - o reducing plastic use within Zoo operations;
 - o reuse plastics within Zoo operations;
 - o recycle 100% of all plastics used at the Zoo.
- encourage and support our suppliers to source alternatives to single-use plastic packaging, and over time eliminate the use or sale of products with single-use packaging where a viable alternative exists;
- inspire people to act by providing them with information and tools that will allow them to make responsible consumer choices for the betterment of the environment;
- facilitate change through stakeholder engagement and dialogue; and
- make proper recycling a social norm.

Dolf DeJong
Chief Executive Officer, Toronto Zoo